Mainstream Islamism in Britain: Educating for the "Islamic Revival"

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Origins and growth

There is a distinct strand of Islamism in Britain comprised of a network of individuals and organisations, generally working within the parameters of the law, for what they see as an "Islamic revival". The groups in this network, distinct from both violent and non-violent Islamist groups that reject participation in the democratic process, have been referred to as "participationist" Islamists[1] and as members of "the New Muslim Brotherhood in the West".[2] They sometimes refer to themselves as part of a global "Islamic Movement" or as "Islamic revivalists". This network or movement is actively engaged in British mainstream social and political life, and so for the purposes of this paper may be described as "mainstream" Islamists.

Mainstream Islamism in Britain has its origins in two overseas organisations, Jamaat-i-Islami established in colonial India in 1941 by Abu al-A'la Mawdudi, and the Muslim Brotherhood established in Egypt in 1928 by Hasan al-Banna. Members of these groups came to Britain from the Indian subcontinent and the Middle East and established their own organisations in Britain

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[1] On the term "participationists", see Damon L. Perry (2019), *The Global Muslim Brotherhood in Britain: Non-Violent Extremism and the Battle of Ideas*, London: Routledge, pp.26-7.

[2] See Lorenzo Vidino (2010), *The New Muslim Brotherhood in the West*, New York: Colombia University Press.

from the early 1960s. But since the 1980s, other mainstream Islamist groups have been founded independently from the Brotherhood and the Jamaat, and have become part of the same revivalist network.

The first mainstream Islamist organisations, established by Jamaati and Brotherhood cadres in the 1960s and 1970s, include the Federation of Student Islamic Societies (FOSIS); the UK Islamic Mission (UKIM); the Muslim Educational Trust (MET); Muslim Welfare House; the Islamic Foundation; and Dawatul Islam UK & Eire. In the 1980s and 1990s came the Islamic Sharia Council; Muslim Aid; the Islamic Forum of Europe (IFE); the Association of Muslim Schools UK (AMS-UK); the Palestinian Relief and Development Fund (Interpal); and the Palestine Return Centre. In 1997, three important organisations were founded, the Muslim Council of Britain (MCB); the Muslim Association of Britain (MAB); and the Islamic Human Rights Commission (IHRC). In the 2000s, additional groups were established, reflecting a further diversification of Islamist interests, including Cage (initially called Cageprisoners); the Islam Channel; the Cordoba Foundation; Muslim Engagement and Development (MEND, initially called iEngage); and the Middle East Monitor.

Collectively, these organisations form a trans-ethnic network or movement.[3] They are connected by the numerous overlapping leadership roles of senior personnel, informal personal relationships, and organisational collaborations. They are connected by a shared way of perceiving and evaluating the world.[4] This is evident in how they view themselves and the purpose of their work, and how they distinguish between themselves and others. They are also connected by the way in which they understand Islam and the importance they attach to the authority to determine normative social values.

Some of the older organisations were created to serve particular ethnic or linguistic communities. For example, UKIM, has its roots in the Indian subcontinent and generally maintains a focus on Urdu-speaking communities. But the key personnel in these groups have been or are linked to other groups focused on trans-ethnic, pan-Islamic issues.[5] And since the

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[3] For a detailed insight into the organisational connections between mainstream Islamist groups in Britain, see Perry (2019), chapter 2.

[4] See Perry (2019), chapters 3 and 4.

[5] For example, trustee and former long-time president of UKIM, Zahid Parvez is the director of the Islamic Foundation's Markfield Institute of Higher Education and chief executive of the Muath Centre. He has also been a trustee of the Islamic Foundation and Muslim Aid, a member of MCB's national council, and a president of Young Muslims UK and the Islamic Society of Britain. Maulana Abu Sayeed is the chairman and former president of Dawatul Islam, a UKIM spin-off created to cater for Bengali speaking Bangladeshi Muslims. He is also the chairman of the Islamic Sharia Council. IFE was established by members of Dawatul Islam. Abdullah Faliq, a trustee of IFE, as well as its director of media and public relations, was involved in the creation of MCB and has remained active with the organisation. Faliq is also the head of research for the Cordoba Foundation and a trustee of the East London Mosque.

1980s, the newer organisations began serving Muslims from all ethnic and linguistic origins. There was a shift from serving particular Muslim communities to serving all Muslims on a range of particular issues.

A key milestone in this shift to serving the global community of believers, the *umma*, in Britain was the creation of MCB. In the wake of the Rushdie Affair, MCB became the first government-endorsed interlocutor for all Muslims in Britain and helped galvanise trans-ethnic Muslim solidarity amongst British Muslims.[6] MCB is no longer the sole voice of British Muslims.[7] But mainstream Islamist groups arguably speak the loudest for Muslims and Islam in many specialised fields of activity. The Association of Muslim Schools UK (AMS-UK), for example, is the primary interlocutor for Muslims schools of all backgrounds on educational matters. And the Islamic Sharia Council in London provides arbitration for Muslims of all ethno-linguistic origins and has taken an active interest in promoting *shari'a* nationwide; it was instrumental in establishing the national umbrella organisation for *shari'a* councils, the UK Board of Sharia Councils.[8]

Goals, beliefs and values

The original goals of the mainstream Islamist organisations established in Britain in the 1960s

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[6] See Perry (2019), p.92.

[7] The government formally suspended ties with MCB in March 2009 after MCB deputy secretary general Daud Abdullah signed the Istanbul Declaration. This document, in support of Hamas against what it describes as "the Resistance against the Jewish Zionist occupation", exhorted the Muslim *umma* to wage *jihad* against Israel "until the liberation of all of Palestine". It described any foreign power's efforts to "prevent the smuggling of arms to Gaza" as a "declaration of war". Communities secretary Hazel Blears understood the document as condoning attacks on British troops, as well as advocating attacks on Jews. She therefore called on MCB for Abdullah's resignation, but the organisation refused to comply with her request. Abdullah admitted signing the document, but denied it entailed a call for attacks on British troops or Jews throughout the world. Similarly, MCB acknowledged Abdullah's signing of the document, but insisted that it was done in a personal capacity and reiterated Abdullah's claim that the document in "no way supports the targeting or killing of British soldiers anywhere in the world". The suspension of the government's formal relationship with MCB was lifted in January 2010, after MCB assured the government of its support for British troops across the world as well as its opposition to antisemitism and other forms of racism. However, the government now consults much more widely with various Muslim groups. See Hazel Blears, "Our shunning of the MCB is not grandstanding", *The Guardian*, March 25, 2009, www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2009/mar/25/islam-terrorism; Daud Abdullah, "My reply to Hazel Blears", *The Guardian*, March 26, 2009, https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2009/mar/26/hazelblears-islam; Nicholas Watt, "Government restores links with biggest Muslim group", *The Guardian*, January 15, 2010, www.guardian.co.uk/politics/2010/jan/15/government-relations-muslim-council-britain-mcb; and MCB, "Contributing to a just and cohesive society", MCB Annual Report 2009-2010, http://archive.mcb.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/Annual-Report_2009-2010.pdf, pp.6-7. For the text of the Istanbul Declaration, see, "A statement by the religious scholars and proselytisers (du'a) of the Islamic Nation (ummah) to all rulers and peoples concerning events in Gaza", published at http://hurryupharry.org/wp-content/uploads/2009/03/istpdf.pdf.

[8] The Islamic Sharia Council helped set up what Maulana Abu Sayeed described as a national "federation" of *shari'a* councils for consistency across the country and because "some aren't as strict as we are". Author interview with Maulana Abu Sayeed, see Perry (2019), p.189.

and 70s was to serve immigrant Muslim communities by providing access to resources and services that facilitated their practice of Islam and protected their collective Muslim identity. This included the provision of places for worship, social networks, and Islamic literature relevant to their status as a religious minority in a new non-Muslim society. Today, the goals of the vast majority of mainstream Islamist groups concern specific issues relevant to all Muslims rather than specific Muslim communities. Although groups oriented towards specific ethno-linguistic communities, such as UKIM, continue to play an important role the mainstream Islamist network, most groups are oriented to meet the perceived needs of British Muslims as part of a singular, trans-ethnic community, the *umma*.

Mainstream Islamist organisations are diverse in function, so their immediate, practical and political concerns vary. And there are some nuances in their beliefs and views on social and political issues. But whether it is to provide arbitration, television broadcasting, charity, community organisation, education, research, or advocacy for changes in law or policy, the stakes for them are the same: the embodiment of a distinct Islamic worldview and associated values within the social and political structures of the British state, and within the cognitive structures of its people.

The *raison d'être* of the work of all mainstream Islamists in Britain, irrespective of their immediate concerns and specific fields of activity, is to protect and promote Islam - as they see it – as a source of communal identity and as "a way of life". This includes an epistemology and an ethics – an approach to knowledge and a moral code – that clashes in important ways with Britain's liberal democratic culture. Fundamental to this effort is their contention over the authority to define Islam, which, for them, is a "complete system of life".[9] Since their duty of *da'wa* compels them to share the values of this system within the social mainstream – and since these values conflict in places with "British values" and human rights norms – the authority they seek to determine and promote Islam inevitably overlaps with the state's authority to determine normative social values and enforce them in law. It is in this space that Islamists challenge the government's authority to define "extremism".

Speaking for Islam, contesting "extremism"

Mainstream Islamist groups have sought to promote what they deem as the authentic understanding of Islam from their beginnings in the 1960s and 70s. The Islamic Foundation's early publications, for example, were designed to equip Muslims with the "right" mindset to live

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[9] Described as such by Ghulam Sarwar, founder and director of the Muslim Educational Trust (MET). See Ghulam Sarwar (2006), *Islam: Beliefs and Teachings*, London: Muslim Educational Trust, p.169. For more on Sarwar and MET, see Perry (2019), pp.152-3.

Islamic values in Muslim-minority Britain.[10] UKIM, IFE, MAB and other community organisations in the network all seek to educate and inculcate the "correct" understanding of Islam, whilst combatting the "incorrect" understandings.[11] They do this through a range of activities, including formal and informal courses, retreats, workshops and seminars, as well as leadership training programmes for imams.

In addition to community-oriented mainstream Islamist organisations, the task of speaking for Islam has been and continues to be shouldered by MCB. The organisation is no longer consulted by the government as the sole or primary interlocutor for Muslims in Britain, but it continues to present itself as having the authoritative voice for British Muslims of diverse origins. MCB claims to be non-sectarian and not to have a role in dispensing judgements of Islamic law. But it has adopted public positions which clearly promote a specific understanding of Islam and its place in the world, and a preference for anachronistic interpretations of *shari'a*. These positions – contentious for other Muslims – clash with Britain's liberal values and equality legislation.

In 2008, for example, MCB denounced a marriage contract drawn up by the Muslim Institute for Muslims wishing to arrange an Islamic marriage (*nikah*). The new contract sought to modernise the Islamic legal requirements for a *nikah*, empowering women to initiate divorce on equal terms and prevent husbands from taking additional wives.[12] It eschewed the need for a male guardian to oversee the process and stipulated that women and even non-Muslims can be witnesses. MCB initially supported the contract but then quickly rescinded its support, stating that it represented a "misguided" and "incorrect" attempt to "re-invent" *shari'a* towards a "reformist" view.[13] Defending MCB's decision, former assistant secretary general Sheikh Ibrahim

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[10] The Islamic Foundation, for example, began publishing Islamic books specifically aimed at providing guidance on "the roles and responsibilities" of Muslims living in a Muslim-minority country. According to the Foundation's former executive director, Irshad Bacqui, it was important for such organisations to create a new mindset of "how to live according to Islamic values" in the new British environment. Author interview with Irshad Bacqui, see Perry (2019), p.95.

[11] Omer El-Hamdoon, the former president of the Muslim Association of Britain (MAB), for example, describes MAB's work as promoting "the *correct* understanding of Islam … The people who have deviated in Islam are the people who have deviated from the texts … We hope that the Muslim Association of Britain tries to *correct* Muslims' understanding of Islam, so they are not narrow minded". Author interview with Omer El-Hamdoon, see Perry (2019), p.96.

[12] Urmee Khan, "New Sharia law marriage contract gives Muslim women rights", *The Telegraph*, August 7, 2008, https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/2518720/New-Sharia-law-marraige-contract-gives-Muslim-women-rights.html. For the marriage contract, see "Muslim Marriage Contract", The Muslim Institute, August 2008, captured at: https://web.archive.org/web/20080908101713/http://www.muslimparliament.org.uk/Documentation/Muslim%20Marriage%20Contract.pdf.

[13] MCB, "STATEMENT: Muslim Marriage Certificate", MCB website, August 15, 2008, captured at: http://web.archive.org/web/20080824221846/http://www.mcb.org.uk/article_detail.php?article=announcement-734.

Mogra asserted that *shari'a* is the domain of Muslim jurists and theologians and that Islamic law is clear that Muslim brides-to-be require male guardians.[14] The Islamic Sharia Council also rejected the model contract, saying, "it is unacceptable to claim earlier generations were marrying according to a faulty system which we now have to put right".[15]

According to Mogra, MCB "signposts" people to *shari'a* councils and other bodies,[16] thus implicitly endorsing the particular interpretation of Islamic law being used to arbitrate on divorce and other matters that has caused so much controversy in recent years.[17] MCB has ardently defended *shari'a* councils, minimising serious concerns regarding such institutions, including their unequal treatment of women.[18] Other mainstream Islamist organisations, such as IHRC and MEND, have similarly defended *shari'a* councils, which came under scrutiny with the government's first counter-extremism strategy. IHRC, which has been consulted by the Home Office on Muslim matters, describes official concern about these councils as an assault on Islam, as "part of a wide, insidious and relentless attack on the whole Muslim way of life under the pretext of security and anti-terrorism".[19] The interpretation of Islamic law used in *shari'a* councils is contentious. Elham Manea, a Muslim academic, describes it as belonging to "the

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[14] Allen Esterson, "The MCB and the Muslim Marriage Contract", Butterflies and Wheels blog, August 24, 2008, http://www.butterfliesandwheels.org/2008/the-mcb-and-the-muslim-marriage-contract/.

[15] See John R. Bowen (2016), *On British Islam: Religion, Law, and Everyday Practice in Shari'a Councils*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, p.214.

[16] Author interview with Ibrahim Mogra, see Perry (2019), p.189.

[17] For critical reports into the operation of *shari'a* councils in Britain, see Elham Manea (2016), *Women and Shari'a Law: The Impact of Legal Pluralism in the UK*, London: I. B. Taurus; Machteld Zee (2016), *Choosing Sharia?: Multiculturalism, Islamic Fundamentalism and Sharia Councils*, Utrecht, Netherlands: Eleven International Publishing; Caroline Cox (2015), "A parallel world: confronting the abuse of many Muslim women in Britain today", Bow Group, London, www.bowgroup.org/sites/bowgroup.uat.pleasetest.co.uk/files/Bow%20Group%20Report%20-%20A%20Parallel%20 World%20-%20Confronting%20the%20abuse%20of%20many%20Muslim%20women%20in%20Britain%20today%2 024%2003%2015.pdf; Maryam Namazie, Yassi Atasheen and Anna Waters (2010), "Sharia Law in Britain: A Threat to One Law for All and Equal Rights", London: One Law for All, www.onelawforall.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/New-Report-Sharia-Law-in-Britain_fixed.pdf; and Denis MacEoin (2009), "Sharia Law or One Law for All?", ed. David G. Green, London: Civitas, www.civitas.org.uk/pdf/ShariaLawOrOneLawForAll.pdf.

[18] In October 2015, after the announcement of the government's intention to conduct an independent review into the application of *shari'a* in England and Wales, MCB stated, "Where there are concerns of discrimination and illegality, these should be dealt with under the full force of the law". But it has diminished the seriousness of these concerns by claiming that much of them have been "generated through rumours or one-off incidents promoted by ideologically-driven and misinformed journalists or politicians". Not taking seriously the claims made by critics that some women have been pressured to attend *shari'a* council hearings – risking ostracisation or worse if they do not – MCB made the blanket assertion that the councils "are a voluntary method of alternative dispute resolution ... Those who use these institutions do so out of free will". See "Home Office Announcement of Independent Investigation into Sharia law", MCB website, October 14, 2015, https://mcb.org.uk/general/home-office-announcement-of-independent-investigation-into-sharia-law/.

[19] IHRC, 'A letter to Nick Clegg regarding the government's proposed new plans to "combat Islamic extremism"', IHRC website, 11 March 2015. www.ihrc.org.uk/activities/campaigns/11382-a-letter-to-nick-clegg-regarding-the-governments-proposed-new-plans-to-combat-islamic-extremism.

medieval jurisprudence tradition, which freely violates human rights and the concept of gender equality".[20] If Manea is correct – and her argument is persuasive – then it would be reasonable to take the view that the MCB and other mainstream Islamists' support for these councils is effectively protecting an illiberal religious ideology and the practices based upon it.[21]

MCB, along with IHRC, MEND, Cage, FOSIS and other mainstream Islamist groups, have long campaigned against the government's counter-radicalisation strategy, Prevent, and more recently against its counter-extremism strategy.[22] All of these groups view these strategies as a state-led attack on Islam, as an attempt to define Islam as something that it is not.[23] The counter-extremism strategy is particularly problematic for mainstream Islamists because it

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[20] Manea (2016), p.120.

[21] Ibid., pp.180-1.

[22] MCB has described Prevent as "flawed" and "counterproductive" for allegedly stigmatising Muslims. It has claimed that the government "engages in state-sponsored sectarianism by setting arbitrary measures on who is, and who isn't an extremist", whilst alleging that the government's concept of extremism is driven by "neoconservative think tanks". MCB has come under fire for its public stance against the government's counter-radicalisation and counter-extremism efforts. High profile Muslim lawyer Nazir Afzal criticised MCB as part of an "industry" of Muslim groups seeking to undermine such efforts by spreading misinformation and myths, including those that portray Muslims as victims of state-led discrimination. MEND similarly describes the government's counter-radicalisation and counter-extremism strategies as state-sponsored Islamophobia. Some staff and literature produced by the group have portrayed these strategies as a form of institutionalised anti-Muslim bigotry deliberately targeting aspects of Islamic ideas and practices and curtailing Muslims' civil liberties. Echoing this line, FOSIS has described Prevent as a "failed strategy" that is "divisive, toxic and discriminatory". It has called for its "complete abolition". It has played an active role in the "Preventing Prevent" campaign alongside Cage on university campuses. In 2015, its vice president of student affairs, whilst lauding the work of Cage, declared that "Prevent in itself is a racist agenda; it's an Islamophobic agenda". In a recent tirade against the Commission for Countering Extremism, Cage goes as far as claiming that the government's counter-extremism strategy is an "oppressive project" based on an "elastic" definition of "extremism" that "can be adapted as per the state's shifting agendas". IHRC co-launched a campaign against the government's counter-radicalisation strategy – "Together Against Prevent". The initiative claims that Prevent uses "draconian surveillance methods", whilst "stigmatising and criminalising entire Muslim communities". IHRC produced a webpage of resources for the initiative aimed at empowering people who have been approached by Prevent officers, to "fight back" and "challenge" them. See "Stigmatising Muslim civil society won't avert terrorism – Prevent strategy still flawed", MCB website, June 7, 2011, http://archive.mcb.org.uk/stigmatising-muslim-civil-society-wont-avert-terrorism-prevent-strategy-still-flawed/; Andrew Norfolk, "'Myths' by Muslims hit Prevent campaign to fight terror", *The Times*, June 3, 2017, https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/myths-by-muslims-hit-anti-terror-campaign-0lqf9jl5s; Tom Wilson (2017), MEND: "Islamists Masquerading as Civil Libertarians", London: Henry Jackson Society, http://henryjacksonsociety.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/HJS-Mend-Report.pdf; "Independent Review of the Prevent Policy", FOSIS website, January 22, 2019, https://www.fosis.org.uk/press-releases/independent-review-prevent-policy/; Hannah Stuart (2015), *Understanding Cage: A Public Information Dossier*, London: Henry Jackson Society, p.22; "CCE Exposed", Cage website, January 10, 2019, https://www.cage.ngo/cce-exposed; "Campaigners launch "Together Against Prevent"', September 30, 2015, Network for Police Monitoring website, https://netpol.org/2015/09/30/campaigners-launch-together-against-prevent/; and "The PREVENT Strategy: Campaign Resources", June 21, 2015, IHRC website, https://www.ihrc.org.uk/activities/projects/11472-the-prevent-strategy-campaign-resources/.

[23] Asim Qureshi, Cage's research director, for example, declared of Prevent, "It's always been a social engineering programme to legitimise the government sponsored version of Islam only". See Karen Jayes, "The PREVENT Policy: a politically motivated programme", Cage website, August 5, 2014, https://www.cage.ngo/prevent-policy-politically-motivated-programme.

shines a light on non-violent but arguably extremist ideas and practices that some of them have denied or defended in a variety of ways, including underplaying concerning behaviour as mere "religious conservatism". These ideas and practices include the discriminatory treatment of women in *shari'a* councils; the preaching of misogynistic, homophobic, antisemitic, and supremacist views in mosques; the education of Muslim children according to such views; and the unlawful sex-segregation of Muslim children in schools.[24]

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[24] Mainstream Islamist groups have routinely defended allegedly extremist views and practices as mere "religious conservatism" or simply failed to condemn such views and practices. In 2015, after the publication of the government's counter-extremism strategy, MCB warned the strategy would fail if it continued "to conflate conservative views with violent extremism without any evidence base." Sex discrimination in *shari'a* councils has been denied, for example, by MCB, as already mentioned in this paper. IHRC chimed, "The idea that they need to be probed because they oppress women is as offensive as it is inaccurate". Mainstream Islamists have a similar reluctance to acknowledge or tackle extremism in mosques. On the government's plans to close mosques hosting extremist speakers – such as the East London Mosque (ELM), which has a documented history of hosting "hate" preachers – MCB questioned the government's authority to classify any mosque as "extremist" and implied the government was leading a witch hunt. ELM itself has similarly denied or ignored accusations of hosting speakers espousing misogynistic, homophobic, antisemitic, and supremacist views. After literature was found in an MCB-affiliated mosque calling for the death of Ahmadi Muslims – who MCB do not consider as Muslim – MCB set up an inquiry, which was criticised for its lack of impartiality, but failed to publish the findings or withdraw the mosque's affiliation. The exposure of Muslim children to what can arguably be called "extremist views", as was documented by Peter Clarke in Birmingham during the Trojan Horse affair, has similarly been eschewed by MCB. The group accused Clarke of "conflating conservative Muslim practises to a supposed ideology and agenda to 'Islamise' secular schools". Yet, Clarke noted there was a "coordinated agenda to impose … segregationist attitudes and practices": "Rejecting not only the secular and other religions but also other strands of Islamic belief, it goes *beyond* the kind of social conservatism practised in some faith schools which may be consistent with universal human rights and respectful of other communities". And, as this paper describes in a later section, the unlawful sex-segregation of children in Muslim schools, such as Al-Hijrah, is viewed by AMS-UK as compatible with what it deems as Islamic values. See "'One Nation Counter-Extremism Strategy' risks further undermining fight against terrorism", MCB website, October 19, 2015, https://mcb.org.uk/press-releases/one-nation-counter-extremism-strategy-risks-fight-against-terrorism-191015/; "A letter to Nick Clegg regarding the government's proposed new plans to 'combat Islamic extremism'", IHRC website, March 11, 2015, www.ihrc.org.uk/activities/campaigns/11382-a-letter-to-nick-clegg-regarding-the-governments-proposed-new-plans-to-combat-islamic-extremism; Tahir Nasser, "The Muslim Council of Britain is failing Ahmadis like Asad Shah", *The Guardian*, April 25, 2016, https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2016/apr/25/muslim-council-of-britain-ahmadi-asad-shah; "Independent Inquiry on Aalami Majlise Tahaffuze Khatme Nubuwwat, also known as Stockwell Green Mosque", MCB website, April 14, 2016, https://mcb.org.uk/mcb-updates/amtkn-april-2016/; "Our Affiliates", MCB website, captured on October 5, 2018, https://web.archive.org/web/20181005001524/https://mcb.org.uk/about/affiliates/; habibi (pseud.), "The East London Mosque – Surrealist Politics", Harry's Place website, July 16, 2017, http://hurryupharry.org/2017/07/16/the-east-london-mosque-surrealist-politics/; "East London Mosque Promotes (Yet Another) Extremist", Stand for Peace website, May 12, 2014, http://standforpeace.org.uk/east-london-mosque-promotes-yet-another-extremist/; Hasan Afzal, "Extremism in Abdul Bari's Mosque", *The Huffington Post*, September 20, 2011, https://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/hasan-afzal/extremism-in-abdul-baris-_b_971232.html?ec_carp=6265422767140198967; Andrew Gilligan, "Inextricably linked to controversial mosque: the secret world of IFE", *The Telegraph*, February 28, 2010, https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/politics/labour/7333487/Inextricably-linked-to-controversial-mosque-the-secret-world-of-IFE.html; "The Muslim Council of Britain responds to Peter Clarke's 'Trojan Horse' letter report", MCB website, July 23, 2014, https://mcb.org.uk/press-releases/the-muslim-council-of-britain-responds-to-peter-clarkes-trojan-horse-letter-report/; and Peter Clarke (2014), "Report into allegations concerning Birmingham schools arising from the 'Trojan Horse' letter", HC 576, London: House of Commons, www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/340526/HC_576_accessible_-.pdf, paras. 5.1-2, p.48., emphasis added.

What is at stake for mainstream Islamist groups in the increasing scrutiny of illiberal and intolerant religious ideas and practices, is not just an ideology. It is an alternative way of seeing and organising the world, a form of collective identity based upon it, and, crucially, the authority to determine the core values that underlie it. Islamists' struggle for the authoritative voice to determine normative values is inseparable from their disdain for the government's use of the term "extremism", since the term is officially defined in relation to the baseline of liberal, Enlightenment values, rather than Islam. "Extremism" for mainstream Islamists is not the undermining of "British values", even though some of these may be compatible with Islamic values, but, rather, an affliction that "deviates a people and movements from God's guidance" because "Islam is the middle way".[25]

The Islamic state and *shari'a*

"Islamism" is typically defined as a religiopolitical ideology that aspires towards an Islamic state or form of government.[26] But mainstream Islamist groups in Britain do not – contrary to the government's description of "Islamist extremism" – "demand a caliphate, or a new Islamic state".[27] Although violent Islamists and rejectionist agitators such as Al-Muhajiroun explicitly call for an Islamic state, mainstream Islamists believe in bringing Islamic values into British society, beginning with what they see as the genuine embrace of authentic Islam in Muslim communities. The attainment of an Islamic state is a secondary concern in relation to an Islamic society, which begins with the individual and the family, and proceeds through education, community work, and advocacy. The shared vision of mainstream Islamists is the attainment of

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[25] Parvez (2007), p.200. Parvez's notion of Islam as the "middle way" – and "extremism" defined in terms of deviation from Islam – is a recurring theme for mainstream Islamists. For example, drawing on the work of the spiritual leader of the Muslim Brotherhood, Yusuf al-Qaradawi, former MCB general secretary Muhammad Abdul Bari describes the "middle way" as between "extremism" and "rejection". "Extremism" is defined as "rigidity, fanaticism, and radicalism". Muslim "extremists" are defined as either committing violent acts or isolating themselves from mainstream society. Neither may be condoned because of the belief that Islam ought to be spread beyond the Muslim population without coercion. "Rejection", on the other hand, is described as a "libertarian attitude, laxity, or so-called liberalism" – which amounts to non-Muslim extremism – since both of these positions are viewed as extremes. See Yusuf al Qaradawi (1991), *Islamic Awakening: Between Rejection and Extremism*, London: Zain International; and "Dr Muhammad Abdul Bari – Between Ignorance and Extremism", lecture transcript, February 10, 2006, www.scribd.com/document/47470171/Dr-Muhammad-Abdul-Bari-Between-Ignorance-and-Extremism.

[26] For example, Peter Mandaville (2007), *Global Political Islam*, New York: Routledge, p.57.

[27] This phrase is from Home Secretary Theresa May's speech in March 2015. The description she gave of "Islamist extremism" was derived from the report of the prime minister's Task Force on Tackling Radicalisation and Extremism, published in December 2013. It re-appears in different wording in the 2015 Counter-Extremism Strategy. See, 'A Stronger Britain, Built On Our Values', British Government website, March 23, 2015, https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/a-stronger-britain-built-on-our-values; Cabinet Office (2013), *Tackling extremism in the UK: Report from the Prime Minister's Task Force on Tackling Radicalisation and Extremism*, www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/263181/ETF_FINAL.pdf; and HM Government (2015), *Counter-Extremism Strategy*, Cm 9148, www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/470088/51859_Cm9148_Accessible.pdf.

a society based on Islamic values and principles. This is not to suggest that they reject the notion of an Islamic state, since, although some of them have downplayed its importance, they typically consider it as the eventual and inevitable outcome of such a society.[28]

Suhaib Hasan, president of the Islamic Sharia Council, makes this clear in stating that the Islamic state is not an *objective*, as such, but a promised *reward* for widespread piety.[29] This sentiment is shared by numerous prominent figures in the mainstream Islamist network, including Zahid Parvez, the director of the Islamic Foundation's Markfield Institute of Higher Education (MIHE), and Omer El-Hamdoon, until last year the president of MAB and deputy secretary general of MCB. Parvez asserts that "political power is essential in the eyes of Islam", adding that the social conditions of the acceptance of an Islamic state must first be in place.[30] The Islamic state – as a legal, political and economic system – must grow from the seeds of Islamic religiosity. Whilst president of MAB, El-Hamdoon asserted that MAB isn't in Britain to establish an Islamic state since Islam, as a way of life, can only be realised when people voluntarily embrace it. He said the creation of an Islamic state is not an objective MAB is striving for, but admits, "As a Muslim, irrelevant of where I am living, one of my objectives is to establish an Islamic state. Islam is comprehensive and since the problems are comprehensive, the solution has to be comprehensive".[31] Anas Altikriti, the current MAB president (and founder and director of the Cordoba Foundation), has spoken of the need for a comprehensive social transformation that does not just concern spirituality, education, finance, or politics, but every aspect of human existence.[32] The Islamic Human Rights Commission (IHRC) echoes this, openly calling for "a new social and international order", the alternative nature of which relates to its controversial conception of "human rights" based on *shari'a*.[33] Some mainstream Islamists have expressed the

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[28] For a discussion of mainstream Islamists' views of the Islamic state, see Perry (2019), pp.107-8, 119-28.

[29] See Suhaib Hasan, "The Current Problems of the Muslim Ummah and their Solution in Light of the Purified Seerah", April 8, 2014, http://sheikhsuhaibhasan.blogspot.co.uk/2014/04/the-current-problems-of-muslim-ummah.html; and author interview with Suhaib Hasan, in Perry (2019), p.122.

[30] Parvez (2007), p. 39, 41, 173-4.

[31] Author interview with Omer El-Hamdoon, see Perry (2019), pp.122-3.

[32] "Anas Altikriti – A New Dawn", YouTube, September 8, 2011, www.youtube.com/watch?v=YYBCy60x3qw; see also Perry (2019), p.117.

[33] "Aims & Objectives", IHRC website, undated, https://www.ihrc.org.uk/about/aims-and-objectives/. The alternative nature of this alternative world order relates to an alternative understanding of human rights conceived as "divinely granted" and "revealed for human beings" by Allah. This resonates with the 1990 Cairo Declaration on Human Rights in Islam, which states that *all* rights and freedoms "are subject to the Islamic Sharia". See "Cairo Declaration on Human Rights in Islam", OIC website, webpage captured February 4, 2016, https://web.archive.org/web/20160204165950/http://www.oic-oci.org/english/article/human.htm.

effort to achieve this transformation in Islamic terms as a "cultural *jihad*".[34]

Mainstream Islamists consistently refer to *shari'a* as a comprehensive ethical and legal code that applies not only to personal conduct but to all domains of human activity, including the state's governance of political, economic and military affairs. El-Hamdoon, the former president of MAB, recommended to the author as a guide to *shari'a* a book entitled *'Umdat al-Salik* (*The Reliance of the Traveller*), a fourteenth century manual of the Shafi'i school of jurisprudence authorised by Al-Azhar University.[35] This book contains rulings in the realm of state administration, including corporeal (*hudud*) punishments, such as the cutting of hands for theft.[36] Numerous figures in the mainstream Islamist network acknowledge and do not seem to reject such punishments, instead referring to their non-applicability in a Muslim-minority setting and the fact that they comprise only a tiny fraction of *shari'a* rulings.[37] Some mainstream Islamists have made explicit their belief that prior to *hudud* punishments being applied, Islam has to be firmly embraced within society and *shari'a* lived out as a moral code.[38]

A key mainstream Islamist view is that the Islamic state is a natural outcome of the long-term goal of an Islamic society, and *shari'a* should not be enforced in its entirety until this situation is attained. Muslims, according to Hasan, Abu Sayeed and ECFR, are only obliged to implement *shari'a* inasmuch as is practical in a Muslim-minority society.[39] They believe in a prophecy of

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[34] Ibrahim Hewitt, for example, states, "any personal or communal struggle to establish an Islamic lifestyle is Jihad". Parvez likewise states that *jihad* aims at '[i]ntellectually challenging ideologies, beliefs and ways of life that conflict with God's Way". It also aims at "[i]nfluencing positive social, economic and political change in society according to Islamic ideals". See Hewitt (2004), p.58, Parvez (2007), p.158.

[35] Author interview with Omer El-Hamdoon, see Perry (2019), p.121. This is not to say that El-Hamdoon necessarily endorses all that is in this book. But when asked if he could recommend a book on *shari'a* – in the context of a conversation on understanding what *shari'a* is – he named this book. Acknowledging that there are several schools of orthodox Islamic jurisprudence, he said, "It presents just one school of thought". However, he added, "but it's a good book". He also said, "'We believe in God, and we believe in *shari'a* and we do not give up *shari'a* ... We don't believe *shari'a* is discriminatory, that *shari'a* is prejudiced".

[36] Ahmad ibn Naqib al-Misri (1994), *'Umdat al-Salik – Reliance of the Traveller, A Classic Manual of Islamic Sacred Law*, ed. and trans. Nuh Ha Mim Keller, Beltsville: Amana Publications, pp.613-5 (o14.0-6), 668 (p.21.0).

[37] See Perry (2019), p.121.

[38] Abdullah Faliq, for example, asserts that *hudud* punishments are not applicable in Britain: "When it comes to ruling, it doesn't apply to us here. We don't have an Islamic system of government, so *hudud* punishments shouldn't even arise as a question. You follow the law of the country, as long as it doesn't make you compromise your Islamic faith". See Perry (2019), ibid. Exactly the same position is taken in Ghulam Sarwar's book, *Sex Education: The Muslim Perspective*, in which he describes the punishment for sex outside marriage ("fornication") as 100 lashes, the punishment for adultery as stoning to death, and the punishment for homosexual acts as either lashes or death; he adds that these punishments can only occur "in an Islamic society implementing Shariah (Islamic Law) in its totality", i.e. "in a fully-fledged Islamic state". See Ghulam Sarwar (2004), *Sex Education: The Muslim Perspective*, London: MET, p.16.

[39] See Perry (20190, p.126.

Islam's eventual "revival" in Britain and beyond.[40] And in explicit reference to the experience of the prophet Muhammad they accept that this will take time, perhaps generations.[41] Since they believe *shari'a* applies to every domain of human existence and desire a situation in which it is eventually comprehensively applied, the question arises regarding how an Islamic society is to be achieved and what the implications are for women, those wishing to leave Islam, homosexuals, and non-Muslims.

When asked about the conditions for an Islamic state to emerge in Britain, mainstream Islamists generally refer to a situation where Muslims are a majority.[42] But they are vague about the processes by which an Islamic society may become an Islamic state, and about how government institutions and state law become based on *shari'a*.

In any case, the Shafi-ite manual may provide a glimpse into some of the normative values and laws comprising the society mainstream Islamists may aspire towards. It stipulates that "circumcision" is obligatory for men and women, noting that in two of the other orthodox schools of Islamic jurisprudence it is recommended.[43] This is a relevant and timely observation, given that Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) is a problem highlighted in the counter-extremism strategy and that an amendment to the Children Act 1989 was passed in March this year that seeks to provide greater protection from girls at risk of FGM.[44] Some mainstream Islamist

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[40] The Islamisation of Europe has been predicted by the spiritual guide of the Muslim Brotherhood, Yusuf al-Qaradawi. Anas Altikriti, director of the Cordoba Foundation, shares al-Qaradawi's conviction, but adds, "I believe in it because that is the prophecy of the Prophet," he says. "It's not an invention of Sheikh Qaradawi". Suhaib Hasan, president of the Islamic Sharia Council, likewise voices a firm conviction in the future triumph of Islam not just in Europe but worldwide. Regarding the return of the caliphate, Hasan contends, "It will come because it is prophecised by the Prophet". See Yusuf al-Qaradawi, cited in Jonathan Dahoah-Halevi, "The Muslim Brotherhood: A Moderate Islamic Alternative to al-Qaeda or a Partner in Global Jihad?", Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs, 1 November 2007, http://jcpa.org/article/the-muslim-brotherhood-a-moderate-islamic-alternative-to-al-qaeda-or-a-partner-in-global-jihad/; John Ware, "Time to Wise Up to the Muslim Brotherhood", *Standpoint Magazine*, July/August 2013, https://standpointmag.co.uk/features-july-august-13-time-to-wise-up-to-the-muslim-brotherhood-john-ware/; and author interview with Suhaib Hasan, in Perry (2019), pp.127-8.

[41] Al-Qaradawi refers to "gradualism" as the means to the establishment of "a real Muslim society". He states, "Gradualism here refers to preparing people ideologically, psychologically, morally, and socially to accept and adopt the application of the Shari'ah in all aspects of life". Abu Sayeed, citing the long time it took Muhammad to establish Islam, says he doesn't feel restricted in Britain and likens the current situation to the "stage of the purification of ideas". See Yusuf al-Qaradawi, "Gradualism in Applying the Shari`ah", On Islam website, November 24, 2011, https://web.archive.org/web/20150915164356/http://www.onislam.net/english/ask-the-scholar/shariah-based-systems/judiciary-and-police-systems/169643-gradualism-in-applying-the-shariah.html?Police_Systems=; and author interview with Maulana Abu Sayeed, in Perry (2019), p.127.

[42] See Perry (2019), pp.125-6.

[43] al-Misri (1994), p.59 (e4.3).

[44] For more on this bill, see the Parliament bill webpage: https://services.parliament.uk/Bills/2017-19/childrenact1989amendmentfemalegenitalmutilation/documents.html.

organisations have made statements rejecting FGM, but have not done so unambiguously.[45] The *shari'a* manual also stipulates that apostasy is punishable by death.[46] The view that within an Islamic state such a punishment is the will of Allah and therefore unquestionably right was controversially expressed by AMS-UK's former chairman, Mohamed Mukadam.[47]

Futhermore, *'Umdat al-Salik* asserts that a woman is obliged to accept her husband's demand for sex providing that she is at home and is physically fit to do so.[48] This is no mere textual observation, since it chimes with the view of both Hasan and Abu Sayeed – key figures in Britain's network of *shari'a* councils – that rape in marriage is impossible.[49] And it is a view allegedly expressed on a handout used in Sex and Relationships Education lessons at Park View School, one of the schools involved in the Trojan Horse affair.[50] More recently, in 2016, Ofsted

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[45] For example, MCB and the Islamic Sharia Council have put their names to a pamphlet against the practice of FGM, which states that it is not condoned from an Islamic viewpoint. In this pamphlet, the chairman of the Islamic Sharia Council, Maulana Abu Sayeed, writes, "In Islam it is forbidden to mutilate the body, in this sense Female Genital Mutilation is condemnable as it irreversibly harms the woman. It is also prohibited to compel an individual to undertake this operation". But it is unclear what, precisely, Abu Sayeed means by FGM "in this sense" and if this includes *all* four types classified by the World Health Organisation, or whether it just refers to type 3, the most severe of them. A former colleague of Abu Sayeed, who sat alongside him as a *shari'a* judge at the Islamic Sharia Council, Haitham al-Haddad, argues that only "Pharaonic female circumcision" – FGM type 3 – is "against *shari'a*", since it "cuts extensively" and "causes harm for the female". He adds, however, that there is a "proper way" of doing female circumcision that is "*sunna*", i.e., an exemplary practice from an Islamic perspective. He refers to the Islamic traditions – *hadiths* – to justify this position. "It is the consensus of all the scholars that female circumcision is *sunna* ... I haven't come across any scholar who said it clearly that it is not *sunna*". Some mainstream Islamists seem not to disagree with al-Haddad. In 2015, Cage director, Asim Qureshi, refused to be drawn on whether he agreed or disagreed with al-Haddad's position on FGM, as well as on other topics, including death by stoning for adultery. See "FGM", pamphlet by Muslim Spiritual Care Provision in the NHS, MCB and Forward, undated, MCB website, http://www.mcb.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/FGM-Islam-Leaflet.pdf; Haitham al-Haddad, "Rulings for Newborn Babies - male/female circumcision, head-shaving, naming", YouTube, December 20, 2010, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=msOmkAaytYM; "Classification of female genital mutilation", WHO website, undated, https://www.who.int/reproductivehealth/topics/fgm/overview/en/; and Rosa Prince, "Cage director Asim Qureshi refuses to condemn stoning of adulterous women", *The Telegraph*, March 6, 2015, www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/islamic-state/11453846/Cage-director-Asim-Qureshi-refuses-to-condemn-stoning-of-adulterous-women.html.

[46] al-Misri (1994), pp.109 (f1.3), 595-8 (o8.0-7).

[47] Faisal, "The penalty for apostasy", Spittoon blog, March 30, 2010, http://web.archive.org/web/20100407163056/http://www.spittoon.org/archives/5719.

[48] al-Misri (1994), p.526 (m5.4).

[49] Charlotte Rachael Proudman (2012), "Equal and Free? Evidence in Support of Baroness Cox's Arbitration and Mediation Services (Equality) Bill", London: House of Lords, www.secularism.org.uk/uploads/equal-and-free-16.pdf, p. 74; Tim Ross, 'Rape within marriage is "impossible", claims Muslim cleric', *The Telegraph*, October 15, 2010, https://web.archive.org/web/20101018071909/http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/newstopics/religion/8064571/Rape-within-marriage-is-impossible-claims-Muslim-cleric.html.

[50] Peter Clarke (2014), para. 4.20, p.38; Ian Kershaw (2014), "Investigation Report: Trojan Horse Letter", Northern Education, https://www.birmingham.gov.uk/downloads/file/1579/investigation_report_trojan_horse_letter_the_kershaw_report, p.32. It should be noted that in a disciplinary hearing in 2015 concerning several teachers at Park View School, one of the witnesses, under cross-examination, could not rule out the possibility that the handouts promoting these views

inspectors found a book expressing this view in the library of one of AMS-UK's schools, Al-Hijrah School.[51] The book – *The Muslim Women's Handbook* by Huda Khattab – states, "The wife is not allowed to refuse sex to her husband".[52] Khattab's book is specifically recommended for Muslim schoolchildren in a book by the founder and director of MET, Ghulam Sarwar, entitled, *Sex Education: The Muslim Perspective*.[53] Sarwar's book itself states, "A wife should not refuse to have sexual intercourse with her husband without a reasonable excuse". [54] Sarwar then quotes a *hadith* in which the prophet Muhammad allegedly said, "If a husband invites his wife to bed (i.e. to have sexual relation [sic]) and she refuses and causes him to sleep in anger, the angels curse her till the morning".[55] In other words, it seems, she cannot simply refuse because she doesn't want to. Sarwar's book, it should be noted, is recommended in MCB's guidance for schools on the needs of Muslim children.[56] Echoing this misogynistic message, MCB founding member and former general secretary of FOSIS, Abdul Wahid Hamid, writes, "There is one thing in particular in which a wife should strive not to disobey her husband, and that is when he invites her to come to bed".[57]

Another book found in Al-Hijrah School's library states that women are commanded to obey their husbands and fulfil their domestic duties.[58] This, again, is consistent with the view of Sarwar, expounded in a book he wrote for use in British Muslim schools, entitled *Islam: Beliefs and Teachings*.[59] This states that men and women have different duties defined by Allah, and

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had been downloaded by a pupil outside school and circulated by people other than the teachers. According to Peter Clarke's investigation, however, "Staff reported that one of the teachers who gave the lessons said: '*Luckily we were able to hide all the controversial worksheets very, very quickly and managed to get rid of all of them between the two Ofsted inspections*'". See Richard Adams, "Trojan horse teachers 'gave pupils handout saying wives cannot refuse sex'", *The Guardian*, October 14, 2015, https://www.theguardian.com/education/2015/oct/14/trojan-horse-teachers-gave-pupils-handout-saying-wives-cannot-refuse-sex; and Peter Clarke (2014), para. 4.20, p.38.

[51] See [2017] EWCA Civ 142, para 140, https://www.judiciary.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/interim-executive-board-of-al-hijrah-school-20171013a.pdf.

[52] Huda Khattab (1993), *The Muslim Women's Handbook*, London: Ta-Ha, p.42.

[53] See Sarwar (2004). Khattab's book appears in the bibliography of Sarwar's book. Sarwar describes his bibliography as a list of "good sources" regarding sex education (p.45). In a section of the book entitled "Advice to Muslim pupils", Sarwar encourages Muslim schoolchildren to read books in the bibliography marked with an asterisk (p.48). Khattab's book is one of seven books out of 37 marked with an asterisk (pp.59-61).

[54] Ibid., p.23.

[55] Ibid.

[56] MCB (2007), *Meeting the Needs of Muslim Pupils in State Schools: Information and Guidance for Schools*, London: The Muslim Council of Britain, http://www.religionlaw.co.uk/MCBschoolsreport07.pdf, p.65.

[57] Abdul Wahid Hamid (1989), *Islam: The Natural Way*, London: Muslim Educational and Literary Services, pp.86-87.

[58] See [2017] EWCA Civ 142, para 140.

[59] Ghulam Sarwar (2006), *Islam: Beliefs and Teachings*, 8th edition, London: Muslim Educational Trust. On the use of this book in Muslim schools in Britain, see Ed Husain (2007), *The Islamist*, London: Penguin, p.22.

that to aspire for "total equality between a man and a woman" goes "against nature".[60] Parvez, the director of MIHE, shares such misogynistic values, writing, "Men and women due to their biological differences are assigned different primary but complementary roles by Islam, and any confusion in these roles will inevitably lead to internal tensions and a decline in the family".[61] An "over emphasis on rights" and a "confusion in gender roles", he states, weakens the family unit, which mainstream Islamists deem to be a crucial building block for the social transformation they aspire for.[62]

Conflicts and controversies: education

There are several important fields of activity where the work of mainstream Islamists conflicts with liberal democratic values and human rights legislation. These include arbitration, where *shari'a* councils have dispensed judgments contravening equality laws and settled disputes involving criminal matters beyond their legal remit;[63] and political advocacy, where MEND,

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[60] Sarwar (2006), p. 160.

[61] Zahid Parvez (2007), *Building a New Society: An Islamic Approach to Social Change*, Markfield: Revival Publications, p.240.

[62] Ibid., pp.239, 80.

[63] *Shari'a* councils provide discriminatory verdicts on disputes that would not be supported in the civil courts, include those relating to inheritance. Under *shari'a*, women are discriminated against since they are entitled to just half of what their male siblings are able to inherit. In September 2008, it was reported that a *shari'a* council in Nuneaton had ruled in this way, dividing the estate of a Midlands man between three daughters and two sons. Discrimination also occurs in the issuing of Islamic divorces. For a Muslim man a divorce is automatic, but for a Muslim woman complicated legal procedures are required with no guarantee of divorce. The Islamic Sharia Council in London has made clear that Islamic divorce is the right of a man, but available to a woman only with her husband's permission. The London council and others, including the one in Birmingham Central Mosque, have also discriminated against women by charging women more than men for obtaining a divorce. This, as Charlotte Proudman notes, is "a form of gender discrimination contrary to the Equality Act 2010". *Shari'a* councils are also issuing rulings on areas that lie outside their legal remit, including criminal matters such as domestic violence. Some such cases are failing to reach the civil courts, where they ought to be settled. A Dutch academic, Machteld Zee, who gained unprecedented access to *shari'a* councils in London and Birmingham, was told by one *shari'a* council judge that they see 600 to 800 cases a year involving "divorce-seeking women who are on the receiving end of violence or maltreatment". Zee was told by a *shari'a* council judge, "Under Islam, we should reconcile marriages even if there is violence". *Shari'a* councils' handling of criminal matters was confirmed by another academic, Elham Manea, who published an extensive study of women and the practice of *shari'a* in Britain in 2016. She reported that one *shari'a* council had dealt with cases of child abuse in addition to domestic violence. See Richard Edwards, "Sharia courts operating in Britain", *The Telegraph*, September 14, 2008, www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/2957428/Sharia-law-courts-operating-in-Britain.html; Abdul Taher, "Revealed: UK's first official sharia courts", *The Times*, September 14, 2008, https://web.archive.org/web/20080917152241/http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/uk/crime/article4749183.e ce; "WHAT IS KHUL'A?", Islamic Sharia Council website, undated, webpage now removed, but captured on April 1, 2009, http://web.archive.org/web/20090401224229/http://www.islamic-sharia.org/divorce-khula/what-is-khula-2.html; Charlotte Rachael Proudman (2012), *Equal and Free? Evidence in Support of Baroness Cox's Arbitration and Mediation Services (Equality) Bill*, London: House of Lords, www.secularism.org.uk/uploads/equal-and-free-16.pdf, pp. 29, 39, 47, 73; Charlotte Proudman, "A Practical and Legal Analysis of Islamic Marriage, Divorce and Dowry", Family Law Week, January 31, 2012, www.familylawweek.co.uk/site.aspx?i=ed95364; Senay Boztas, "Sharia in the UK: The courts in the shadow of British law offering rough justice for Muslim women", *The Independent*, December 4, 2015, www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/sharia-in-the-uk-the-courts-in-the-shadow-of-british-law-offering-

Cage and others, in their purported defence of Islam and Muslim identity, have, it seems, also sought to agitate Muslim sentiment against government policy and liberal values through the victimhood narrative of Islamophobia.[64] But perhaps the most systematic and controversial effort of mainstream Islamists to promote and practice a particular understanding of Islam in British society – one that clearly conflicts with "British values" – is in the field of education.[65]

Education is considered by mainstream Islamists as an important vehicle for the transmission of Islamic values and principles, since through direct instruction and controlled socialisation they can ensure a continuity of agents to conduct *da'wa* and edge closer to their goal of an Islamic

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rough-justice-for-muslim-women-a6761221.html; and Elham Manea, (2016), *Women and Shari'a Law: The Impact of Legal Pluralism in the UK*, London: I. B. Taurus, pp. 224–226.

[64] In the foreword of a recent report into "narratives of division" propagated by Islamists in Britain, Tony Blair warns of a number of groups that "advance a worldview that pits Muslims and non-Muslims against one another, in which the government and British society are portrayed as inherently anti-Muslim". The groups highlighted in the report include IHRC, Cage and MEND. The report is highly critical of IHRC and Cage for advancing a divisive, Muslim victimhood narrative. "MEND," it says, "was less engaged in advancing these kinds of narratives in its recent public content, but it has a history of making some divisive statements". MEND has been scrutinised in far greater detail and less favourably in several other reports. In a recent Policy Exchange report on Islamophobia, Trevor Phillips, Sir John Jenkins and Martyn Frampton note a number of instances of MEND's promotion of a "victimhood mentality", including a public pronouncement comparing Muslims' current predicament in Britain with the conditions that allowed the Holocaust to happen. Another similar comparison given by MEND was noted by Mark Rowley, Assistant Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police for Specialist Operations and National Lead for Counter Terrorism Policing. The report also notes evidence that MEND is "misrepresenting the figures for Islamophobic hate crime" to support its victimhood narrative. Cage has also stoked Muslim sentiment against the government, making some disturbing and misleading allegations, including the claim that people are "in the worst cases tortured, rendered or killed, seemingly on the whim of security agents". Yet, when asked, has failed to provide the names of those individuals. Cage has also claimed, "The culture of abuse [of Muslims] now runs so deep in the UK that there are virtually entire communities which, due to security services acting outside the rule of law, no longer have access to due process". Yet, again, it has failed to provide the names of people who are in jail without due process. See *Narratives of Division: The Spectrum of Islamist Worldviews in the UK*, Tony Blair Institute for Global Change, January 2019, https://institute.global/sites/default/files/2019-01/Narratives%20of%20Division%20report.pdf., pp.5, 65; Trevor Phillips, John Jenkins and Martyn Frampton (2019), *On Islamophobia: The Problem of Definition*, London: Policy Exchange, https://policyexchange.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/On-Islamophobia.pdf, pp.43, 62, 73, 82; "Extremism and Terrorism: The need for a whole society response", The Colin Cramphorn Memorial Lecture by Mark Rowley, Policy Exchange website, February 26, 2018, https://policyexchange.org.uk/pxevents/the-colin-cramphorn-memorial-lecture-by-mark-rowley/; "MEND Head of Policy speech in commemoration of Holocaust Memorial Day", MEND website, January 24 2018, https://www.mend.org.uk/news/mend-head-policy-speech-commemoration-holocaust-memorial-day/; Tom Wilson (2017), esp. pp.31-2, 57-61; Andrew Gilligan, "Cage: the extremists peddling lies to British Muslims to turn them into supporters of terror", *The Telegraph*, February 28, 2015, https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/terrorism-in-the-uk/11442602/Cage-the-extremists-peddling-lies-to-British-Muslims-to-turn-them-into-supporters-of-terror.html.

[65] This paper limits its focus to the mainstream Islamist network in Britain and its role in a clash of values in the field of education. It does not consider the influence of Wahhabi Islam in Britain's schools, but this is of concern. A television documentary by John Ware in 2010 showed that a worldview and set of values antagonistic to liberal democracy is being propagated in some 40 Muslim schools which teach the Wahhabi-Islamist curriculum of Saudi Arabia. It showed young Muslim children being taught to regard Britain as an enemy of Islam and to hate non-Muslims, especially Jews and homosexuals for whom the death penalty applies in accordance with *shari'a*. See, "British Schools, Islamic Rules", Panorama, BBC, originally broadcast on November 22, 2010, http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b00w8kwz. See also BBC News, 'Saudi school lessons in UK concern government', November 22, 2010, http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-11799713.

society. The scale of this aspiration is made clear by Ghulam Sarwar, MET's founder and director, who states, "Islamic education and a global Islamic revival are inextricably connected".[66]

Educators for the "Islamic revival"

MET, an affiliate of MCB, was the first Islamist organisation to lobby and advise central and local governments for specific arrangements in schools for Muslim children and for revisions of the national school curriculum according to Islamic principles. It obtained government approval in the 1990s for an Islamic studies syllabus in secondary schools, for which it provided teachers and teaching materials. It has participated and assisted in Islamic studies lessons in many schools in the Midlands.[67] It has also persuaded local educational authorities to recognise and accept the "special needs" of Muslim pupils in state schools, including exemption from mixed-sex swimming lessons and from some aspects of sex education, and the inclusion of its approved Islamic books in school libraries.[68] These books include those of Sarwar, such as the aforementioned *Islam: Beliefs and Teachings*. This book presents Islam as a "complete system of life" that sanctions polygamy and arranged marriages, prohibits Muslim women from marrying non-Muslim men, and outlaws the "free mixing of grown-up boys and girls".[69] "Man-made" law is described as inferior to *shari'a*, which is perfect, complete and applicable for all people at all times.[70]

Islam: Beliefs and Teachings was selected for inclusion in a resource pack for schools designed by MCB's "team of educationalists" as part of its nationwide initiative, "Books for Schools", launched in 2004.[71] Demonstrating MCB's own significant interest and role in education, this

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[66] Ghulam Sarwar (2001). *Islamic Education: Its Meaning, Problems and Prospects*. London: The Muslim Educational Trust, p.30.

[67] Urfan Khaliq (2004), "Islam and the European Union: Report on the United Kingdom", in Richard Potz and Wolfgang Wieshaider (eds.), *Islam and the European Union*, Leuven: Peters, p.257.

[68] "Achievements", MET website, captured May 3, 2008, http://web.archive.org/web/20080503042942/http://www.muslim-ed-trust.org.uk/achievements.php.

[69] Sarwar (2006), p. 163-4

[70] Ibid., p.153.

[71] "Books 4 schools", MCB website, March 24, 2004, https://mcb.org.uk/press-releases/books-4-schools/; "MCB launches educational resources for British schools", MCB website, October 11, 2004, https://mcb.org.uk/press-releases/mcb-launches-educational-resources-for-british-schools/. To see the list of books and other materials chosen to comprise MCB's "self-contained resource pack", see MCB (2007), pp.62-3. This list also appeared on a dedicated webpage for the project on MCB's website until at least March 7, 2014. See https://web.archive.org/web/20140307070151/http://www.mcb.org.uk/booksforschools.php.

drive was publicly supported by the then education secretary, Charles Clarke.[72] MCB stated, "By providing children with an authentic understanding of Islam, we hope to sow seeds that will facilitate harmony and tolerance amongst Britain's diverse communities".[73] In 2006, MCB claimed the books were being used in hundreds of British schools.[74] Yet, as already mentioned, Sarwar's book encourages an understanding of Islam that clashes with modern liberal values. It also laments the lack of an authentic Islamic state and lauds the work of the Muslim Brotherhood and Jamaat-i-Islami in their goal of "Islamising society" for an Islamic revival that, with the attainment of such a state, will "guide the world towards justice, happiness and peace".[75]

In recent years, AMS-UK has picked up the baton from MET, building on MET's advocacy work by developing relationships with and representing Muslim schools throughout Britain. AMS-UK formally represents 133 independent Muslim schools and "supports a wider group of Muslim schools, both independent and maintained, as well as academy trusts". [76] AMS-UK's influence is suggested by its formal recognition by the Department for Education as the national representative body for Muslim faith schools in the country. It has received state funding and some of its leaders have enjoyed roles advising the government on educational issues.[77] In 2010, its chair, Ashfaque Ali Chowdhury, and former chair, Mohamed Mukadam were consulted by the Department for Communities and Local Government to produce guidance on the training of Muslim faith leaders.[78]

AMS-UK and MET are linked historically through their senior leadership. Former assistant director at MET, Ibrahim Hewitt, served as AMS-UK's development officer and reportedly founded the group.[79] Besides personnel, there is a continuity between these organisations'

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[72] "Muslims launch school books drive", BBC News, October 12, 2004, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/education/3736428.stm.

[73] "Books 4 Schools", MCB website.

[74] "London Borough of Merton launches Islamic resources packs for schools", MCB website, December 7, 2006, https://mcb.org.uk/press-releases/london-borough-of-merton-launches-islamic-resources-packs-for-schools/.

[75] Sarwar (2006), p.171.

[76] Court of Appeal judgment ([2017] EWCA Civ 1787), https://www.judiciary.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/interim-executive-board-of-al-hijrah-school-for-joinder-20171107.pdf, para 7.

[77] AMS-UK brochure, December 2013, http://ams-uk.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/12/AMS-Brochure.pdf.

[78] Department for Communities and Local Government (2010), "The Training and Development of Muslim Faith Leaders: Current Practice and Future Possibilities", www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/6155/1734121.pdf.

[79] See Ibrahim Hewitt, "Having faith in freedom", *The Independent*, January 23,1996, https://www.independent.co.uk/voices/having-faith-in-freedom-1325401.html; and "UK Muslim Brotherhood Leader Heads School Funded By British Taxpayers; Ibrahim Hewitt Wants Adulterers Stoned To Death", The Global Muslim

thinking and aspirations. Muslim schools, for Sarwar, Hewitt and Mukadam, are not just for educational purposes, but for safeguarding the future of the Muslim *umma* and Islam as a way of life. Hewitt, for example, has written, "If we believe that the issue of Muslim schools is purely educational, we are being more than a little naïve ... The education of our children is crucial for the future of the *Ummah* and every effort must be made to ensure that the education provided for Muslims in Britain matches the seriousness of the task ahead".[80] The "first and foremost" duty of Muslim parents, Mukadam has asserted, is the transference of Islamic faith and values to their children, without which they would enter "the fire of hell".[81] Mukadam has also expressed the view that religious education for Muslim pupils, at least in primary schools, should first and foremost be about transmitting Islamic beliefs and values, rather than "teaching that all faiths have equal value".[82]

A former assistant secretary general of MCB and the long-time chair of Interpal, Hewitt is also a trustee of IBERR, the International Board of Educational Research and Resources, which was established to implement the aims of the First World Conference on Islamic Education held in Mecca in 1977.[83] The statement of this conference affirmed that the "ultimate aim of Muslim Education" is the "complete submission to Allah on the level of the individual, the community and humanity at large".[84] This echoes Sarwar's conviction that, "The introduction of an Islamic education system should be an integral part of the efforts worldwide to establish Islam as an all-encompassing way of life".[85] Another co-founder of AMS-UK and a former member of its executive committee, Mohammad Akram Khan-Cheema, is IBERR's chief executive.[86] At the

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Brotherhood Daily Watch, April 23, 2014, https://www.globalmbwatch.com/2014/04/23/uk-muslim-brotherhood-leader-head-school-receiving-taxpayer-money-ibrahim-hewitt-adulterers-stoned-death/.

[80] See Ibrahim Hewitt (1996), "The Case for Muslim Schools", in Ghulam Sarwar (ed.), *Issues in Islamic Education*, London: Muslim Educational Trust, p.78. In this article Hewitt also describes the desirable "ethos of a Muslim school" as one in which "the tenets of Islam *influence every part of the curriculum*, something not possible in non-Muslim schools" (p.74, emphasis added).

[81] Arif A. Jamal and Farid Panjwani (2011), "Having Faith in Our Schools: Struggling with Definitions of Religion", p.81, in Myriam Hunter-Henin, *Law, Religious Freedoms and Education in Europe*, Ashgate: Farnham.

[82] Simon Midgley, "Breaking the tenets of multi-faith RE", *The Independent*, February 15, 1996, https://www.independent.co.uk/news/education/education-news/breaking-the-tenets-of-multi-faith-re-1319085.html.

[83] See, "IBERR Membership" and "What is IBERR?", IBERR website, site now inactive but archived at: https://web.archive.org/web/20080213230657/http://www.iberr.org/iberr1.htm.

[84] Statement from The First World Conference on Muslim Education, 1977, Mecca, quoted in Sarwar (2001), p.29.

[85] Sarwar (2001), p.30.

[86] John Ware, "The Plot to Islamise Birmingham's Schools", *Standpoint Magazine*, September 2014, https://standpointmag.co.uk/issues/september-2014/features-september-14-plot-to-islamise-birmingham-schools-john-ware-trojan-horse/; AMS-UK Annual Report, July 17, 2010, http://www.ams-uk.org/general/AMS%20UK%20Annual%20Report%202009-10.pdf, p.3; and "Akram Khan Cheema", Islamic Institute for Development and Research website, undated, https://www.iidr.org/people/28-akram-khan-cheema/.

AMS-UK 2013 conference, he reportedly gave a workshop entitled "Islamification of the whole school curriculum".[87] The slideshow of a presentation he gave at this conference encouraged Muslim teachers to reflect on their proud Islamic heritage for a "New World Order".[88] Chowdhury, AMS-UK's current chair, also directs the Association of Muslim Supplementary Schools, founded in 2008.[89] That the same small number of mainstream Islamists – hardly representative of Islam in Britain – are in key positions representing both Muslim mainstream schools and Muslim supplementary schools demonstrates mainstream Islamists' high level of organisation in Britain.

Extremism in schools

AMS-UK played a key role in establishing the Bridge Schools Inspectorate (BSI) with the Christian Schools Trust (CST) in 2008. Through BSI, AMS-UK and CST inspectors were legally allowed to inspect their own schools, until BSI was closed down in 2015 after concerns were raised about its impartiality and the extremist views of some of its inspectors and trustees, including Hewitt and Mukadam.[90] BSI's chief inspector cited "unforeseen staffing pressures" as the reason for the inspectorate closing down.[91] But just prior to its closure, the head of Ofsted, Michael Wilshaw, wrote to BSI, noting that it "has not ensured that inspectors are able to identify warning signs of extremism and radicalisation in school settings with enough rigour".[92]

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[87] John Ware, ibid.

[88] Mohammad Akram Khan-Cheema, "Learning to Teach, Teaching to Learn", AMS-UK Annual Conference presentation, available at http://ams-uk.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/LEARNING-TO-TEACH-Teaching-to-Learn-MAK-C-Feb-2013.pptx.

[89] Association of Muslim Supplementary Schools listing, DueDil website, https://www.duedil.com/company/gb/07285151/association-of-muslim-supplementary-schools/directors.

[90] See "Concerns over religious hardliners inspecting independent 'faith schools'", National Secular Society website, May 11, 2014, https://www.secularism.org.uk/news/2014/05/concerns-raised-over-religious-hardliners-inspecting-independent-faith-schools; and "Controversial schools inspectorate reportedly forced to close following successful BHA campaigning", Humanists UK website, June 16, 2015, https://humanism.org.uk/2015/06/16/controversial-schools-inspectorate-reportedly-forced-to-close-following-successful-bha-campaigning/.

[91] Andrew Gilligan, "Schools watchdog with links to extremists shut down", *The Telegraph*, June 14, 2015, https://www.telegraph.co.uk/education/educationnews/11673313/Schools-watchdog-with-links-to-extremists-shut-down.html.

[92] "Annual report on the quality of the inspection work carried out by the Bridge Schools Inspectorate 2013/14", Ofsted, https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/476668/201314_BSI_AnnualReport.pdf.

In February 2018, AMS-UK chair, Chowdhury, declared, "There is no place for extremists or the promotion of extremist views in schools".[93] Three years earlier, in February 2015, he said, "If the government is looking to eradicate extremism, then it needs to work with the Muslim community to do so and not *any* Muslim community… [but with] people who *know*".[94] However, the suggestion that AMS-UK represents the "right" Muslim community and is a body that is "in the know" about tackling extremism is questionable. In 2010, the website of an AMS-UK school reportedly stated, "If we oppose the lifestyle of the West, then it does not seem sensible that the teachers and the system which represents that lifestyle should educate our children".[95] A year later, an undercover investigation in another AMS-UK school conducted for Channel 4's *Dispatches* programme showed Muslim children "being taught religious apartheid and social segregation". The children were subjected to "deeply disturbing talks about Jews, Christians and atheists" and told that "the disbelievers" are the "worst creatures".[96]

More recently, in 2016, Ofsted found evidence suggesting that another school under the wing of AMS-UK lacked an appreciation of the "fundamental British values" of the rule of law and individual liberty.[97] Ofsted inspectors visiting Al-Hijrah School found that it had "failed to keep pupils safe from extreme views that undermine fundamental British values".[98] They found books in the school library that "included derogatory comments about, and the incitement of

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[93] "AMS Chairman's response to Amanda Spielman HMCI", AMS-UK website, February 1, 2018, http://ams-uk.org/ams-chairmans-response-to-amanda-spielman-hmci/.

[94] "Muslim Schools Tackling Extremism", AMS-UK website, February 24, 2015, http://ams-uk.org/muslim-schools-tackling-extremism/, emphasis added.

[95] Andrew Gilligan, "Ofsted praises Islamic schools which oppose Western lifestyle", *The Telegraph*, November 6, 2010, http://www.telegraph.co.uk/education/educationnews/8114452/Ofsted-praises-Islamic-schools-which-oppose-Western-lifestyle.html.

[96] Tazeen Ahmad, "Shame of Britain's Muslim schools: Secret filming shows pupils being beaten and 'taught Hindus drink cow p***'", *The Daily Mail*, February 13, 2011, http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-1356361/Shame-Britains-Muslim-schools-Secret-filming-shows-pupils-beaten.html#ixzz3bV4ri2fB. See also "Mosques 'teaching extreme views' to children", *The Telegraph*, "February 12, 2011, https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/terrorism-in-the-uk/8321005/Mosques-teaching-extreme-views-to-children.html.

[97] The government defined "extremism" in its 2011 iteration of its counter-radicalisation strategy, Prevent, as the "vocal or active opposition to fundamental British values, including democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect and tolerance of different faiths and beliefs", as well as "calls for the death of members of our armed forces, whether in this country or overseas". See Home Office (2011), *Prevent Strategy*, Cm 8092, www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/97976/prevent-strategy-review.pdf. Since 2014, schools have had a duty to "actively promote" these "fundamental British values". Some clarification of how these values are understood in an educational context was provided by the head of Ofsted, Amanda Spielman, in a speech in July 2018. See "Amanda Spielman's speech to the Policy Exchange think tank", British Government website, July 9, 2018, https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/amanda-spielmans-speech-to-the-policy-exchange-think-tank.

[98] Al-Hijrah School Ofsted report, October 20, 2017, https://files.api.ofsted.gov.uk/v1/file/2731875, p.1.

violence towards, women".[99] They also claimed that Al-Hijrah, a mixed sex state school, had unlawfully segregated boys and girls from the age of nine in classrooms, corridors, play areas, at school clubs and on school trips, which undermined the students' equality of opportunities.[100] The school challenged Ofsted's findings in a judicial review at the high court and the judge ruled in its favour that the school's segregation of sexes did not amount to unlawful discrimination. However, in October 2017, Ofsted successfully appealed.[101] The court of appeal ruled on behalf of Ofsted that Al-Hijrah had in fact breached the 2010 Equalities Act by sex-segregating boys and girls. AMS-UK attempted to intervene, albeit without the formal support of the school, to overturn the appeal.[102] But it was unsuccessful.

Chowdhury said candidly that the verdict may create a conflict between AMS-UK's duty to ensure its schools obey the law and its duty to ensure they "act in a way which is consistent with Islamic teachings and practices".[103] AMS-UK's conflict of duties admits a deeper conflict of values between Britain's liberal democracy and mainstream Islamism. The final judgment on sex-segregation sets an important precedent in this conflict of values: Following the ruling, no mixed-sex state school is legally allowed to apply such policies. However, just a month after the ruling, in November 2017, AMS-UK admitted that at least ten of its schools were formally operating sex-segregation policies against the law, with more operating such policies informally.[104] And more than a year after, Al-Hijrah is still in breach of equalities legislation.[105] Ofsted has recently reported other Muslim schools breaching the Equality Act.[106] Al-Hijrah now plans to evade this dilemma by closing down its secondary phase, maintaining only mixed-sex primary provision. This may set a trend for schools in similar predicaments.

Sex-segregation is just one manifestation of a conflict of values in some Muslim schools. In November 2014, Wilshaw expressed concern that hundreds of children in six of Tower

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[99] Ibid,. pp.1, 3.

[100] Ibid., pp.1, 4, 6.

[101] Richard Adams, "Islamic school's gender segregation is unlawful, court of appeal rules", *The Guardian*, October 13, 2017, https://www.theguardian.com/education/2017/oct/13/islamic-school-gender-segregation-unlawful-court-of-appeal.

[102] Court of Appeal judgment ([2017] EWCA Civ 1787), paras 12, 17.

[103] Sally Weale, "Some Islamic schools in England still segregating children", *The Guardian*, November 7, 2017, https://www.theguardian.com/education/2017/nov/07/some-islamic-schools-in-england-still-segregating-children.

[104] Ibid.

[105] "'Boys eat lunch first' at Al-Hijrah School in Birmingham", BBC, February 1, 2019, https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-birmingham-47090045.

[106] Josh Layton, "Islamic schools 'in breach of law' over segregation of boys and girls", *Birmingham Live*, November 3, 2018, https://www.birminghammail.co.uk/news/midlands-news/islamic-schools-in-breach-law-15357775.

Hamlets' private Islamic schools were at risk of "extremist influences and radicalisation". This was directly related, he said, to their intense focus on "developing Islamic knowledge and understanding at the expense of other important areas of the curriculum".[107] Consistent with the advice MET has long provided to local authorities – and MCB's 2007 paper on the alleged needs of Muslim pupils – music, art and drama were rarely taught. Wilshaw reported that in all six schools, "pupils' physical and educational welfare is at serious risk".[108] The most recent Ofsted reports for these schools describe improvements in their management and provision of more inclusive curriculum, and as a consequence their overall ratings have improved.[109]

Trojan Horse

Another former inspector and senior official in both AMS-UK and MCB, Tahir Alam, was at the centre of this controversy.[110] Now banned from managing independent schools or governing maintained schools,[111] Alam co-authored MCB's aforementioned paper, *Meeting the Needs of Muslim Pupils in State Schools*, with assistance from the Al-Hijrah Trust.[112] Alam is an associate

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[107] Michael Wilshaw, "Advice note from Her Majesty's Chief Inspector, Sir Michael Wilshaw, to the Secretary of State for Education, Rt Hon. Nicky Morgan MP, on school inspections in the London Borough of Tower Hamlets", November 21, 2014,
https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/386594/Tower_20Hamlets_20advice_20note.pdf.

[108] Ibid.

[109] In Jamiatul Ummah School, for example, Ofsted reported that students now show "respect and tolerance for those who are different from them, including gender and sexual orientation" and staff "have a thorough knowledge of the issues related to radicalisation and extremism, female genital mutilation and forced marriage". The school's overall rating has changed from "inadequate" to "good". See Jamiatul School Ofsted report for January 2018, https://files.api.ofsted.gov.uk/v1/file/2772131.

[110] Alam was a school inspector for Ofsted, a member of AMS-UK's executive council, and MCB's assistant secretary general, as well as the chair of MCB's education committee. See Sean Coughlan, "'Trojan Horse' school governor is Ofsted inspector", BBC, June 2, 2014, https://www.bbc.com/news/education-27664948; AMS-UK Annual Report, July 17, 2010, http://www.ams-uk.org/general/AMS%20UK%20Annual%20Report%202009-10.pdf, p.3; and "Marking a Decade of Community Development", MCB Annual Report 2007-2008, http://archive.mcb.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/Annual-Report_2007-2008.pdf, p.33.

[111] Alam was banned from managing independent schools or being a governor of maintained schools in September 2015 by Nicky Morgan, then education secretary. The barring decision was made on the basis that he had been involved in activities aimed at "undermining fundamental British values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, and mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs". In November 2016, Alam was reportedly teaching in informal classes. Alam's ban was upheld in a tribunal in December 2017. See "Direction: Tahir Alam barred from managing independent schools", Government website, September 9, 2015, www.gov.uk/government/publications/direction-tahir-alam-barred-from-managing-independent-schools; Andrew Gilligan and Sian Griffiths, "'Trojan Horse' plotters dodge teaching ban", *The Sunday Times*, November 27, 2016, https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/trojan-horse-plotters-dodge-teaching-ban-lwkrqc3bd; and "'Trojan Horse' school ruling hush", BBC, January 2, 2018, https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-birmingham-42540543.

[112] MCB (2007), p.6.

of MEND and shares its line that Trojan Horse is a hoax, a "sham idea".[113] MCB and others have claimed that mere governance malpractice should not be confused with extremism. The Education Committee's report on the issue expressed a similar denial of extremism,[114] which has fed into the Islamist's narrative of an Islamophobic witch hunt.[115] Yet, although there was no evidence of extremism supporting *violence* – i.e. of radicalisation – there was "compelling evidence of a determined effort by people with a shared ideology to gain control of the governing bodies of a small number of schools in Birmingham"[116] and introduce within them "the segregationist attitudes and practices of a hardline and politicised strand of Sunni Islam".[117]

In January 2017, Louise Casey, commissioned by the government to conduct a review into opportunity and integration, reported to the House of Commons Communities Committee that Trojan Horse was happening elsewhere in Britain. "In terms of some of the things that were seen in what's called the Trojan Horse," she said, "we did not find it very difficult to find things like the segregation of girls – what I would describe as *anti-equal opportunities* or *anti-liberal values*".[118] Her observations support Clarke's contention that his report was merely "the tip of the iceberg".[119] Clearly, there is need for further investigation of these issues nationwide. One

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[113] MEND, "Home Secretary announces new counter-extremism strategy", MEND website, March 24, 2015, https://mend.org.uk/news/home-secretary-announces-new-counter-extremism-strategy/. Birmingham City Council responded in robust terms to MEND's effort to re-frame events concerning the Trojan Horse controversy, stating, "What happened in the schools caught up in Trojan Horse in 2014 is clearly established and we must not shy away from challenging those who seek to deny there was a serious problem at that time". The authority referred to Peter Clarke's report, commissioned by the Department for Education, and the report it commissioned by Ian Kershaw. As Clarke wrote in his report, whether the anonymous letter that described a "Trojan Horse" plot to Islamise schools was a hoax misses the point; the issue is "whether the events and behaviours have actually happened". See Jonathan Walker, "Birmingham Council insists Trojan Horse did happen and promises to challenge those who deny it", *The Birmingham Mail*, November 3, 2017, http://www.birminghammail.co.uk/news/midlands-news/birmingham-council-insists-trojan-horse-13852775; and Peter Clarke (2014), p.8. On the collapse of a number of cases against teachers alleged to have been involved in the controversy, and the fuel this has provided to the notion of Trojan Horse as a "hoax" or witch hunt, see footnote 120.

[114] Education Committee (2015), "Extremism in schools: the Trojan Horse affair", Seventh Report of Session 2014–15. HC 473. House of Commons, http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201415/cmselect/cmeduc/473/473.pdf, p.6.

[115] See, for example, Yusuf Patel, "Gove's Trojan Horse Hoax finally exposed by Education Select Committee", Islam21c, March 18, 2015, http://www.islam21c.com/politics/goves-trojan-horse-hoax-finally-exposed-by-education-select-committee/.

[116] "Oral statement by Nicky Morgan on the 'Trojan Horse' letter", July 22, 2014, https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/oral-statement-by-nicky-morgan-on-the-trojan-horse-letter.

[117] Clarke (2014), para. 5.1, p.48.

[118] "The Communities and Local Government Committee questions Dame Louise Casey about her report on social integration", January 9, 2017, https://www.parliament.uk/business/committees/committees-a-z/commons-select/communities-and-local-government-committee/news-parliament-2015/integration-review-evidence-16-17/.

[119] Andrew Gilligan, "Trojan Horse 'just the tip of the iceberg'", *The Telegraph*, 12 October 2014. https://www.telegraph.co.uk/education/educationnews/11157116/Trojan-Horse-just-the-tip-of-the-iceberg.html.

aspect of such an inquiry ought to be the extent to which these issues are culturally or politically driven.[120]

SRE and contested values

According to an ICM/Channel 4 poll in 2016, illiberal social attitudes are shared by a significant proportion of Muslims in Britain.[121] More than half, for example, believe that homosexuality should be made illegal and almost half believe it is unacceptable for someone who identifies as gay or lesbian to teach in a school. Mainstream Islamist organisations can tap into these attitudes and aggravate them to further their broader aspirations. A case in point are the recent anti-LGBT protests of Muslim parents in Birmingham and other cities, who withdrew their children from school because of the introduction of the "No Outsiders" programme as part of the Sex and Relationships Education (SRE) curriculum.

In the wake of the protests, AMS-UK announced its engagement with the Department for Education on behalf of Muslim schools to develop a curriculum that meets the statutory

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[120] The Trojan Horse affair remains a divisive issue in discussions of extremism and security in Britain. A number of cases against some of the teachers alleged to have been involved in the affair have collapsed, giving fuel to the notion popularised by some mainstream Islamists that the entire affair is a "hoax" or witch hunt. In May 2017, a hearing at the National College for Teaching and Leadership (NCTL) into five former members of the Park View Educational Trust senior leadership team was discontinued. The teachers were accused of allowing undue Islamist influence in the running of three Birmingham state schools, but the hearing ruled that there was an "abuse of process" that made it impossible to continue the hearings. The Department for Education's lawyers reportedly did not submit the transcripts of witness interviews used by Peter Clarke for his report into the affair, and so the NCTL dropped the hearing. The NCTL criticised the government lawyers for "a lack of candour and openness" and "a lack of cooperation". Humanists UK also criticised the legal team, lamenting that this "in effect, exonerated prematurely five teachers accused of espousing or sympathising with extremist views". It added, "If they are now free to return to the classroom, before any final assessment of their culpability has been made, that is almost as big of a scandal as the one for which they are being investigated". Earlier, in October 2016, also because of "serious procedural impropriety", the high court overturned lifetime bans on two former Park View teachers, Inamulhaq Anwar and Akeel Ahmed. The Prohibition Orders made against them in relation to the Trojan Horse allegations were dropped. See "'Trojan Horse' teachers free to return to classroom after independent panel throws out case", Humanists UK website, May 31, 2017, https://humanism.org.uk/2017/05/31/trojan-horse-teachers-free-to-return-to-classroom-after-independent-panel-throws-out-case/; and Richard Adams, "Five teachers accused in Trojan horse affair free to return to classroom", *The Guardian*, May 30, 2017, https://www.theguardian.com/education/2017/may/30/trojan-horse-tribunal-five-birmingham-teachers-islam. For further discussion of Trojan Horse, see Perry (2019), pp.177-185.

[121] The poll, which used a control group to compare attitudes, found "a chasm … between those Muslims surveyed and the wider population on attitudes to liberal values on issues such as gender equality, homosexuality and issues relating to freedom of expression". See Channel 4, "C4 survey and documentary reveals What British Muslims Really Think", Channel 4 website, April 11, 2016, https://www.channel4.com/press/news/c4-survey-and-documentary-reveals-what-british-muslims-really-think; and Loulla-Mae Eleftheriou-Smith, "Poll finds more than half of British Muslims believe homosexuality should be illegal", *The Independent*, April 11, 2016, https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/poll-finds-more-than-half-of-britsih-muslims-believe-homosexuality-should-be-illegal-a6978091.html. For the full survey report, see 'ICM Muslims survey for Channel 4', ICM website, April 11, 2016, http://www.icmunlimited.com/polls/icm-muslims-survey-for-channel-4.

requirements of SRE whilst respecting Islamic sensitivities.[122] Two lesser-known groups equally concerned with SRE that have lent their voices to the protests and channelled them into a more ambitious campaign are StopRSE and SREIslamic. The motivations of both these groups exceed "religious conservatism". Both are driven by an ideological viewpoint that undermines "fundamental British Values".

StopRSE, established by convert Kate Godfrey-Faussett in 2018, refers to RSE as a part of a threatening international ideological project. Her website quotes Hitler, implying a battle for young Muslim minds and an equivalence between secular liberalism and Nazism: "He who owns the youth controls the future".[123] Islamic references are carefully scant on StopRSE's website, but until recently, it promoted downloadable Islamic literature including a book that described the punishment for homosexuality as lashes or death.[124] This is an Islamist position expressed by Hewitt and Sarwar.[125] It is also expressed in the work of MCB founding member Abdul Wahid Hamid.[126] It is a view sanctioned by the aforementioned Shafi-ite manual of *shari'a*.[127]

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[122] "AMS engagement with DfE on SRE", AMS-UK website, March 6, 2019, http://ams-uk.org/ams-engagement-with-dfe-on-sre/.

[123] "Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE)", StopRSE website, undated, https://stoprse.com/index.php/comprehensive-sexuality-education/.

[124] See "Stop RSE Campaign: evidence dossier", National Secular Society, https://www.secularism.org.uk/uploads/stop-rse-campaign-evidence-dossier.pdf.

[125] In his book, *What Does Islam Say?*, Hewitt describes homosexuality as an "evil" and "depraved" practice, and a "sin" that is categorically forbidden in Islam (pp.25-7). He refers approvingly to a *hadith* in which the prophet Muhammad is alleged to have said, "If you find anyone doing as Lot's people did (i.e. homosexual sodomy), kill the one who does it, and the One [sic] to whom it is done". He adds, "Muslim jurists have held differing opinions concerning the punishment for this abominable practice, some stating the punishment for fornication [i.e. lashes], while some stating the death penalty for both the active and passive participants." Attempting to qualify this view, Hewitt remarks, "It is important to mention that these rulings are not given in an anarchic sense where a Muslim takes the law into his own hands. Rather for these punishments to be implemented, due legal process needs to be carried out, which can only be done under a state implementing Islamic Law." This is consistent with other mainstream Islamists' views on the application of *hudud* punishments, as mentioned earlier in this paper. "While such punishments may seem cruel," Hewitt writes, "they have been suggested to maintain the purity of the society and to keep it clean of perverted elements, allowing for the spiritual development of its members in an ideal environment." See Ibrahim Hewitt (2004), *What Does Islam Say?* London: Muslim Educational Trust, p,26. Interestingly, these quotations from Hewitt's book are from a section on homosexuality that – in its entirety – appears verbatim in Ghulam Sarwar's book, *Sex Education: The Muslim Perspective*, on pages 26 and 27. This is perhaps explained by the fact that both books were published (and re-issued in the same year, 2004) by the Muslim Educational Trust, where they worked closely together. It should be noted that both of these books were recommended by MCB, among a small number of resources, in its guidance for schools; see MCB (2007), p. 65.

[126] Adultery and homosexual acts ("sodomy") are punishable by death if the person is married and by public flogging if unmarried. See Hamid (1989), p.88.

[127] al-Misri (1994), pp.610-1 (o12.0-6).

SREIslamic was founded in 2008 by Yusuf Patel, then a member of Hizb ut-Tahrir.[128] Patel is a writer for Islam21C, a project of the Muslim Research and Development Foundation established by former Islamic Sharia Council judge, Haitham al-Haddad. Patel shares with al-Haddad,[129] Hewitt, Sarwar, Hamid and many other Islamists the view that homosexuality is *haram*, i.e., immoral and illegal according to *shari'a*.[130] One document he has co-authored for parents refers to the punishment of lashes for sex outside marriage and adultery, though any explicit reference to homosexuality is discretely omitted.[131] Patel does not campaign for an Islamic state, but is a strong advocate for "Islamic values". And he highlights the importance of marriage (as the only vehicle for sexual relations) by reference to the punishments for sex outside marriage "within an *Islamic system of government*".[132] The inclusion of LGBT rights into SRE, Patel announced recently at Tooting Islamic Centre, is "indoctrinating children with value systems *we* [Muslims] *don't agree with*".[133] He views his campaign work for Islamic values in education – which sees Muslims primarily in terms of their collective, not individual, identity – as part of a bigger

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[128] "About Us", SREIslamic website, captured March 26, 2010, https://web.archive.org/web/20100326004201/http://sreislamic.wordpress.com/about-us/.

[129] For al-Haddad, homosexuality is evil, a "scourge", a sin, and a "criminal act". Marriage in Islam, he says, will never be between a man and a man or between a woman and a woman. See Haitham al-Haddad, "Standing up against Homosexuality and LGBTs", March 20, 2012, Islam21C website, https://www.islam21c.com/politics/4670-standing-up-against-homosexuality-and-lgbts/; and "Haitham al-Haddad on homosexuality", YouTube, December 26, 2015, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rqHogziVa24.

[130] Patel states that as a Muslim he believes in the "prohibition of pre-marital and extra-marital relations". These include homosexual relations. On SREIsalmic's website, it states, "Any sexual relationship outside of a marriage between a man and a woman is not Islamically permitted (haram). It is considered a major sin". Patel states that homosexuality is "not an acceptable lifestyle choice". Situating his beliefs on homosexuality firmly within a religious framework, Patel refers to the sins of the people of Lot who transgressed against Allah's will. Similar references are made by Hewitt, Sarwar and others, who cite the Qur'an and *hadiths* on "Lot's people" as homosexual sinners to justify the belief that homosexuality is a sin and a crime in the eyes of Allah, punishable by lashes or death. Although Patel doesn't go as far as articulating such punishments for homosexuality, he clearly believes that homosexuality is unacceptable and a sin according to Islam. See "Yusuf Patel at the East London Mosque - homosexuality is unacceptable!", YouTube, June 19, 2011, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F92673hOm5U; "FAQs", SREIslamic website, undated, https://www.sreislamic.org/faq/#1557278358119-4f16361d-e9a3; "Anti Gay Bigotry, the East London Mosque and Lutfur Rahman", Harry's Place blog, July 4, 2011, http://hurryupharry.org/2011/07/04/anti-gay-bigotry-the-east-london-mosque-and-lutfur-rahman/; Hewitt (2004), pp.26-7; and Sarwar (2004), pp.26-7.

[131] Farhad Khodabash and Yusuf Patel, "Sex and Relationship Education (SRE): A Muslim Community Perspective", January 2009, https://web.archive.org/web/20130904042622/http://sreislamic.files.wordpress.com/2009/02/sre_v3_january_new.pdf, p.18. Homosexuality, and the punishment for it, is not mentioned in this document for parents. But Patel and his co-author concede that the "Islamic framework" that they present for SRE is not a "comprehensive teaching tool" for "an alternative SRE policy". And their numerous approving references to Abdul Wahid Hamid's book, cited above, in which homosexuality is described as punishable by lashes or death, suggests agreement.

[132] Farhad Khodabash and Yusuf Patel, ibid, emphasis added.

[133] "SRE Event at Tooting Islamic Centre - Yusuf Patel", video upload, Facebook, February 15, 2019, https://www.facebook.com/yusufmpatel/videos/10155751025501923/UzpfSTIxMzE4OTYwODcxNDcyNDoyMjk1 NjQwODMwNDY5NTgx/.

"mission" to make children "slaves of Allah".[134]

There is clearly a clash of values to be handled in the field of education, where a cultural reservoir of what Casey calls a "regressive Islamic religiosity" intersects with organised mainstream Islamism.[135] StopRSE and SREIslamic's view that "No Outsiders" and SRE more generally seeks to promote a particular way of life is incorrect, unless this refers to one that values the education of children about the shared humanity of people of all sexual orientations and the importance of non-discrimination. Their campaign against these values – as with religiously-underpinned, misogynist and pro-segregationist attitudes and practices[136] – is not merely an expression of religious "conservatism", unless what is being "conserved" is an illiberal worldview and collective identity that perceives itself under threat from individual liberty. It is, arguably, "extremist", by the government's definition.[137]

Successes and setbacks

There are institutional and cognitive aspects to the conflict of values with mainstream Islamism. Mainstream Islamists' efforts to transform the institutional landscape of Britain's liberal democracy, including schools, is the hard edge of this conflict. It is conducted through lobbying and campaigning for changes in law and policy that institutionalise anachronistic *shari'a*

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[134] Ibid.

[135] Louise Casey (2016), "The Casey Review: A Review into Opportunity and Integration", Department for Communities and Local Government, www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/575973/The_Casey_Review_Report.pdf, p.128, n.8.25.

[136] For example, in the case of Al-Hijrah and in the work of Islamist educationalists, such as Sarwar and Hewitt already cited in this paper.

[137] "Equality under the law" and "individual liberty" are two of the five elements of the government's concept of "fundamental British values", the "vocal or active" opposition to which defines "extremism" for the government. These two elements (or values) have been opposed and undermined in the education sector both *actively* – wherever schoolchildren have been ideologically but unlawfully segregated – and *vocally* – wherever literature has been distributed by Islamist organisations or found in Muslim or state schools which supports ideologically held views on women as subservient to men, on wives as unable to refuse sex to their husbands, on husbands' ability to beat their wives, or on homosexuality being punishable with violence or death. These views, and particularly their active promotion, are extremist, since they advocate a way of life that – taken to its limit – includes an alternative political and legal system that does not respect any of the fundamental British values: democracy, equality under the law, individual liberty and respect and tolerance of different faiths and beliefs. These views are based on an alternative system of values to "British values", based on an alternative authority, in which Muslim children are deemed to be "slaves of Allah", and in which the goal of schooling is to strengthen the collective identity of the Muslim *umma*, rather than develop the independent thinking and well-being of individuals who happen to be Muslim. Of course, wishing to withdraw children from aspects of SRE is not in itself extremist. But where this desire is driven or justified by a value system and point of view in which the freedom of individuals suffers for the sake of a group identity, and in which individuals are not equal under the law, then we should acknowledge that capitulating to anti-LGBT campaigns to alter the curriculum or withdraw children from SRE on the alleged basis of parents' rights feeds into what can reasonably be called an extremist movement.

precepts. With such institutional changes, Islamists hope, people's beliefs and values can be transformed for a better society. But there is also a soft, ideological edge to this conflict. Through changes in people's beliefs and attitudes, Islamists hope for a transformation in the institutions that structure everyday life, be they educational, economic, political or otherwise. Education is a key field in this conflict, since it is a vehicle for the transmission of ideas, values, and practices that determine the mainstream culture and the laws that protect it.

Mainstream Islamists have met with limited success in advocating for legal and policy changes accommodating their views and values. In education, MET's advisory role for the local government provision of Islamic studies and AMS-UK's position as national interlocutor for Muslim schools may be seen as achievements, but modest ones. More needs to be known about MET's influence on local authorities and schools, although it appears to have become inactive in recent years, and AMS-UK's recent failure to overturn the landmark ruling that mixed-sex state secondary schools cannot sex-segregate marks a setback for institutionalising discriminatory Islamic values in such schools. The dissolution of BSI was certainly a blow for mainstream Islamists. However, for a fuller picture of the success of mainstream Islamists in education, more needs to be known about where they operate and how they are influencing what is being taught and practiced in schools, including the several thousand Muslim supplementary schools serving an estimated 250,000 children.[138]

Islamist organisations have benefitted from and helped stoke the current anti-LGBT campaigns, but it is unclear what influence they have had on the mobilisation of Muslim sentiment about SRE. Their success on this front will depend on how the government handles the regulation of SRE. This will turn on the matters of whether parental choice overrides children's rights and whether the right to practice one's religion overrides protection from sex discrimination.[139] Allowing for opt-outs from SRE would represent a small victory for Islamists, but allowing for Muslims to revise the SRE curriculum to accommodate "religious sensitivities", as AMS-UK

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[138] See Association of Muslim Supplementary website, undated, http://www.amss.org.uk/; and Farid Panjwani, "As Britain plans to regulate madrasas, let's understand their history", *The Independent*, December 16, 2015, https://theconversation.com/as-britain-plans-to-regulate-madrasas-lets-understand-their-history-52094.

[139] Interestingly – given their view of the inferiority of "man-made" law in comparison to *shari'a* – Islamists sometimes refer to human rights legislation that guarantees freedom of religion in order to argue for the accommodation of Islamic values that, in some cases, clash with other human rights. For example, to the Select Committee on Religious Offences in England and Wales, the founder of the Association of Muslim Lawyers, Ahmad Thomson, argued, "between the right to freely practice one's religion on the one hand, and on the other hand, the right not to be treated less favourably because of one's gender or sexual orientation – there is a statutory requirement [from the Human Rights Act, section 13] to pay particular regard to the former rather than the latter". See Association of Muslim Lawyers (2002), "Memorandum from The Association of Muslim Lawyers", Minutes of Evidence, Select Committee on Religious Offences in England and Wales, House of Lords, https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld200203/ldselect/ldrelof/95/2101710.htm, n.43.

hopes to do, would provide an opportunity for the dissemination of beliefs and values in schools that are at least consistent with Islamist ideology and, as such, would constitute a larger success. This would likely re-invigorate the guidance produced by MCB for schools to "meet the needs" of Muslim children, which articulates a contentious version of Islam that stifles Islamic diversity.[140]

Islamophobia

The scrutiny of schools – state, faith or supplementary – for Islamist influence on curricula, policies and governance is bound to be met with charges of "Islamophobia". One of the biggest successes of mainstream Islamists in Britain is, in fact, the campaign to normalise Islamophobia in public discourse as a concept that blurs the distinction between genuine anti-Muslim bigotry and the legitimate criticism of Islamism, outdated *shari'a* precepts and the illiberal practices justified by them. Despite the failure of MCB's early efforts to criminalise blasphemy against Islam,[141] mainstream Islamists' persistent efforts to introduce Islamophobia into official thinking

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[140] According to MCB's guidance, for example, girls and boys ought to be subject to specific dress codes. Ignoring the diversity of Islamic scholarly opinion on this matter, it states, "In public boys *should always* be covered between the navel and knee and girls *should* be covered except for their hands and faces, a concept known as 'hijab'" (see MCB (2007), p.20, emphasis added). This prescription regarding dress is presented as the authoritative Islamic view. Other stipulations take a similar line, obscuring Muslim diversity and encouraging the perception of Muslims as a distinct group deserving of unique rights in the public space: Muslim children should be exempt from mixed-sex dance, swimming and PE lessons, and should not be taught figurative art or certain types of music. It is curious that the guidance cites Islamophobia as a reason for the importance of meeting Muslim children's allegedly unique needs, when it can be argued that the advice is itself Islamophobic by ignoring the diversity of Muslim opinion on Muslim children's needs in schools. Similarly, it is ironic that the "contemporary example" of Islamophobia in public life provided in the MEND-influenced, MCB-endorsed report of the APPG on British Muslims includes making "stereotypical allegations about ... Muslims as a collective group", when MCB and have done precisely that by presenting Islamic values and Muslim children's needs in schools in a prescriptive way that is contentious for many Muslims. See APPR (2018), "Islamophobia Defined: The inquiry into a working definition of Islamophobia", London: All Party Parliamentary Group on British Muslims, https://static1.squarespace.com/static/599c3d2febbd1a90cffdd8a9/t/5bfd1ea3352f531a6170ceee/154331510949 3/Islamophobia+Defined.pdf, p.56. MCB's guidance for schools is based upon a similar document produced by Muslim Welfare House: see Muslim Welfare House (2004), *Understanding the Educational Needs of Muslim Pupils: Guidance for Schools, Teachers & Local Education Authorities*, London: Muslim Welfare House, https://mwht.org.uk/downloads/Understanding-the-Educational-Needs-of-Muslim-Pupils.pdf

[141] MCB, along with other mainstream Islamist groups, such as IHRC and the Association of Muslim Lawyers, campaigned for changes in the (now repealed) blasphemy law to include a sentence of up to seven years for the "vilification" of religion and its prophets. Quoting Lord Scarman, MCB sought to criminalise the "scurrility, vilification, ridicule and contempt" of religion. The campaign ended with the passing into law of the Racial and Religious Hatred Act 2006, which created new offences "involving stirring up hatred against persons on racial or religious grounds". A blow to their campaign, but a victory for the freedom of speech, was the removal from the final draft of the act of clauses criminalising the "insulting" and "abuse" of religion. Under the act, religious hatred has to be shown to be intentionally stirred up. See MCB (2002), "Memorandum from The Muslim Council of Britain (404)", Minutes of Evidence, Select Committee on Religious Offences in England and Wales, House of Lords, https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld200203/ldselect/ldrelof/95/2101707.htm, n.2.3; Caroline Cox and John Marks (2006), *The West, Islam and Islamism: Is Ideological Islam Compatible with Liberal Democracy?* London: Civitas,

and define it in a way that shields criticism of Islamist extremism made headway when, in November 2018, the All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on British Muslims adopted the first working definition of "Islamophobia" as "a type of racism that targets expressions of Muslimness or perceived Muslimness".[142] Examples of Islamophobia provided by the APPG included alleging "conspiracies about Muslim entryism in politics, government or social institutions", accusing Muslims of being more loyal to the Muslim *umma* than to Britain, and accusing Muslims of "exaggerating Islamophobia".[143] John Jenkins aptly noted, "The APPG fails to offer any example of the type of criticism of Islam, or Muslims, *or especially, Islamists*, that might fall *outside* the definition of 'Islamophobia' that they urge the Government and others to accept. Instead, the report makes clear that a new definition could be the prelude to new kinds of 'civil offences', pursued through the courts".[144] Jenkins also observed that staff from MEND and IHRC were both heavily involved in the report's drafting.[145]

Fears of Islamophobia and racism have already long been a factor in the prevention of exploring and disclosing concerns about Islamist extremism and harmful religious practices. As Casey reported in 2016, "Too many public institutions, national and local, state and non-state, have

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p.132–133; and Dominic Raab (2009), *The Assault on Liberty: What Went Wrong with Rights*, London: Fourth Estate, p.59.

[142] APPR (2018), p.11.

[143] APPR (2018), p56.

[144] See John Jenkins (2018), "Defining Islamophobia: A Policy Exchange Research Note", London: Policy Exchange, https://policyexchange.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/Defining-Islamophobia.pdf, p.13, emphasis added. Similar concerns were voiced by a group of critics including academics, writers and other public figures, who warned the definition could serve as a "backdoor blasphemy law". Additionally, Richard Walton, the former head of Counter-Terrorism Command at the Metropolitan Police, said it risked jeopardising a range of government policies, as well as the operation of a free media. Martin Hewitt, chairman of the National Police Chiefs' Council, said "We are concerned that the definition is too broad as currently drafted, could cause confusion for officers enforcing it and could be used to challenge legitimate free speech on the historical or theological actions of Islamic states. There is also a risk it could also undermine counterterrorism powers, which seek to tackle extremism or prevent terrorism". And Assistant commissioner Neil Basu, the head of UK counterterror policing, echoed this, stating, "The definition of Islamophobia proposed by the APPG on British Muslims is simply too broad to be effective and it risks creating confusion, representing what some might see as legitimate criticism of the tenets of Islam – a religion – as a racist hate crime, which cannot be right for a liberal democracy in which free speech is also a core value ... As it stands, this definition risks shutting down debate about any interpretation of the tenets of Islam which are at odds with our laws and customs, which in turn would place our police officers and members of the judicial system in an untenable position. Despite the fact it would be non-legally binding, it would potentially allow those investigated by police and the security services for promoting extremism, hate and terrorism to legally challenge any investigation and potentially undermine many elements of counterterrorism powers and policies on the basis that they are 'Islamophobic'. That cannot be allowed to happen." See "Islamophobia definition 'unfit for purpose', say campaigners", National Secular Society website, May 15, 2019, https://www.secularism.org.uk/news/2019/05/islamophobia-definition-unfit-for-purpose-say-campaigners; Trevor Phillips, John Jenkins and Martyn Frampton (2019), p.6; and Lizzie Dearden, "Proposed Islamophobia definition 'would undermine counterterror operations and threaten free speech', police tell prime minister", *The Independent*, May 15, 2019, https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/islamophobia-meaning-definition-terror-operations-theresa-may-appg-british-muslims-a8914686.html.

[145] Jenkins (2018), pp.17-18.

gone so far to accommodate diversity and freedom of expression that they have ignored or even condoned regressive, divisive and harmful cultural and religious practices, for fear of being branded racist or Islamophobic".[146] Mainstream Islamists claim that Prevent and the counter-extremism strategy is having a "chilling effect" on free speech, particularly in universities.[147] But this isn't borne out by the facts regarding the number of extremist speakers at universities: A recent study by Student Rights shows that this number is actually on the rise.[148] Many of these events were connected to MEND.[149]

The more significant chilling effect is arguably in the reluctance of officials to tackle or report political or cultural extremism out of fear of being branded Islamophobic. The current Conservative government recently rejected the APPG's definition.[150] But if a future government accepts the APPR's definition and examples, as a Labour government might do, this could make matters worse. The ability to investigate extremist ideas and practices, on one hand, and the ability to protect Muslims from hate crimes and unlawful discrimination, on the other, are

[146] Casey (2016), p.16, n.1.67.

[147] The first legal challenge to the Prevent strategy and the Prevent duty, was brought by Salman Butt in 2017, who alleged that the government's approach to counter-extremism was having a "chilling effect" on free speech in universities. The judge rejected the notion that the duty has such a "chilling effect", since the requirement to have "due regard" to preventing people from being drawn into terrorism "does not override" the requirement on higher education institutions to exercise "particular regard" of the duty to ensure freedom of speech and academic freedom. However, Butt won a Court of Appeal challenge against part of the Prevent duty guidance. The Court of Appeal held that the guidance breached the right to freedom of expression. See [2017] EWHC 1930 (Admin), https://www.bindmans.com/uploads/files/documents/CO-6361-2015_-_Butt_v_Secretary_of_State_for_the_Home_Department_-_Final...pdf, para. 30; [2019] EWCA Civ 256, http://www.bailii.org/ew/cases/EWCA/Civ/2019/256.pdf, paras. 176-7; Phoebe Southworth, "'Prevent' ban on extremist speakers at universities is 'unlawful', Court of Appeal rules", *The Telegraph*, March 8, 2019, https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2019/03/08/prevent-ban-extremist-speakers-universities-unlawful-court-appeal/. For an alternative view of the appeal ruling, see Steven Greer, "Counter-terrorism Prevent strategy receives a boost from the courts – and statistical evidence", *The Conversation*, March 21, 2019, https://theconversation.com/counter-terrorism-prevent-strategy-receives-a-boost-from-the-courts-and-statistical-evidence-113949.

[148] See Emma Fox (2019), Extreme Speakers and Events in the 2017/18 Academic Year, London: Henry Jackson Society, https://henryjacksonsociety.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/HJS-Extreme-Speakers-and-Events-Report-.pdf. This report utilised the government's definition of extremism (see footnote 97) and catalogued "events promoted to students in the academic year 2017-18 that featured speakers with a history of extreme or intolerant views, or representatives of organisations that have a history of promoting such speakers". The events included in this report included those that "were sponsored by, or raised funds for, an organisation linked to 'extremism'", as well those "that featured or endorsed extremist views". Events off campus that were organised by students or a student organisation were also included (see p.13). Fox concludes, "Speakers that have a history of virulent views and display intolerance to those of a different faith, sexuality, culture and gender are regularly promoted to students. British universities are playing host to those who sympathise with military insurgencies and the overthrow of democracy, charities linked to terror groups overseas, and organisations whose senior figures have expressed a revulsion towards homosexuals, Jews, and minority Muslim sects" (p.99).

[149] See Fox, ibid., pp.3, 89-90.

[150] "Government rejects Islamophobia definition ahead of debate", BBC, May 15, 2019, https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-politics-48283337.

connected: The more confidence we have in scrutinising extremism – religious or not – without fear of stigmatisation or prosecution, the better we are able to identify and address genuine anti-Muslim attitudes and actions. And these include mainstream Islamists' efforts to determine Islamic values for all Muslims in Britain, and the impingements against the human rights of Muslims, particularly women and children, connected with those efforts.

Mainstream Islamists' efforts to change law and policy, as well as hearts and minds – in favour of an alternative way of life that conflicts with the core liberal values of individual freedom and equality under the law – should be made more transparent and challenged wherever possible. Greater light needs to be shed on the role of mainstream Islamists in influencing government and civil society institutions, particularly in the field of education, including those responsible for policy making and local service provision. Much more needs to be learned about how and where mainstream Islamists are active and how they are contributing to discussions of values and to decision-making within Muslim communities. Loaded charges of Islamophobia or racism will not help this endeavour.

Mainstream Islamist voices should be heard not just amongst Muslims in the sacred spaces of mosques, schools and community halls but in the broader public space where normative values can be discussed as well as critiqued. This may be part of a new discussion on national values involving policy makers, local government officers and civil society representatives, Muslim and non-Muslim. Of course, the voices of mainstream Islamists ought not be the only Muslim voices in this discussion. At the centre of this discussion of values ought to be the matter of rights, including religious rights, parents' rights and children's rights. This discussion should move beyond the usual general tropes – such as "justice", "equality" and "tolerance" – and explore in granular detail the rights and values we ought to champion, what is meant by these in practice, which of those require protection in law, and how the law currently serves this purpose. The discussion of extremism and what constitutes it ought to be secondary. Rather than starting with the issue of more clearly defining extremism – as the government has struggled to do in legal terms[151] – values, as well as rights and legal protections, should be leading the discussion.[152]

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[151] See, for example, the discussion on a definition of extremism in: Joint Committee on Human Rights, *Oral evidence: legislative scrutiny: Counter-extremism Bill*, HC 105, June 29, 2016, http://data.parliament.uk/writtenevidence/committeeevidence.svc/evidencedocument/human-rights-committee/countering-extremism/oral/34800.pdf.

[152] This rings with the sentiment expressed by a recent House of Lords report, which stated that "Shared British Values are fundamental to the life of the country and should be promoted in their own right, not simply as an adjunct of counter-extremism policy". See Select Committee on Citizenship and Civic Engagement, *The Ties that Bind:*

In a liberal society, the rights of the individual surely ought to trump those of the group. In schools, children's well-being and preparedness for modern Britain as well as for "global citizenship"[153] surely ought to be a priority. Children's ability to think critically, to understand about the rapidly changing world they live in, and to empathise with others, ought not suffer for the cause of collective identity politics, whether religious or not, especially one that castigates others. The right of parents to withdraw their children from aspects of the national curriculum, such as SRE, surely ought not override the rights of children to be exposed to a healthy plurality of viewpoints and expressions of values. This includes dissenting views and alternative values, as long as they are not put into practice in a way that stifles individual liberty. If we want to boost the value we place on individual liberty, on respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs, and on equality under the law – all core "British values" – our children need to learn not just to be critical, but also open-minded. And as they grow into adults, they also ought to value the legal protections they have – not just from incitement to hatred and violence, but also from any specious charges of (what amounts to) blasphemy that serve to "revive" an alternative worldview and world order.

Citizenship and Civic Engagement in the 21st Century, HL Paper 118, April 18, 2018, https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld201719/ldselect/ldcitizen/118/118.pdf, p.21, para. 63.

[153] On "global citizenship education", see UNESCO website, undated, https://en.unesco.org/themes/gced.