

# Counter-Islamophobia Kit

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**Workstream 2: Dominant Counter-Narratives to Islamophobia –  
United Kingdom  
Arzu Merali  
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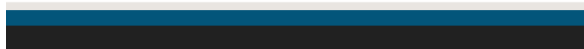
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Centre for Ethnicity & Racism Studies

### **About the CIK Project**

The *Countering Islamophobia through the Development of Best Practice in the use of Counter-Narratives in EU Member States* (Counter Islamophobia Kit, CIK) project addresses the need for a deeper understanding and awareness of the range and operation of counter-narratives to anti-Muslim hatred across the EU, and the extent to which these counter-narratives impact and engage with those hostile narratives. It is led by Professor Ian Law and a research team based at the Centre for Ethnicity and Racism Studies, School of Sociology and Social Policy, University of Leeds, UK. This international project also includes research teams from the Islamic Human Rights Commission, based in London, and universities in Leeds, Athens, Liège, Budapest, Prague and Lisbon/Coimbra. This project runs from January 2017 - December 2018.

### **About the Paper**

This paper is an output from the second workstream of the project which was concerned to describe and explain the discursive contents and forms that Muslim hatred takes in the eight states considered in the framework of this project: Belgium, Czech Republic, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Portugal and United Kingdom. This output comprises eight papers on conditions in individual member states and a comparative overview paper containing Key Messages. In addition this phase also includes assessment of various legal and policy interventions through which the European human rights law apparatus has attempted to conceptually analyse and legally address the multi-faceted phenomenon of Islamophobia. The second workstream examines the operation of identified counter-narratives in a selected range of discursive environments and their impact and influence on public opinion and specific audiences including media and local decision-makers. The third workstream will be producing a transferable EU toolkit of best practice in the use of counter-narratives to anti-Muslim hatred. Finally, the key messages, findings and toolkits will be disseminated to policy makers, professionals and practitioners both across the EU and to member/regional audiences using a range of mediums and activities.

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## 1. Background

The report of Workstream 1 (Merali, 2017a) outlined the ten key narratives of Islamophobia currently operating across British social, political, legal and media discourse. The purpose of this second report is to outline key counter-narratives to Islamophobia both already in effect and which have been identified as needing more emphasis from state, its institutions, the media and civil society.

The search for effective counter-narratives is located in a relational methodology (to be expounded further below) which sees racism as the “interactive relation between repressive racial ideas and exclusionary or humiliating racist practices across place and time, unbounded by the presumptive divides of state boundaries” (Goldberg, 2009). The Domination Hate Model of Intercultural Relations (Ameli, 2012) collapses the distinctions between legal, political, educational and other institutional praxis by focusing on discursive patterns within institutions and social and political commentary. This approach also allows for an analysis of the impact of racism along a continuous scale rather than being confined to discrete areas based on their status as actionable under criminal law (e.g. hate crimes), civil law (e.g. discrimination) or other complaints mechanism (e.g. media representation) or as a matter for conceptual study, analysis and transformation. This allows for a discussion of counter-narratives by themes rather than by the necessary mechanisms proposed to effect change.

Interviews with key actors with relevance to the topic at hand, as well as investigation of existing literature from the academy, local, regional and international civil society and a variety of social media have been used in order to establish a broad ranging conceptualisation of what counter-narratives do and can look like. Where possible, overlap regarding mechanisms has been reduced.

The ten key narratives of Islamophobia identified in Workstream 1 (Merali, 2017a) were:

Muslims as disloyal and a threat to internal democracy  
Islam as a counter to ‘Britishness’ / ‘Fundamental British Values’  
Muslims and ‘extremism’  
Muslims as a security threat (and therefore in need of regulation by way of exceptional law, policy and social praxis)  
Muslim misogyny and perversion and the oppressed Muslim woman  
Muslims as subhuman and unable to socialize to ‘human’ norms  
Muslims as segregationists  
Muslims in need of integration (assimilation)  
Immigration and the demographic threat  
Muslim spaces as incubators

These were then categorised as falling within four categories, arranged in order of impact. The narratives can be subsumed under the four most powerful and fall as follows:

1. Muslims as a security threat (and therefore in need of regulation by way of exceptional law, policy and social praxis)

Whilst the idea of **Muslims as ‘extremists’** is of relevance to these narratives, it is inferred in all the above. Of similar significance is the trope of **Muslim misogyny and perversion and the oppressed Muslim woman**. This carries with it now the subtext of violence, having been attached to the idea of male radicalisation both by dint of raising radicalised sons as a result of their inability to

communicate with them (e.g. Cameron, 2016 in Payton, 2016, Groves, 2016, Hughes, 2016), and by being themselves beacons of radicalisation and cause of social unrest (e.g. Turner, 2013).

Whilst the narrative of Muslims as **segregationists** is connected to Muslims failing or not wanting to integrate, **the failure to integrate narrative** has moved beyond the idea of Muslims as living separate lives. The narrative that has gained more currency is that of **'entryism'** and the idea that Muslims trying to integrate or to have positions in society or mobilize on social issues is a form of threat.

Suspicion and denigration of **Muslims spaces** is framed (regardless of the space, be it a mosque, school or the practice of veiling) as inherently threatening and **in need of regulatory law, praxis and discourse**. The idea of **segregationism**, based on the idea of Muslim spaces crosses over here with the overarching narrative of the 'need for Muslims to integrate'.

Disloyalty and the threat to internal democracy

This, and the other narratives also feed into the narrative of Muslims as the **vanguards of multiculturalism**, are used as evidence of the failure of and indeed the lack of credibility of the multicultural settlement (as ultimately evidenced when erstwhile Prime Minister, David Cameron finally ended all claims of the state to foster such an ethos, declaring instead that it was time for a 'muscular liberalism' in 2011. Arguably, the collapse of the idea of Muslims as citizens and the idea of the Britishness of the majority versus the culture(s) of immigrants (be they Muslim, Eastern European or other) has resulted in an unattainable 'Britishness', despite claims that the adoption of liberal mores is all that is needed for victimised ethnic and / or religious groups to end their victimisation.

The rise of the obsession regarding **entryism** highlights the extent to which the Muslim ability to project themselves into the future has taken hold (Sayyid, 2014), whereby Muslim aspirations based on pre-existing praxis amongst the majority is seen, not as (deferential) emulation and evidence of integration but as something other, by virtue of its 'Muslimness'.

Right-wing commentariat claims during the Brexit campaign echoed those of Murray, for example, in 2003 and 2014 regarding the Muslim **demographic time bomb**, with the possible accession of Turkey to the EU highlighted (Boffey & Helm, 2016) as a threat to the UK.

Islam as a counter to 'Britishness' / 'Fundamental British Values'

The idea that Muslims are **subhuman** and unable to **socialise to 'human' norms** has gained currency within civil society and caused a schism in programs to combat Islamophobia by accepting the premise that (if) some Muslim practices are beyond the pale, there must be a form of rejection of such practices and beliefs on the part of Muslims before a recognition of and redress for Islamophobia can come about. Thus, the expectations of Muslims from the government is beset with a **conditionality** in a way no other citizen, be they from a minoritized community or the majority community is required to hold.

Muslims in need of integration (assimilation)

Whilst the **separatist / segregationist narrative** still exists (and crosses over with the overarching narrative of security), it has more significance as a trope in far-right mobilisation where the idea of physical segregation in terms of veiling, Muslim spaces (i.e. mosques, schools etc.) is deemed aberrant and in need of redress if necessary as a result of mobilisation of the majority to attack those expressions of separateness. This can be evidenced in the rise of hate crimes. Ameli and Merali, 2015 recorded a rise to nearly 18% of all respondents reporting physical attacks against them, with the experience of verbal abuse 'often' and 'always' in 2010 was much higher than in 2014 (20.8% compared to 6.4%), this masks the overall rise in experience with those stating 'rarely'

and ‘sometimes’ rising from 11% to 49.6% (nearly half of everyone surveyed). In 2010 the overall experience ran at 38.9%, in 2014 it ran at 66%.

Whilst the majority of hate crimes are usually perpetrated by individuals with no group affiliations, there has clearly been a rise in far-right mobilizations against such spaces. This includes marches through supposedly Muslim majority areas e.g. various English Defence League marches in Luton; mosque invasions by Britain First (Dearden, 2014) particularly in 2014; continued attacks on Muslim women who wear clothing identified as Muslim, including but not solely face veils and headscarves.

These four narratives hold up the basis for all anti-terrorism laws, regardless of efficacy. The above narratives not only herald expulsion of the Muslim as citizen and equal subject before the law, but are foundational to the rise in the notion of what it means to be ‘British’. This idea of Britishness whilst finding violent outlet in far-right mobilizations at street levels is established as part of mainstream policy-speak which leaves those constructed as Muslim as intrinsically on the wrong side of this identity with no ability to cross over.

## *2. Introduction*

The determination of national identities as identified above, constructed by virtue of exclusion are in many ways a contradiction of democratic values based on equality and difference. There is an urgent need for policy makers and institutions to acknowledge this contradiction and seek both measures that immediately mitigate the negative impacts of these narratives, and work on long term policy and strategy that both project and lead on counternarratives to Islamophobia. The impact of measures that otherise Muslims is not simply a rights issue for Muslims individually or a ‘minority rights’ issue for Muslims as (a) community/ies. This level of subalternisation strikes at the heart of what it means to be a democracy. The deficit caused by structural racisms, whether Islamophobia or any other form, undermines the very egalitarian claims that form the basis of democratic identity and praxis, and call into question the self-perception of the state as liberal (Johnson, 2017).

### *An overview of Counter-narratives to Islamophobia*

Based on interviews of practitioners including lawyers, academics, policymakers, civil society representatives, journalists, artists as well as existing literature and other media resources, the following issues were identified as overarching concerns that need to be addressed and provide four metanarratives that inform the ten key counter-narratives to Islamophobia that will be outlined in this report:

1. The Normalisation of Islamophobia and the challenge facing society to make Islamophobia and all forms of racism unacceptable (Ahmed, 2017).
2. The need for a Muslim space wherein Muslims can reclaim control of their narrative(s). This speaks to the situation that the majority of interviewees have expressed, that Sayyid (2014,

referencing Klug 2013) describes as an understanding of Islamophobia as an undermining of the ability of Muslims as Muslims, to project themselves into the future. In this scenario, Muslims are not only denied the ability to define Muslimness in any of its diversity but also are defined by state and institutional discourse and praxis that is a form of violence against them. It disempowers them from having any role in the development of wider society.

As Kundnani (2017) interviewed for this project states:

“Islamophobia is ultimately a symptom of bigger, wider, deeper issues in British society. Islamophobia is not just ever about Muslims, it’s about a deep social crisis. But the experience of Islamophobia is also particular to Muslims and has its own particular feel and texture and history and experience and so forth, and so, the challenge in taking it on is to both enable a space where Muslims can articulate and define their own experience and their own response to Islamophobia in Britain while at the same time being able to link that particular story to the wider crisis that Islamophobia needs to be linked to. And that wider crisis will be to do with the whole structure of British society in the end and therefore implicates everyone in Britain.”

3. Countering the obsession of law and policy with marks of Muslimness (Ameli et.al, 2012) leading to the expulsion of the Muslim subject (from equality before and the protection of) the law (Razack, 2008, Ameli and Merali, 2015). This was summarised by Ahmed (2017) “as the obsession of the courts and policy makers with what Muslim women wear rather than operation of Home Office rules that fundamentally violate human rights.”
4. Accountability for state and institutional racism in the context where the state feels it can withhold the rights and therefore its obligations to citizens / humans because of their perceived behaviour / abnormality / lack of humanity.

The responses from interviewees in particular can be categorised into two types: those that directly address one or more of the key narratives highlighted in the first report of this project (Merali, 2017a) and; those that refuse to directly respond to demonization, but to negotiate political and social issues through differently imagined praxis and discourse.

Importantly, interviewees averred to many ongoing forms of counter-narrative that provide examples of work that needs to be ‘rolled out’ on a large scale to tackle directly the narratives of Islamophobia identified. However, key to the critiques raised of existing counter-narratives and / or their praxis fall into two groups:



- (i) Reproducing a cycle of demonization by trying to respond to Islamophobic tropes by ‘proving’ otherwise. This approach was seen to be a set-up to fail both conceptually and practically. Many respondents averred to the endless cycle of Muslim condemnation after any incident of political violence. Narkowicz (2017) states: “‘I condemn, I condemn’, I just don’t think that’s a good counter-narrative. A good counter-narrative is to challenge the narrative on which the questions are based and this is happening but in activists’ space...”

Further, attempts to prove loyalty e.g. raising awareness of Muslim participation in the world wars, and thus being worthy of remembrance (and thus inclusion in to the collective memory) or indeed aggressively promoting remembrance events (Merali, 2014, Glenton, 2015, Ahmed, S. 2015, Afzal, 2017, Baig, 2014, Leslie-Smith, 2014) in order to prove Muslim ‘loyalty’ were critiqued. These attempts have not resolved over twenty years or more the issue of demonization of Muslims as any of the above identified tropes. If anything the strengthening of such narratives, indicates that this is failed praxis.

Conceptually, as Malik (2014) argues, this is not to criticize Muslims for condemning acts of political violence etc. but to understand that the discourse of condemnation is an exclusionary one, and that by fulfilling the demand of condemnation, Muslims will still not be included but will be simply reinforcing their connection to something which they claim not to be connected with. Shadjareh (2004) explains the situation post the Madrid Station bombings of 2004:

“While younger organisations... called on mosques to pray for peace for all in the wake of the horror of Madrid, the Muslim Council of Britain called on mosques to report any suspicions they had about anything. It's the difference between being a part of society, however marginalised, and perpetuating the idea that you are an unruly guest, your stay determined by different conditions than for everyone else. You don't have to be disaffected youth to see the anomalies and feel the isolation.”

- (ii) Where ‘successful’ or ‘innovative’ or where needed but not fulfilled, these counter-narratives were being provided by civil society. Whilst many interviewees and indeed many civil society projects and practitioners see the role of civil society as key, almost all interviewees saw the key lack in the current situation was the failure of the state to intervene. Whilst some saw the state as the root of or at least complicit with many if not all the narratives of Islamophobia, all identified a lack from the state and its institutions in its responsibilities. In summary, counter-narratives to Islamophobia were

located in the space vacated by the state and were being provided by civil society (Bouattia, 2017).

The need for the state and its institutions to take action was the overwhelming demand of interviewees as expounded further below.

### *3. Methodology*

35 semi-structured interviews were undertaken for this part of the project. Interviewees were chosen because of their existing work on counter-narratives to Islamophobia and other forms of racialization. They included several broadcast and print journalists and editors, a former Archbishop of Canterbury and current master of a Cambridge University college, academics researching on different aspects of Islamophobia, (including (but not solely) on education, media representation, hate crimes, securitization, discrimination, sociology of religion, social cohesion), lawyers, artists, authors, charity trustees, curators and advocates. Five wished some or all of their comments to remain anonymous.

Goldberg's (2009) relational model of analysis provides the reference for analysis, centring on the "constitutively relational aspects" of racial conceptions. While granting that the exact arrangement of these aspects are "no doubt deeply local in the exact meanings and resonances they exhibit," he argues that they are "nevertheless almost always tied to extra- and transterritorial conceptions and expressions, those that circulate in wider meaning and practice" (Goldberg 2009). Embracing this relational view of racialism explains local variations in discourse, because racial ideas are adapted and modified to local needs and power structures. At the same time, however, "racial ideas, meanings, exclusionary and repressive practices in one place are influenced, shaped by and fuel those elsewhere. Racial ideas and arrangements circulate, cross borders, shore up existing or prompt new ones as they move between established political institutions" (Goldberg 2009) (Jackson, 2016).

The cross-fertilization of racial ideas between institutional settings, and the mutual reinforcement of structural Islamophobia by institutions (Ameli, 2012) informs the following analysis and interviewees were sought on the basis that by their research interests and experiences, respondents could speak to the questions raised by this thesis, even if to counter it. Interviews were not sought from solely political actors, though some of those interviewed are also political activists. Many of those interviewed were sought out for their multiple experiences in different fields (e.g. one was a political activist and journalist, another an academic and broadcaster, another a charity trustee and advocate and so on). Some interviews were sought and conducted on the recommendation of other interviewees.

#### 4. *Counter-Narratives to Islamophobia*

##### 1. *Decentring conversations on Islam and Muslims from current institutionalised narratives.*

Upon being elected President of the University of Salford's Student Union and a National Executive Councillor of the NUS, Zamzam Ibrahim found her tweets made five years previously when she had just turned sixteen being published in the mainstream media with claims made as a result that she was an anti-white racist and an extremist (Ibrahim, 2017). Finding herself forced to explain herself (repeatedly) Ibrahim was also subjected to 48 hours of threats, including rape threats and abuse via social media. She wrote after the event of the right-wing media that:

"They often paint us as caricatures undeserving of empathy or understanding. They want to deny our humanity because they want you to be afraid of us.

"We cannot allow this situation and allow this cycle to continue in Britain today. Because **the first step of solving any problem is admitting there is one.**"

This cycle of repetition is picked up by other interviewees. Samayya Afzal (2017), a former National Union of Students NEC officer, and formerly Diversity Development Officer at the Peace Museum of Bradford concurs with Ibrahim: 'it's very frustrating from my perspective or from people within the community that are constantly having to say the same things over and over again... to get people to understand that we don't deserve to be discriminated against.'

Poole (2017) laments the lack of interest shown by media and government in the plethora of research discussed in this project, which proves in great detail the existence and nature of the problems and narratives of Islamophobia. Ibrahim's demand that the problem of constant dehumanization must be acknowledged is still, sadly, the natural starting point.

The **humanisation of the Muslim subject** was repeatedly raised by interviewees not simply as an intuitive response to the idea of demonisation, dehumanisation and subalternisation (Johnson, 2017) in political and media discourses regarding Islam and Muslims, but as a basis for policy and even law. The dehumanisation of the Muslim subject is not necessarily an overtly racist act. In their submission to the Scottish Government (EHRIC) for its Inquiry into Bullying and Harassment of Children and Young People in Schools, Scotland Against Criminalising Communities (SACC) explain how this operates within an institutional setting where teachers are with all good intentions trying to help victims of racist and or Islamophobic bullying:

"In conversations with members of the majority community we often encounter the view

that highlighting a racist/Islamophobic incident as such could risk further stigmatising the individual affected and could “make matters worse.” We virtually never encounter that view from the people supposedly at risk of being stigmatised.

“Recognising a racist/Islamophobic comment or incident for what it is as an essential step towards tackling the problem. We believe that systematic failure to recognise racist/Islamophobic incidents, whatever the reason for it, is a form of institutional racism/Islamophobia.”

Thus even putatively benign interventions can reproduce racism, in this case, by obviating the very outcomes that victims of racism feel are needed. Crucially, in this instance but possibly more generally the erasure of Muslim voices in countering Islamophobia (or more generally the voices of those who experience racism(s) from addressing racism) is causal. The well-intention actions implemented in order to suppress further problems in fact simply suppresses those who are the victims.

The need for this process of humanization was also indicated by interviewees to be crucial in academic and policy framing of Muslims, which even when sympathetic, had the effect of making invisible or marginalising Muslims in a way that again removed their agency (Johnson, 2017, Rajina, 2017). In so doing this:

“changes the very foundation of how you do this research because it means you’re not going to be just taking, “oh, look at the poor Muslims there, look at the violated Muslim...” It’s actually about these systems of oppression are killing many Muslims across the globe, but also, we deserve to be defined by more than these systems of oppression.” (Johnson, 2017)

By having this ‘basic understanding of the Muslim ummah’s humanity’ (Johnson, 2017) and an ‘understanding of the way race is invoked’ (Kapoor, 2017) in institutional discourses per se, made invisible ontic assumptions about Muslims as subjects (of law, the state or discourse) can begin to be challenged effectively.

Examples of how this has already been carried out include research undertaken by interviewees in the course of their doctorate or post-doctorate work as well as discrete research projects funded by the ESRC and UK universities on e.g. the **framing of and the outcomes of the framing of securitisation discourse** like the Deport, Deprive, Extradite project. The project aims to ask key questions about the praxis of government by investigating:

“the shifting dynamics of racism and the security state, exploring the interconnections between counterterrorism policing and border control as they play out in the context of the War on Terror.” (Deport, Deprive, Extradite, 2017)

In addition to garnering statistics and analyses of events and their impact on the securitisation discourse, they have produced films with renowned director Ken Fero highlighting individual cases of injustice where the narrator and subject of the films' lives have been devastated by unproven allegations and or refusing to co-operate with the intelligence agencies (Fero, 2017).

At the level of the individual, some academics referred to their own doctoral work and how they **challenged the norms of framing** the Muslim or otherwise racialized subject. Rajina (2017) found that she:

“...decided to focus on the British Bangladeshi community in East London because... a lot of the research... was all very much about the socio-economic status of being the poor migrants, the poor people... It was never about the people themselves... it was very much about just framing it within the good migrant-bad migrant discussion. And I was keen to just look at the people, and look at the landscape and see how East London has changed over the years. East London has a very, very long relationship with Bengal – not just modern-day Bangladesh but the whole of Bengal, with the East India Company being set up in the Bengal in 1600 and the British leaving India in 1947. So, we're talking about a 300-year relationship there. That intrigued me ...”

“...I feel, any research around Muslims always revolves around something as nebulous as just identity or just their economic contributions, it's very rarely about the people, the development of the community, internally, how the shifts are happening between generations - this is why I compare two generations and their perceptions of dress and language. How, what is it? What are the factors that are influencing and changing those things?”

Rajina (2017) signals that the arrival within the academy of people of colour who 'disrupt' established anthropological narratives is one positive counter to existing narratives that have failed hitherto to deal with positionality, the need for reflexivity and the white male colonial gaze (2017).

However, the **natural evolution of change** whether in academia or other institutions or society per se without institutional intervention is challenged by interviewees from various backgrounds who noted that **diversity in and of itself was not enough to effect change** with institutions often socializing those who entered those institutions to its norms and prejudices. Ahmed (2017) notes that in the lower ranks of the legal profession there are many Muslims represented but that this did

not necessarily entail a critical approach to the profession or the law. Whilst Ahmed (2017) and others concede that better representation at the top of the profession is needed and welcome in ensuring that the **optics of equalities** (see counter-narrative 7 below) are fulfilled, the same caveat applies.

An **understanding of the way race is invoked** (Kapoor, 2017) is helpful across all fields discussed. Kapoor's comments apply regarding the need to understand the shifting boundaries of what is understood as race/racism apply equally to the framing of research in academia (Rajina, 2017, Johnson, 2017), the positionality of lawyers (Ahmed, 2017, Choudhury, 2017), the ontology of the law and the epistemology evoked by lawmakers (Qureshi, 2017) (whether in parliament or on the bench) or common-sense understandings of marginalised groups within society and projected by parts of the commentariat (particularly but not solely characterised within a securitisation discourse) (Ameli et.al., 2004b) Kapoor, 2017 states:

"I think specifically the big challenge is convincing people, in certain sections of mainstream population that [Islamophobia] constitutes racism in the sense that there's an argument by the similar liberal sections, political commentators but also the general public because the signifiers are centred around religion. [They say] it's not race, it's different, the Polly Toynbees<sup>1</sup> and so on, of the world... it transgresses, although it might be that it's deeply linked to seeing physical differences; colour is used in conjunction, as part of the ways in which Muslims are portrayed I think the stark racial signifiers are there but it's not necessarily the case and so one of the challenges is the way in which race is invoked ... the other thing is... the way the narrative around the problem is conceptualised in terms of national security, global security, it's moved the criminalised threat, which is one way in which race is always invoked, beyond national boundaries, so it presents a greater or a more difficult challenge, one that more starkly connects racism with imperialism. It's not just a criminal figure that within the bounds of a nation state can be dealt with within the confines of a criminal justice system, it's something that links domestic racism with imperial and colonial interventions and I think the separation between racism and imperialism is part of the consequence of the separation of thinking about the two together, has enabled this distinction or separation so that the terrorist suspect is not necessarily a figure that we think

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<sup>1</sup> Polly Toynbee wrote for The Independent after the launch of the Runnymede Trust Report *Islamophobia: A Challenge for Us All*, "I am an Islamophobe, and proud of it." cited in Toynbee, P. (1997). "In Defence of Islamophobia". The Independent (23 October 1997), quoted in Naser Meer, *Citizenship, Identity and the Politics of Multiculturalism: The Rise of Muslim Consciousness* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), p. 182.

about as being a racialized trope in the same way that the mugger has been in the past, the kind of criminalised black and brown figures.”

Part of the Deport, Deprive and Extradite project led by Kapoor is the production of short films that convey in the words of people who have been harassed by the security services, the traumas that they have faced and the injustices laid bare e.g. the removal of their children by social services despite there being no criminal finding against them (Fero, 2017).

The challenge **variously identified of the normalization of Islamophobia and the desensitisation of society at large and institutions to its operation**, effects and its inherent injustices are interconnected issues that such projects have tried to challenge. Kapoor identifies a mix of anti-Muslim, anti-immigrant, securitised discourses that pervade the university setting, where institutions have gone above and beyond what is required by the law rather than interrogate the ideas underpinning such laws and policies. **Getting the institution to understand it’s complicity in injustice is part of the challenge of unpacking the various performances and theatres of Islamophobia** (Sayyid, 2014). Kapoor’s (2017) example highlights that in:

“...some senses there’s an indifference, there’s some sense when you try and raise the injustice, for example, of having to treat Tier 4 students differently from other students, police being on campus during freshers’ week to ensure that they know they have to register if they change address or if they fail to attend supervisory meetings then they potentially face deportation.”

Williams (2017) highlights the dangers, but also an example of push back against the loose use of terms, in particular ‘radicalisation’:

“One of the basic mistakes that government sometimes makes (I have spoken to successive ministers about this over the years) is that there is something called ‘radical Islam’ and something called ‘moderate Islam’... that is a painfully inept grid to interpret Muslim identity... I am always wary of the way the word radicalisation is thrown around...”

“We continue to have arguments (at the university) about how radicalisation is understood and our own university [Cambridge] made a nuanced response to the government on that, noting that the word radicalisation must be used with care... unfortunately in a very short term and reactive political culture where you have to be seen to be doing something yesterday this is hard work, so I think the sheer normalisation of Muslim presence is needed.”

Kasia Narkowicz (2017) who also works on the Deport, Deprive and Extradite project with Kapoor describes the **dilemma to humanising Muslims and the impact of celebrity ‘Muslimness’** thus:

“the problem is what is effective is not effective... celebrities like Nadiya Hussain, I can see that probably does something for people, just like visual representation, when they see people who they normally dehumanise, they see them humanised... bringing Muslims to the mainstream probably does something. I personally think it is a really sad benchmark to have.”

Kassam (2017) describes his project’s work in this regard:

“... a [counter]narrative for Islamophobia is being able to highlight studies of Muslims that contribute to society... For example, we have recently got a *hijabi* Muslim referee who was qualified, and we have a video on that. It just offers a different perspective obviously the way in which Muslim women are portrayed. When I say mainstream I do not mean the entire mainstream elements of the mainstream, but The Daily Mail, or The Sun<sup>2</sup>. The way in which Muslim women are portrayed is often... they do not have a voice etc. and when you see this, when you see a Muslim woman in a *hijab* giving yellow cards to a bunch of guys playing football it’s quite liberating, empowering. In a sense it offers a different perspective and we try to focus on those stories, whenever there is a positive story, positive contribution.”

However, the cycle of humanisation and dehumanisation, is critiqued by poet Suhaiymah Manzoor-Khan in her piece, ‘This is not a humanising poem’ (2017). She decodes the conditionality placed on Muslim presence and acceptance:

Love is when you are not an athlete  
or bake cakes  
Love is not when we offer our homes  
or free taxi rides after the event.

In other words **the national conversation and the national story needs to include Muslims regardless and without conditions**. She concludes her piece with a brutal but precise critique:

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<sup>2</sup> The Sun and The Daily Mail are politically and socially right leaning tabloid newspapers that have earned reputations as purveyors of scurrilous stories (particularly in the case of the former) and anti-migrant (particularly in the case latter). The anti-migrant sentiment broadly covers any number of anti-Muslim tropes discussed in this and the Workstream 1 report.



‘If you need me to prove my humanity

I'm not the one who's not human.’

Hooper (2017) highlights both civil society and media trends that emphasise ‘positive’ Muslim responses to incidents of political violence as serving to ultimately undermine the supposed aim of doing so:

“there’s been a counter-narrative to the narrative that, there’s some sort of incident or attack, the Islamic state is blamed, and there’s an outpouring of public emotion and among those reactions are: Muslim communities raise funds or they do something which then the media seizes on as an example of “Oh look, Muslims are doing something in recognizing the horror of the Manchester bombing” or something like this. And I actually feel that the framing of these media stories is quite damaging because although it is well-meaning it actually frames Muslims... [and] it makes the point that they have a normal reaction to something horrific, something that’s newsworthy and noteworthy. We have to be really careful now about how we present these stories about Muslim communities as if we somehow should be congratulating people that they have a normal human reaction to horrific events happening in the society where they live. That’s a trend that I’ve noticed, the ‘good Muslim’, as it were, promoted as opposed to the ‘bad Muslim’... I think that we shouldn’t go [this way] because it entrenches the idea of Muslims as the ‘other’. In terms of the media, this also feeds into the idea of stuff that goes viral, even the sort of emotional framing of headlines. The Independent does very cheap stories about how these Muslims reacted to the Manchester bombing... it’s quite manipulative and unhelpful.”

Simply reproducing cultural forms in order to provide counter-narratives to the problems caused by that form perpetuate the problem. Looking for different cultural practice, to analogise Kappeler (1986) arises from a ‘changed consciousness of what culture and its practices are... It would be a practice in the interest of communication, not representation’.

Manzoor-Khan’s performance of “This is not a humanising poem” has been seen on various social media platforms several million times, clearly speaking to the experience and feelings of many. **The use of art by Muslims to express their story/ies was recommended by many interviewees albeit with an understanding that the space within which those stories could be created was under severe pressure** (see El-Khairi and Latif, 2016 below), and that freedom of expression for Muslims was severely curtailed by the state, that mainstream artistic spaces are not easily accessible to Muslims or conducive to this type of work. At the time of writing Manzoor-Khan’s poem and work have been profiled on mainstream arts media channels. Manzoor-Khan’s work is one of the more vociferous and critical in a developing canon of ‘resistance’ and decolonial performance art which

broadly includes young Muslim artists like Mark Gonzales and Warsan Shire whose poem ‘Home’ on the experience of being a refugee, was adopted by INGO Save the Children during the so-called Refugee Crisis<sup>3</sup>. This type of cross-over into the mainstream is an important step by the **culture and arts sector that narratives of Islamophobia that deny the place of Muslims within the cultural fabric of the nation can be confronted** despite societal and institutional discursive practices that work counter to that.

The type of pressures on Muslims in arts spaces are compounded by the operation of security praxes include Prevent as highlighted by El-Khairy and Latif (2016). Their play *Homegrown* was pulled by The National Youth Theatre halfway through rehearsals. The pair highlight not just the hypocrisy of this denial of free speech, but elaborate in detail how this incident highlights the exclusion or worse, expulsion of Muslim voices from telling their own or indeed any stories by the mutually reinforcing actions of the law, media and government (Ameli & Merali, 2015).

El-Khairy and Latif report and argue the impact of the following as:

- (i) Before being cancelled, the production had already been subject to local government intervention. That intervention led to them being thrown out of their original venue; after which police had suggested security measures that included reading drafts, attending rehearsals, planting plainclothes officers in the audience, and carrying out daily sweeps of the venue by a bomb squad. This all garnered much media attention, but little dialogue. Subsequent to the cancellation there was no consistent or elucidatory explanation from any of the agencies of why any of the foregoing or the cancellation took place.
- (ii) The playwrights argue that had they, and the majority of the 113 young people involved not been Muslim this situation would not have arisen and indeed their work may have been lauded in much the same manner that Gillian Slovo and Nicholas Kent’s work ‘Losing our Children to Islamic State’ which was not only allowed to go ahead by the same National Theatre (NT) but framed by the artistic director as ‘provocative’ and ‘urgent’ speaking of: ‘the “flak” the theatre anticipates, but [he] said it was right to take part in a “national debate”.’

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<sup>3</sup> It has been noted that the term Refugee Crisis is in itself problematic insofar as those suffering the crisis are largely imagined to the European societies faced with an influx of refugees rather than the refugees themselves who are often fleeing war and / or extreme poverty / social deprivation. It arguably another example of dehumanising discourse.

As El-Khairi and Latif note: 'This framing... in relation to Islam not only boosts ticket sales, but also sets up a battle between brave artists and feared Muslims.'

- (iii) They summarise the duplicity of the 'national conversation' in reference to a previous attempt by the NT 'to promote a show tackling "the Muslim question" as both timely and fearless"', including in 2012 when a work that 'addressed freedom of speech, censorship and Islam – from the Salman Rushdie fatwa to the Dutch cartoons of the Prophet Muhammad.'" The playwrights note that:  
"Despite contemporary British Muslim life rarely puncturing the walls of the National, they presented Islam not only as a topic for dramatic exploration, but as an urgent problem: one that society has been too scared to confront.'" This leads them to raise the core issue to this section: "Why can't Muslims tell their own stories?", but also, why did the NT not open its space to young Muslims to speak of the experiences of over-policing and Prevent, the key issues facing them and the story of their nation as told through their experience?
- (iv) They also refer to the double bind of the interpretation of Muslim absence from these 'conversations', using the example of DW8 again: 'they tend to be left out of the conversation, yet their position is always presumed to be one of irrational rage. Their absence is never interpreted as an act of ambivalence. Instead it is cultural ignorance or crude protest.'

Understanding that ambivalence and opening up conversations that interrogate the hidden operation of Islamophobic narratives – even as in the case of NT's production 'Another World' they seek to humanise the dehumanised - is desperately needed to have a 'national conversation' that decentres current institutionalised narratives on Islam and Muslims, whether overtly or covertly Islamophobic, or indeed whether they operate in existing attempts to 'humanize' the Muslim subject whilst denying that 'subject' their own voice. The importance of Muslim agency in this process crosscut with counter-narratives 9 and 10 below, and fall under the broad meta-narratives of the normalisation of Islamophobia (1) and the need for Muslim space (4).

This idea of changing the narrative has impact on the utility of legal challenges. Choudhury (2017) highlights the role his department (advocacy at IHRC) has in trying to challenge the government narrative through strategic litigation but, as will be expounded on below, has severe limitations:

“we are constantly challenging government policies, whether it is when they put out a consultation for legislation, ... pushing back and constantly challenging these narrative and providing that alternative narrative or that alternative face on that story.”

However, this has been fraught with difficulties in regard to the anti-terror legislation in particular, leading IHRC to absent itself from consultations on this issue because they felt that the government simply used such consultations as rubber-stamping exercises rather than engaging with the concerns raised (Islamic Human Rights Commission, 2015). This theme of whether to engage or not was recurring through the interviews for this research, with several advocating either strategic boycotts of institutions (Salih on the media, 2017, see counter-narrative 8 below) or no direct engagement with government.

Even where humanising narratives exist, e.g. the memorial work for Srebrenica that has taken hold over the last few years, Ahsan (2017) expressed concerns about what could be the agenda of the government which has funded such a project organisation with over £1million pounds. This frustration with established institutions and the state can be summed up by Choudhury's (2017) expectation of the political and media discourse produced around immigration:

“[it] smacks of racism, and it is a case of ‘these immigrants are problem’, they don’t necessarily want to discuss how social problems are solved, so it just becomes all about ‘immigration’ ... and it is what they end up doing is demonising minority communities as a result, and they need to stop doing that and that it is.”

Williams (2017) feels that Muslims being seen to interact with other issues not just Muslim ones is a way that the media and political realms can send messages to wider society about the place of Muslims in the UK, where:

“... Muslim commentators in the media are seen to be addressing other intelligent and resourceful issues not just religious ones ... that is surely one of the things that would make a difference. This [Muslims] is a set of resources, identities, convictions that can contribute to a general civil discourse, not just one about religion, but about justice, poverty, the environment etc.”

This visualising of Muslims as part of the story of society carries forward to the next counter-narrative of diversifying the understanding of who and what constitutes the nation.

2. *Diversifying the understanding of what, who and how is a Muslim, and the acceptance of this plurality within a plural understanding of the nation.*

The rise of the idea of ‘Britishness’ (Merali, 2017a, and Ameli and Merali, 2015) and the narrative of Islam as a counter to ‘Britishness’ and ‘Fundamental British Values’ (FBV) has narrowed the conversation around what is the nation. Both ‘identities’ are homogenized in a false manner, creating a fictitious dichotomy between British and Muslim, both imaginings of which are projected AT Muslims. Muslim ‘identity’ in this instance is created in the absence of Muslim participation but is a projection of ‘Muslimness’ created through the discursive practice of policy, media and law (Ameli and Merali, 2015). Former Archbishop of Canterbury, Rowan Williams (2017) sees that the national conversation is one very much geared towards marginalizing faith per se, with Muslims bearing the brunt of both this increasing anti-religious culture as well as experiencing the effects of racialisation as Muslims.

The emphasis regardless on ‘Britishness’ and British values in opposition to Islam and Muslim practice even permeates civil-society where the idea that Muslims are subhuman and unable to socialise to ‘human’ norms has gained currency within civil society and caused a schism in programs to combat Islamophobia by accepting the premise that (if) some Muslim practices are beyond the pale, there must be a form of rejection of such practices and beliefs on the part of Muslims before a recognition of and redress for Islamophobia can come about. Thus, the expectations of Muslims from the government is beset with a conditionality in a way no other citizen, be they from a minoritised community or the majority community, is required to hold (Rajina, 2017, Shadjareh, 2004).

Sociologist of religion Sariya Contractor (2017) finds the **direction of travel of the national conversation** problematic:

“...there is too much of an emphasis on Muslims, it **has to be both ways**, Muslims may have questions about Prevent, or questions about other things so I wouldn’t say that the emphasis has to be on Islam or Muslims. Perhaps again, that’s difficult, why should it be the Muslims always answering the questions... the emphasis on asking questions should be about diversity, we live in plural Britain. Paul Weller, me and my colleagues argue in our

book that Britain is no longer what it was, the religion belief... [is] increasingly less Christian, increasingly more plural... so the questions that have to be asked need to incorporate all the different stakeholders in society not just Muslims.”

Myriam François (2017) describes the need for this process as a discussion about the story of the country and who is part of that story. Contractor identifies three examples of good practice in this from local authorities and the Church of England. Contractor (2017) refers to far-right marches by the English Defence League (EDL) in Blackburn and Leicester. **The strong network of community organisations** in Blackburn and the umbrella body of the Lancashire Council of Mosques **worked with the council and the police, resulting in extra vigilance and care being taken of Muslim sites.** The day passed without incident. This contrasts with reports to civil society organisations where, despite direct threats of violence, Muslim sites including mosques and schools have not received a risk assessment or support from the police or acknowledgement of the precarity of their situation from local authorities (Islamic Human Rights Commission, 2017 unpublished). At the time of writing it has been reported that Muslim sites have seen an upsurge of hate motivated attacks including arson in the period (Roberts, 2017). This would suggest a **community security focused approach** (notwithstanding the problems caused by austerity and funding cuts) to those in legitimate fear of street violence is required as a starting point for community relations.

Contractor further identifies Leicester City Council’s response to an EDL march as exemplary:

“The very next day Leicester decided it was going to celebrate its One Leicester identity, they had a big celebration in the square, different faith leaders, young people came together, they had singing and music, they also had a mic for people passing by who would come and say why they were One Leicester and they were very careful or sensitive to the fact that Muslims have different sensibilities but also includes Muslims. They were very aware of the fact that this EDL narrative is often anti-Muslim rather than anti-immigrant and they conflate these identities... it really seemed to work. Over and over again when I interviewed people they spoke about ‘our’ celebration to counter the EDL’s message of hate. Now what was key about this was it did not focus on Muslims, what it did was focus on Leicester as a diverse community that was inclusive, included Hindus, Muslims, Christians, people that were not religious and who were Muslim. I think the focus on inclusivity is key.”

Choudhury (2017) emphasizes the need for grassroots organisations that can legitimately claim to be representatives of the people in that area be consulted by and be in communication with local

authorities. Rajina (2017), El-Shayyaal (2017), Hamid (2017) are among several who refer to the need to understand the broader Muslim experience in particular regional and class differences, which make Muslims invisible as they do others who are non-London/south of England based and/or are working class. This ties in with concerns about equalities outside of a purely 'Muslim' focus on national problems to be discussed further in section seven below. As well as regional difference there is also the importance of analysing how Islamophobic narratives in one context bleed through when unchallenged not just regions but generations. Afzal (2017), herself a young woman recently graduated from university found in reviewing oral histories of Bradford recurring mentions of the Honeyford Affair and the devastating impact it had on the lives of those identified as Muslim in the city. This finding and reminder is counter-intuitive to the idea that politicised Muslim subject was created in discourse and praxis in the post-9/11 moment or in the UK after the Salman Rushdie affair of the 1990s. It is a reminder that the long-running tropes of racialisation need to be factored into any policy relevant work. Whilst a full analysis of the Honeyford affair is beyond the remit of this paper it is worth highlighting that the incident revolved around comments by a headteacher in the city that there was in effect a conspiracy by Asians to 'produce Asian ghettos' and their 'value system' (as opposed to a perceived British system) and that there was a "an influential group of black intellectuals of aggressive disposition, who know little of the British traditions of understatement, civilised discourse and respect for reason" (Parkinson, 2017). The ghosts of Honeyford can be found in the Trojan Horse Affair which arose in relation to a hoax alleging a conspiracy to export an already existing Islamist takeover of schools in Birmingham to Bradford in 2014 (Ameli and Merali, 2015). Whilst contemporary politics eventually saw Honeyford discredited, his death in 2012 provided an opportunity for a public reappraisal of his views in what is now a culture that has discarded much of its equalities and human rights discourse on the basis that this simply fosters a now much demonized multiculturalism. Parkinson's (2012) article for the BBC was entitled "Ray Honeyford: Racist or Right?". This framing as a question, signified a shift in British culture from an understanding of racist discourse to one where such discourse could be celebrated, and the stigma associated with the term racism devalued as a political tactic by 'extremists' old and new. This polarisation of ideas reflects a resurgent notion of monoculture which is normative and under threat by extremists. It erases even the plurality of the 'white' nation, made up of regions, regional and national languages (themselves replete with histories of suppression of Celtic languages and cultures), and masks the exclusionary cycles of the state when unchecked. In the French context, Milicent (2006) sees a similar cycle enacted against Muslims as was enacted against different nations that ended up being comprised in the France of today. James (1963) references

this as a French colonial practice in the Caribbean which crushes the quest for national identity and differs from the British system, who seek instead to stifle such a quest.

In this scenario, the state and its and other major institutions' discursive praxis (Merali, 2017a and Ameli and Merali, 2014 and 2015) at best stifles and now more often crushes the idea of a plural national identity or one in which marginalised groups, particularly Muslims can have a say in developing. Repeated surveys have shown, that Muslims show deep loyalty to the state (Ameli and Merali, 2004a) (even above the rate of members of the majority community) (Comres, 2015, put the figure at 93%) yet their expectations as citizens of reciprocity is dashed at almost every turn (Ameli et. al. 2004a, 2004b and 2006) by a denial of their agency as citizens, their delegitimisation as agents for change whether for Muslims or society as a whole and their expulsion from the normal practice and equality before the law. The cultural shift around this situation is characterised by a state that does not deny this situation but justifies it based on a 'need' for securitisation of that community that has been thoroughly debunked over almost two decades. Many interviewees whether of Muslim and/or various backgrounds often felt that the ability to change this lay outside of direct interaction with state organs that had not only failed to address these issues but promoted policies that created and/or exacerbated the situation. Thus, movement building (Ameli and Merali, 2015) that is built on alliances between social activists, causes and marginalised groups including Muslims in their diversity was needed (including Kundnani, 2017, Rajina, 2017, Aked, 2017, Bouattia, 2017, Kapoor, 2017, Narkowicz, 2017) remains a preferred option for many whose critical voices and work on counter-narratives has been key. This begs the question as to what the state's response will be, but also demands that there the state's response can no longer be one of a mythical monoculturalism.

François (2015) highlights that even where there is an attempt to 'include' Muslims into the narrative of the 'one nation' mantra adopted by former Prime Minister David Cameron, it is focused only when addressing Muslims (see Cameron's Ramadan 2015 speech in François, 2015) followed swiftly by a denunciation of problematic 'Muslimness' that has an immediate and otherizing effect (see Cameron's speech two days later echoing his 2011 call for a "muscular liberalism", François, 2015). As François (2015) (whose work at SOAS includes a project on social cohesion) notes in response to Cameron's targeting of Muslims as individuals prone to radicalization and violence:

"...the reality is that individuals are enmeshed in structures. They are not floating atoms, they are part of a broader fabric that contributes to their sense of self and belonging – or lack thereof. That is partly the fabric of their local communities, but also, the fabric of



broader society. To focus purely on individual motivations – or ideology – is to try and disculpate broader society from its responsibility to its citizens. It essentializes Muslims as somehow the pure product of their religion and conveniently glosses over government failings...”

Afzal (2017) highlights how narratives of segregation in Bradford focus on Muslims’ isolation but do not look at the numerous reasons for the situation. This has been picked up by the Scottish Government in their report on Muslims (2011):

“There appears to be an underlying assumption that lack of cohesion<sup>4</sup> amongst communities is a problem in Britain that needs to be addressed... A key theme in the literature is that these policies often fail to recognise the impact of economic and social deprivation, along with discrimination on community relations. As Jayaweera and Choudhury report, there has been a growing critique of aspects of the community cohesion policy. In particular: “a key line of criticism challenges the extent to which the focus on social capital in the community cohesion policy turns attention away from the importance of social and economic deprivation and inequality” (Jayaweera and Choudhury 2008).

As a strategy or indeed expectation for civil society, the **importance of citizenship as a narrative is crucial. Kundnani (2017):**

“I don’t think we can just give up on citizenship because we’re dealing with nation states and the only thing that we have in trying to tame them is the rights that come with being a citizen of them. I don’t think it makes sense to completely give up on the language of citizenship but as soon as you start using the language of citizenship you’re in some sense also binding yourself to the nation state. There’s always a dilemma there... Because of the history of the British empire, there is a way in which we can play the game of citizenship but also play other games because we also have in our history experiences of British colonialism and experiences of struggle against that. We can operate inside the citizenship frame but then also draw on things that are outside it and counter to it. I think that we should allow

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<sup>4</sup> Footnote from citation: According to this report such diversity amongst Muslim communities includes the context for migration, different settlement histories, geographies and employment trends. See link [www.communities.gov.uk/documents/communities/pdf/1203896.pdf](http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/communities/pdf/1203896.pdf). 32 Home Office (2001), Community Cohesion: A report of the Independent Review Team – Chaired by Ted Cattle, London Home Office.

ourselves to be in that double space and allow it to be productive for us. It's not surprising to me that the thing that seems to terrify the Islamophobic propagandists is precisely that relationship of being inside and outside. So, the ideal Muslim for the Islamophobe is the one who completely cuts themselves off from their relationships to the rest of the world and completely disowns Muslims in other parts of the world, and signs up in the most patriotic way to some idea of a nation. But, precisely being able to say "I'm inside the nation but also not of the nation" is the radical space to be and the one that gives the most purchase in taking on the Islamophobes. What that means in practice is that we become advocates both for our own communities in Britain but also for those parts of the world that are being victimized by Britain."

With some 'risk taking' in how 'autonomous narratives' are deployed, Kundnani (2017) suggests:

"out of [this]... a stronger politics that can defend the community can emerge. And doing that in a way that is actually rooted in the needs and the lives of the communities rather than something that's abstract. It has to be something that can have that magical effect that you sometimes get in movements where you find the language that suddenly a lot of people are empowered by it and start participating in a project together and it spreads with its own energy - that kind of moment."

This failure to **include Muslims whether as individuals or groups within the story of the (one) nation** needs to be directly addressed. This extends not just to understanding the diversity of Muslims, but also in naming the problems Muslims face but also the problems of society in general. François (2017) argues both that the experiences of Islamophobia are distinct and are clumsily lumped under the one banner of Islamophobia when the impact on working class Muslims in Blackburn is considerably different than that on Muslim city workers in London. Further the problems faced by Muslims as a result of being differently categorised in the past:

"... at a different point in history, might have been looked at as working-class communities or second-generation immigrant communities or even communities that might have been identified according to their ethnicities. Today they are all just bundled under the label Muslim and I don't think that's a particularly helpful development because (Muslims know this) it's such a broad church for want of a better word..."

The issue of how inequality is conceptualised and dealt with is discussed in further detail in counter-narrative seven below. **The idea again of who or what is a Muslim and what are the problems**

**society face are not so easily collapsible as the current narratives of Islamophobia claim, and recognising this in the production of public discourse** is a first step.

Kundnani (2017) talks about the return to a baseline of the ‘very simple equality and multiculturalism story that is in a way the official, liberal, tolerance argument that’s been there in British society for some time as the official way of thinking about race.’ He continues that more is needed in terms of diversifying the conversations, highlighting the narrowness of the foregoing in and of itself:

“...what’s important [is] to have alongside that some more radical counter-narratives that in the end... will be necessary to really get to the root of this issue. Those ultimately take us to questions of empire and the economic system that we live under... that’s one of the roots by which the discussion about Islamophobia connects over to issues of both class and issues of foreign policy and makes it part of the conversation that is ultimately a deeper crisis in British society. That part of the conversation is often neglected because it feels like it’s starting to sound conspiratorial or it feels like it’s starting to sound like the usual accusation of being apologist or terrorist. But I think it’s a necessary part of the conversation.”

The acknowledgement of the ‘crisis of British society’ in itself and as a conversation Muslims must be part of will be explored further in counter-narrative 5 below but dovetails with the metanarrative of Muslim space (4) to create their own narratives. Kundnani sounds some warnings from previous experiences of conversation and dialogue between marginalised groups, in this case Muslims and wider civil society, institutions and the state:

“the responsibility on the rest of us in British society is in a way the flip side of that which is to **respect the autonomy of Muslims**, and to **hear the voices that are coming out of Muslim communities on their own terms** not of course then to be translated into the languages that we might feel more comfortable with (which was the issue of the nineties).”

Whilst there were some **examples cited of Muslim figures within the commentariat** that might add some texture to this counter-narrative, the overall view was that their **participation was still conditional**:

“[Mehdi Hasan] is a mainstream figure but he is a practising and believing Muslim... I see him as a mainstream figure and he only goes so far and therefore he’s not really dangerous to the system. Whereas maybe someone like Assed [Baig], if he was allowed to do the journalism that he wants to do, maybe he’d be more dangerous. But the system needs more opposition to justify its existence, it needs to give the impression that it’s open and can tolerate dissent but it can only go so far. So many people like Mehdi and others like Owen Jones and Miqdaad

Versi who is getting more of a prominent presence in the mainstream, they'll put aside... the harsher aspects of domestic and foreign policy... they won't talk about fundamental systemic issues that actually threaten the system and might force the system to challenge the system and might force them to fundamentally change their outlook." (Salih, 2017)

Williams (2017) sees the 'collusion with the Saudi regime' by successive governments as a factor in perpetuating demonised representation:

"...there is an emerging group of articulate young Muslim leaders but they are not getting heard. There is another kind of problem which is the political and economic dominance of certain influences in the Muslim world coming from Saudi that feed the myth that Islam is one thing and that is not getting any less either and that is to do with the political collusion with the Saudi regime which western powers seems to be stuck with."

Baig (2017) also argues that the parameters of Muslim participation in the cultural fabric of the nation is severely curtailed. He highlights how his report on Muslim women who do not speak English (which has been viewed in millions on social media<sup>5</sup>) received much support from Muslims but also from people who had hitherto not considered the issue in terms different from mainstream narratives<sup>6</sup>. The Prime Minister had criticised Muslim women who did not speak English, and also announced plans to test the English skills of spouses allowed to come to settle in the UK, with the possibility that they may be deported if their skills were not to an acceptable level. In particular the argument raised by Parveen Sadiq (in Urdu) in Baig's piece that: 'The English invaded more than half the world. Of the countries that they ruled, how many languages do the English speak?... People from third world countries contributed to making Britain, Great Britain, which up to this day they are in denial about...' was widely commended. It gave voice to the people deemed outside the pale by the narrative that Muslims are segregationist; it also gave space to the autonomous voices of grassroots Muslims, whose more incisive critique has hitherto found little expression in the national conversational space.

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<sup>5</sup> Facebook views of the official Channel 4 News post number at the time of writing 2.1million, with over 25,000 shares

<https://www.facebook.com/Channel4News/videos/vb.6622931938/10153567236491939/?type=3&permPage=1>.

The video also has been posted on various social media platforms and its reach is undoubtedly much higher.

<sup>6</sup> In January 2016, David Cameron made series of much criticised comments about Muslim women as "traditionally submissive" and targeted the small minority of women in the UK who did not speak English (Merali, 2016a)

Williams (2017) stated that the highlighting of e.g. Muslim women teachers working in many urban areas would form the basis of a good counter-narrative in the media, both highlighting Muslim contribution and subverting Islamophobic narratives of Muslim women as oppressed, segregated etc. In previous research (Ameli et. al. 2004a, Ameli and Merali, 2006a and Ameli et. al, 2007) highlighted from Muslim respondents this type of thinking – that is the truth telling on a mass scale will normalize Muslims. There are however now, some caveats to this. Ameli and Merali (2015) identify the pervasive environment of hatred against Muslims as forming a barrier that mediates all representation of Islam and Muslims. Whilst images of Muslims – even positive ones – are ubiquitous, the ambivalence of film and photography in particular (Sontag, 1982) and representation in general (Ameli, et. al., 2007) mean that representation is both familiar and alienating. No matter what a non-Muslim ‘viewer’ is shown about Muslims, the operation of Islamophobic discourses frames that view and the general Islamophobic ‘gaze’ pertains.

Poole (2017) describes grassroots initiatives that tackle this in the school setting as a short-term fix, which needs to be developed into longer term projects like:

“Educating in schools and through other organisations and more diversifying of the content that’s out there, as well as diversifying contact. The issue of contact seems to be a really big one. It’s a good mechanism in combatting some of the Islamophobia on a personal level but it’s about trying to go beyond a kind of tokenistic contact e.g. schools take children out to mosques to try and educate them about Islam but it’s not enough, it’s too infrequent and too fleeting. There needs to be more mixing on a more regular basis.”

Anonymous 4 (2017) also raises the issue of Muslim presence in Europe as something that needs to be funded and promoted through media and education:

“there is a rich hidden history of Islam in Europe from which to draw on - many Muslims already know about this - but it needs institutional funding (councils, central government, EU) to bring the history into common knowledge, e.g. through teaching it in schools, trips to historic sites, museums, media.”

He likewise highlights existing materials on the Muslim presence, specifically the English Muslim presence in the UK

3. *Contextualising the nature and level of ‘threat’ posed by political violence per se by reviewing the epistemology of current security policies.*

Brittain (2013) outlines the crisis caused by ongoing securitisation praxes: ‘what have been the costs in the UK and the US, to society and to the legal system which is supposed to represent the best values of society...?’ Securitisation haunts every discourse regarding Muslims. Denied acceptance and thus the rights and assumed dignity of citizenship, Muslims are not considered to be British (Merali, 2017a). This perverse logic followed through sees them projected as living or existing not in Britain but in ‘Islam’ or ‘Islamism whatever that may be’ (François, 2015) in a public discourse that allows them to be eschewed from equal citizenship in the wider public psyche. This situation is part of and indeed significantly undergirds the narratives and the experience of Islamophobia in the UK, and was highlighted by the majority of interviewees as the most significant issue that needed dealing with in order to build a counter-Islamophobia culture in the UK.

The differential impact of institutions on citizens marked by their ‘Muslimness’ or other forms of racialisation and wider society are not as clinically distinct as the operation of a security narrative and set of praxes targeting certain outgroups suggest. Kapoor argues that part of the issue at stake here is the **need to understand that the authoritarian aspects of the nation state have always been there but have simply been exposed by the recent anti-terrorism cases** (2017). Berger and Mohr (2010) argue that the difference between the experience of the racialised and non-racialised wo/man is that the former lives the content of European institutions in a shorter period of time, whereas the later has been socialised into them over generations. For the former the transformation is violent, for the later there is no transformation because they live within these institutions. This critique is necessary if conversations about the damage done to British society as a whole rather than simply as damage done to Muslims in particular. This sectioning off of the issue of Islamophobia furthers the idea that Muslims are something else that need to be dealt with separately – in this case by an exceptional legal regime that falls well below the guarantees and standards of the rest of the law in the country. This also normalises the law as neutral and decreases the space for critique and development of that law.<sup>7</sup>

The tropes of the narratives that undergird the securitization of Muslims, and the exceptional praxis of law and state against them are detailed extensively in Merali (2017a) and opposition to this has been framed largely by civil society calling for at the very least a review of the Prevent policy and its introduction into law since early 2016, to an all-out call for the repealing of ALL anti-terrorism laws

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<sup>7</sup> As Ahmed (2017) points out in section 7 below, whilst EU directives on equalities are often powerful on paper, case law developed and policies implemented in the UK often circumvent the demands made by such directives.

(Jones et. al. 2015). Bouattia (2017) explains how the former of these has found echoes within the political establishment from all political parties to differing degrees, and that this is a testament to the persistence of civil society actors and NGOs, academics, dissenting politicians and lawyers and students' groups to critique the operation of the Prevent policy. Examples of this include the Students Not Suspects campaign (NUS, 2015 onwards), the wider operation of anti-racist campaigns by the National Union of Students Black Students Campaign (NUS, 2017), which includes shared work on Prevent related matters (see e.g. the Preventing Prevent Handbook, NUS Black Students, 2017) particularly during the academic years 2015 – 2017, the operation of organisations like PreventWatch, IHRC, CAMPACC, SACC, Cage and MEND (Merali, 2016b, 2017a, b) who all adopted critical positions with varying nuances across varying durations of time, some starting as far as twenty years ago in response to the introduction of the first new anti-terrorism laws in 1997 (Ansari, 2006) since the repeal of laws targeting political violence in relation to Northern Ireland.

As Bouattia (2017) and others have highlighted this activism has come at extreme personal cost for many involved whether as individuals or organisations, facing demonisation in the press and by politicians, as well as facing the prospects of being marginalised in political spaces. This is widely seen as one of the reasons that many Muslim civil society organisations were slow to criticise the processes of securitisation until they too found themselves demonised<sup>8</sup>.

The call for a review of Prevent being taken up in some political circles is an achievement however what is more significant is that the new independent reviewer of the anti-terrorism laws, Max Hill QC, has spoken of the ideal scenario where there would be no anti-terrorism laws, and crimes of political violence would be prosecuted using the existing gamut of criminal law (Hill, 2017a). Hill was considered by many observers to be a potentially authoritarian and illiberal choice for the post, given his work for the Crown Prosecution Service in prosecuting several high-profile 'terrorism' cases<sup>9</sup>. In post he has called for higher sentencing tariffs for families of perpetrators of acts of political violence. The adoption of the critique by Hill that many of the laws enacted are simply a knee-jerk response to the idea that 'something needs to be done' (Merali, 2017b) and now marks a point where government must listen to the demands of even its hitherto strongly aligned supporters. It also re-emphasises the need for there to be space of critique for Muslims, free of fear

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<sup>8</sup> See e.g. the targeting of the MCB by Boris Johnson on the pages of The Spectator (Ameli and Merali, 2015)

<sup>9</sup> The so-called Ricin case which has been highlighted as an extreme failure by the state, its agencies, law enforcement and prosecution in particular and the media, regarding the unchecked operation of anti-Muslim prejudice that resulted not only in injustice for those directly targeted but had long term (Ameli and Merali, 2015). It was also argued that the events were hijacked for purely political purposes both domestically and abroad as a justification for the invasion of Iraq (Archer and Bawden, 2010)

and where their autonomy and their narratives are considered as part of the conversation. Hill's views confirm that in this instance a counter-narrative to (Islamophobic) securitisation that was much maligned when expressed by Muslims and civil society alliances (Jones, et. al. 2015, United to Protect our Rights, 2005<sup>10</sup>) has found mainstream acceptance. Surely a twenty-year cycle to get to this position is one that the state needs to avoid as the basis of reviewing policy?

Qureshi (2017) claims that the conversations that are being had have no 'epistemological basis' and that securitisation and the framing of Muslims as a threat to the UK needs to be challenged epistemologically. In short:

"That's why I respect the work of people like Marc Sageman quite a lot, who himself has come a long way in his own work. His book "Misunderstanding Terrorism", which came out last year, was a phenomenal piece of work because what he does is that he uses Bayesian probability analysis to make an assessment about what the actual threat is that is posed to non-Muslims by Muslims in the Western world. He categorizes the West as being Australia, New Zealand, Europe and North America. According to him, it ultimately boils down to one Muslim per million per year. That is the threat that is posed to the Western World, that he actually says, that's the way to talk about it. That's what we should be saying. All of this exceptional policy, this securitisation, exists despite the fact that 999,999 Muslims out of one million pose no threat at all to the West. And so, this is how we really need to re-conceive of what the actual data is, what statistics tell us. And then how **policy should be informed by that.**"

Hill QC's **meeting with advocacy group** Cage (Hill, 2017b) **to discuss their concerns regarding the current security regime**, is another repudiation of Islamophobic narratives of Muslims as a security threat and a threat to internal democracy if engaged with. In response to his critics Hill (2017b) explains:

"I have come under some criticism for agreeing to meet with Cage, an organisation considered to be beyond the pale in many circles."

"Successive Governments have taken the view that there are some organisations with which any engagement is inappropriate, and Cage certainly falls within that category. That is of course a matter for government and it is neither my place nor would it be appropriate for me to pass judgment on their stance."

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<sup>10</sup> The signatories to this statement came from a wide civil society spectrum.



“For my part, as the Independent Reviewer of Terrorism Legislation, it is my duty and within my remit to engage with anyone who is affected in any way by the legislation. This not only helps inform my annual review of the legislation but also informs my wider contextual understanding of how our laws apply generally to society.”

As Hill QC, says and does, **reiterating the necessity of conversation between Muslim civil society, including those that have been demonised by established voices, is an imperative in breaking the cycle of literal, legal and conceptual expulsion of Muslims from the nation.**

Hill QC’s own disavowal of the need for anti-terrorism laws is another example of how relevant political voices, in this case an appointed reviewer of law, must **look beyond current narratives of crime and security.**

#### *4. Acknowledging structural issues and racism(s)*

The metanarrative of allowing Muslim space intersects heavily with this section. As Kundnani (2017) identifies:

“Islamophobia is ultimately a symptom of bigger, wider, deeper issues in British society. Islamophobia is not just ever about Muslims, it’s about a deep social crisis. But the experience of Islamophobia is also particular to Muslims and has its own particular feel and texture and history and experience and so forth. The challenge in taking it on is to both enable a space where Muslims can articulate and define their own experience and their own response to Islamophobia in Britain while at the same time being able to link that particular story to the wider crisis that Islamophobia needs to be linked to.”

Part of that wider crisis is a wider issue of racism(s) in the United Kingdom. Whilst the UK has been celebrated (or demonized) for its equalities culture in the past, notably the Race Relations Acts of the 1960s and 1970s that brought some palpable change in the way minorities are treated, there is a case to make that that culture stagnated and if anything has found itself under attack as a result of unbridled Islamophobic narratives normalising racism in society once more. This is particularly evident in the post-Brexit rise in street violence against racialised minorities, whether those minorities were from European countries or BAME communities and / or Muslims. Zempi (2017) lays this at the door of the:

“that toxic language that was used during Brexit, the arguments used by different camps in terms of favouring Brexit but also the actions of Trump for example banning Muslims from certain countries and rhetoric and language used against Muslims in the political context in the UK and US. I think it has legitimised hostility and discrimination from ordinary people, not just the far-right.”

This space is important if the journey started in the report of the Scarman inquiry report (1981) which took the idea of racism within institutions as more than simply the accumulation of the prejudices of individuals, the ‘bad apples’ but as structural, as the McPherson inquiry report (1999) phrased it ‘institutional racism’. This manifests in a variety of ways, but notably with regard to taking action for redress against injustice or simply accessing the structures and rules of the state, the following issues are hugely restricted for Muslims:

- (i) Accessing justice
- (ii) Immigration rules
- (iii) Accumulation of debt around (i) and (ii)
- (iv) The roll out of functions of the state to the private sector
- (v) How hate crimes are recorded, investigated and prosecuted

There are a number of equalities measures and protections in law, yet accessing these for many Muslims and other marginalized groups is hampered by the operation of structural barriers.

Discrimination in the workplace runs at high levels, and accessing employment is fraught with similar difficulties (see Merali, 2017a for a summary of relevant research). Provisions to tackle discrimination at work based on religion came into force at the end of 2003 in response to requirements to comply with the EC Equal Treatment Framework Directive. However, a number of problems arose immediately that made the provisions inaccessible, and where accessed still problematic. Notably legal aid was not initially available for these cases meaning that those bringing cases had to find thousands of pounds to fund cases themselves. This period was also one where lawyers taking on pro bono cases found themselves also targeted and measures brought in to make pro bono lawyers liable for costs should their case fail. As legal aid has been rolled back across the UK in recent years, even when there was a minimal amount of legal aid assigned to such cases in more recent years, as with all such cases the amount was nominal (a few hundred pounds) which is supposed to cover dozens of hours of work across a period of years. This impacted not just these

cases, but immigration cases and indeed civil and criminal cases<sup>11</sup> across the board. The introduction of fees for employment tribunals is another barrier for accessing justice. Lawyers working in the field noticed a significant drop in cases after the introduction of fees (the fees were recently removed after a legal challenge). The impact of such measures is to ensure that despite the potentiality of redress, there are sufficient barriers to ensure that that redress is almost unachievable. **There need to be any number of reversals of such barriers** (Ahmed, 2017, Anonymous 1, 2017, Choudhury, 2017).

Set within the wider context of case law developed around equalities provisions over a twenty-year period, there is an argument that case law has developed to hamper applicants rather than support their claims. The case of London Borough of Lewisham v Malcolm (2008), where an appeal to the House of Lords had the impact of making: “more difficult for a disabled person to prove disability-related discrimination. The judgment means that for some types of disability discrimination cases the correct comparator for a disability-related discrimination claim is now the same as for a direct discrimination claim.” (Equality and Human Rights Commission, 2016). This reflects anxieties around the religious discrimination rules which placed the burden of proof for discrimination on the applicant rather than the employer (as opposed to evidentiary burden as established by the Race Relations Act, 1976). As such **issues around the burden of proof**, are also pressing if there is to be any prospect of making existing legal provisions for equality a reality (Ahmed, 2017).

Additionally, a lack of **properly funded legal aid defence** is crucial not just for Muslim defendants but has been highlighted as one of the determiners for the disproportionate sentencing and thus disproportionate prison populations of Muslims and other racialized communities.

Aligned to this is the issue of the duty solicitor system, whereby those questioned in criminal or anti-terrorism investigations may call a solicitor who is ‘on duty’ to represent them. For those who do not have access to the names of solicitors conversant in the details of the cases they are being questioned for, this representation, particularly in anti-terrorism related investigations and interviews e.g. Schedule 7 questioning, means they do not get appropriate or adequate advice. In such cases the advice given may result in defendants’ not fully being able to exercise their rights, or exercise an effective defence.

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<sup>11</sup> Curtailment of legal aid in criminal cases has also disadvantaged many Muslims who do not qualify for full legal aid in criminal matters making it even harder to have an effective defence for whatever crime petty or otherwise.

Family proceedings have long been accused of institutional racism, including judgments and referrals based upon stereotypes and racist tropes rather than actual problems and issues (see, e.g. Islamic Human Rights Commission, 2000).

With regard to restrictive immigration rules, it was noted by interviewees (Ahmed, 2017, Ansari, 2017) that the financial threshold regarding bringing spouses or family members to the UK meant that Muslims, who hail from a largely working-class background, were disproportionately affected in being unable to meet the threshold, whilst also being disproportionately likely to want to bring family or spouses to the settle in the UK. As such, **a full review of these rules and the clear discriminatory impact they have on certain communities** must be a first port of call. Within that review, attention needs to be paid to the anecdotal evidence and impression amongst relevant professionals that rejections also have a bias against these communities. These **accusations of bias need further investigation, which must be done by independent researchers** but at the same time have relevant support including possibly financial, from the relevant state authority (in this case the Home Office). There also needs to be **political will from government to publicise the findings and implement the recommendations**. The cases of the Burnley Report (Holden & Billings, 2008) and the Trojan Horse inquiries (e.g. Kershaw, 2014 and Clark, 2014) highlight the trend that where government wish to make a point regarding the deficiency of Muslim communities or actors they can commission research, but when the findings – however rigorous – do not meet with that agenda, these reports are given so little support in their dissemination they are effectively suppressed (Burnley Report) or only those parts which meet the agenda are used without regard to findings and recommendations that go against the government's views (Brighouse, 2014 and Education Committee, 2015)<sup>12</sup>.

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<sup>12</sup> In the case of the Burnley Report, research was commissioned on the effect of segregated schooling. This came in the wake of a number of media and political proclamations about the existence of state schools where a very high percentage of the intake were Muslim children. Using the term enclavisation, the authors found contrary to popular tropes that:

“The all-White school is unable by itself to overcome the entrenched White extremism that is mediated through the family, the peer group and the enclave. This strongly suggests that in towns with sizeable ethnic minorities, unless White young people are exposed during their school careers to fellow pupils of different ethnic and religious backgrounds, attitudes of White superiority and hostility towards those of other cultures are unlikely to be ameliorated and smouldering resentments will continue into adult life. Enclavisation, however, assists the development of liberal and integrative attitudes among young Asian/Muslim people by providing an oasis of liberality in a strong and cohesive sub- community.” (Billings and Holden, 2008: 4)

In the case of the Trojan Horse inquiries, after 5 such inquiries, media and political attention was directed to an exchange of WhatsApp messages between teachers where one or more homophobic and one sectarian messages were exchanged. This was highlighted as a justification for the accusation of extremism when the

The operation of the legal profession and its oversight bodies needs review. The failure to accept an understanding of institutional racism is summarised by Ahmed (2017):

“The SRA (Solicitors Regulatory Authority, the disciplinary body for lawyers for solicitors) ... have been the subject of serious allegations of racial biases in disciplinary action. Statistically it’s borne out that BME solicitors are the subject of far more disciplinary actions compared to non BME lawyers. There was also a report and the conclusion funnily enough was that there is a disproportionate amount of actions taken against BME solicitors compared to non BME solicitors but that there wasn’t evidence of racism so that’s the whole point, the whole thing I was speaking about presumptions. When it’s proven statistically that certain things are happening, you have to do better than just say it’s nothing to do with race. They can’t just get away with it by saying it’s nothing to do with race. Well what is the reason for it? And is there a plausible reason for it? And if they can show that there’s a plausible reason for it then fine. So, there is a lack of progress on this issue from a number of organizations and number of institutions.”

**The recording, investigation and prosecution of hate crimes need serious review** (MEND, 2014, Islamic Human Rights Commission, 2013, Ameli et. al, 2004b). Whilst the Director of Public Prosecutions Alison Saunders stated in August 2017 that:

“the CPS, police and others in the criminal justice system are ready to listen and, where we have the evidence, to hold those committing hate crimes to account. Victims should not suffer in silence and, as our new guidance makes clear, **victims can be supported at all stages of the criminal justice process.**”

There remain serious criticisms that the caveat “where there is evidence” means that the majority of reports cannot be taken forward because they boil down to a he said / she said situation. This coupled with patchy or non-existent training for frontline police officers and investigating officers in recording hate motivation means that many cases that do go into the prosecution system are often not flagged as hate crimes (Choudhury, 2017). Particular attention to language used in crime or speech has been flagged up by ENAR (2017), and they recommend the **setting up of specialised units to initiate prompt and effective investigations.**

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reports themselves found that there was no such charge to made against any of the schools, teachers, governors or pupils involved.

Despite this critique, there was a note from Afzal (2017) that in her own cases of two Islamophobic attacks a few years apart, that she saw a shift in the reporting and logging culture that was positive with marked improvements.

**There needs to be serious revision of the epistemologies of anti-racism and equalities within institutions.** The roll out of state functions to the private sector and public-sector employees was a recurring critique, notably:

- (i) The requirements imposed by the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015 for public sector employees to refer anyone they suspect of extremism to the police;
- (ii) The imposition of duties and penalties on private landlords, schools and other public services to report data or indeed individuals whose immigration status is in doubt. This includes reporting people who have overstayed their visa, and denying accommodation and medical and educational services to over-stayers and those whose immigration status is deemed dubious<sup>13</sup>.

The impact of these measures includes, but is not restricted to:

- A surveillance state in general being in operation where the functions of its policing are outsourced to service providers and private citizens. This situation impacts Muslims and other racialized communities disproportionately (Kapoor, 2017 cf above).
- The enforced homelessness and destitution of people caught up in the cycle of failed immigration applications and appeals.
- The denial of basic services to those deemed outside the pale, essentially normalising inequality as a normative function of the state.

There must be **a change in this culture at the highest levels that acknowledges that institutional racism, of which institutional Islamophobia is a part, exists and must be challenged through:**

- (i) **Revision of Legal Aid provisions.** Legal Aid must be provided in order to allow access to justice, but also to prevent the vast accumulation of debt (Ahmed, 2017) that litigants, defendants or immigration applicants and sponsors fall under the current system. Those affected are disproportionately from Muslim and other racialized communities. A

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<sup>13</sup> At the time of writing cases involving people who have reported crimes to the police, have then been detained for immigration violations. This includes a woman who reported being kidnapped and raped, and a Polish man whose immigration was perfectly legal.

caveat to this is that the level of Legal Aid offered must not be tokenistic. Recent changes to Legal Aid rules have made legal professionals either bear the brunt of financial cuts, or decline cases because they remain, even with minimal Legal Aid, financially prohibitive for their firms' existence.

- (ii) **Properly funded legal clinics** as a way to obviate the Legal Aid drought created by restrictions on Legal Aid funds is one solution suggested (Ahmed, 2017) that would require targeted interventions by the state to ensure that there is access to legal redress on issues such as immigration and employment.
- (iii) **Properly funded legal aid defence**, and systems of duty solicitors who are adequately experienced for criminal defendants and those questioned or charged under anti-terrorism laws.
- (iv) **A change in the evidentiary burden in employment discrimination cases** where the burden of proof falls on an employer that they did not discriminate rather than on an (potential) employee that they were discriminated against (Ahmed, 2017). There is precedent for this in the Race Relations Act (1976) superseded by the Equality Act 2010 and making the approach consistent should be uncontroversial.
- (v) **Research into the impact of immigration rules** on Muslims and other racialized and marginalized communities e.g. financial thresholds, levels of rejection, need to submit evidence of return (Ahmed, 2017).
- (vi) **Forward movement on implementing policies that understand how institutional racism** (McPherson, 1999) operates and how to tackle structural discrimination that results. The call for this in regard to the issue of institutional Islamophobia was made as far back as 2004 in the Mubarek Inquiry report.
- (vii) There needs to be a **political push to ensure that the anomalies and injustices of the current equalities culture are erased**. This requires a recommitment to the McPherson principles (1999).
- (viii) **End of the policing of communities through unaccountable private individuals (e.g. landlords), charities, the NHS, and schools and universities.**

The foregoing is in some ways backward looking towards certain 'high' points of equalities culture in the past. This is not a case of unwarranted and misleading nostalgia, though there are dangers in creating a mythical past devoid of critique of its failing (Kapoor, 2017). It is more a case of setting a baseline (Kundnani, 2017 above) from which a movement forward can be established.

Further problems and possible solutions based in civil society highlighted in interviews revolved around strategic litigation (Ahmed, 2017, Choudhury, 2017) and support for individual cases.

The possibilities and timing for strategic litigation appear to be narrowing, and the lack of public funds to bring such challenges also makes this a restricted route for civil society. Where cases have a prospect of succeeding and there is as a result an out of court settlement, or some form of resolution, this then does not get media uptake (either because of confidentiality clauses in settlements or the fact that a settlement is not as sensationalist as a win). Litigation that is settled out of court generates no written decision, and thus has no precedential effect.

Thus, between these impediments the possibility or utility of such litigation is a serious issue. Where there are significant outcomes e.g. the giving of substantial damages in a settled employment case, confidentiality clauses mean that the impact and possible normalisation through media coverage of the outcome of the case is negated (Ahmed, 2017, Choudhury, 2017). Where a case such as that brought against the government on the imposition of full naked body scanners at ports in the UK (Islamic Human Rights Commission, 2013), was resolved by the government removing said scanners in favour of those which did not violate citizens' rights, the coverage of such a case was minimal and again any normative impact of the acceptance that this measure, which had been brought in on the back of a narrative of securitisation, was lost by little or no media coverage or discussion (Choudhury, 2017).

The role of the media in this regard is crucial and thus some recommendations must fall onto their shoulders and cross over with counter-narrative eight below. With regard to a counter-narrative based on acknowledging structural racism, the **media need to move beyond the double-bind of lackadaisical and sensationalist reporting and focus instead on providing balanced and normative coverage of legal developments and the need for changes in the law**. The press has shown when it has taken on causes it can have an impact, with the Daily Mail being credited (and taking credit Dacre, 2012) in many ways for changing opinion and even putting political pressure on the police and legal system over the Stephen Lawrence case (though careful analysis of the Daily Mails' claims suggests these claims were exaggerated and that where there have been positive consequences these were unintended, Cathcart, 2017). Likewise, they stand accused of shifting the focus towards a demonised representation of Muslims and help push the law towards increasing disproportionality towards Muslims (Poole, 2016, Ameli and Merali, 2015).



The **setting up of more community initiatives and the community and independent funding of civil society organisations providing advocacy services and legal support for individuals needing support** is an increasingly needed support strategy. Whilst one organisation has an in-house solicitor for employment and immigration issues (Islamic Human Rights Commission, 2015) there is a dearth of legal support structures within civil society that mirrors in part the general decline of such support across BME civil society, but is also an indictment to the lack of organisation within civil society on issues which have existed for a long time.

Regardless of any lack in this regard, the critique of governmental failure to tackle or even complicity in creating an environment of hatred and hostility for Muslims is a recurring one. Haley (2017) highlights this complexity:

“That’s been of particular concern to our campaign [Scotland Against Criminalising Communities] i.e. state and institutional Islamophobia. Concerns about Islamophobia are deflected into concerns about what you might call street Islamophobia and the actual views held by the general public and all the time the debate takes the purpose of should the government being doing more about that. From my perspective [the] government and government policies... are doing a great deal to stimulate and feed Islamophobic attitudes more generally so I think there’s a lack of correct balance in dealing with these things. There’s an excessive emphasis on dealing with Islamophobic views in the general public and that failure to get to grips with Islamophobia institutionalised in both government and party politics and other authorities or institutions.”

The situation where civil society is in effect providing advice and services (support for victims of hate crimes and advocacy support services) (Bouattia, 2017), legislating and making policy that suppresses democratic values, equality and racism like Prevent (Aked, 2017), imposing discriminatory and restrictive immigration and detention regimes (Ahmed, 2017 and Anonymous 4, 2017), closing down discussion and denying the ability of Muslims to enter dialogue with the state and the institutions of the state regarding their experiences and expectations (François, 2016 and 2017, Ameli et. al, 2004a, 2004b, 2005a, 2005b, 2006, 2007, Kundnani, 2017, Williams, 2017) marks a situation where civil society regardless of its successes or failures cannot make a sustained change when there is no partner in the process of transformation from the government.

The **daily impact of structural racism requires serious investigation**, but it appears even before this process begins there is a **need to establish once more the structural nature of racism and other societal problems**.

5. *Acknowledging Islamophobia as a form of violence that is relational to both recent and colonial history and current events in various Westernised settings that refer to each other in order to perpetuate each other.*

As Sadiq (in Baig, 2016 above) highlights the problematization of Islam and Muslims in the UK context though deeply entwined in the long durée of colonial history, largely represents itself as ahistorical and transnational. There is no overt conversation about the presence of Muslims or other racialized communities in the UK.

François (2017) ties the need for the reinventing of the story of the nation with an understanding of this history:

“nations need what you might call national myths as part of social cohesion, that the stories we tell ourselves about ourselves are inclusive and help to feel that we are united by a common thread. In the absence of that, a dark form of exclusivist nationalism which we’ve seen take over in Brexit can take over. We need alternative national conversations, alternative national myths which look back at the history of the UK, not in an exclusivist, I would say in many cases racist way, but in one which acknowledges the history of the multiple peoples who now inhabit this island and acknowledges the multiple ways in which the UK historically was intertwined with other cultures and civilisations and how our history is now an emerged one...”

The award-winning website, *Our Migration Story: The Making of Britain* (2017), is one of the ways this has been conceptualized as a learning tool, looking at migration to the UK over almost 2000 years of history:

“Drawing on the words and research of over 60 historians based in universities and historical institutions – including the National Archives, the Imperial War Museum, the Victoria and Albert Museum, and the Royal Historical Society – this website presents the often-untold stories of the generations of migrants who came to and shaped the British Isles.”

Haley (2017) contextualises the impact further:

“What we’re seeing everywhere is that Islamophobia is the driver for the growth of the far right... it’s Islamophobia that propelled Trump to the US presidency. If you look a bit around the EU it’s the same. We’ve seen systematically for a decade or more, UKIP have tried to pick up on Islamophobia and racism and channel that and transfer those attitudes into something that’s Islamophobia directed at EU migrants. There remains a really close relationship between the way that Islamophobia is exploited and the targeting of EU citizens.”

“Everywhere you look Islamophobia is driving some of the biggest and most alarming political movements we’ve seen anywhere, but we’re not seeing a response to that that’s anywhere near to commensurate with the importance of the issue.”

Goldberg’s (2009) conceptualisation of the globalization of the racial pertains here:

“The support racial thinking and racism ‘here’ gets from ‘there’, both as a symbolic matter and materially, sustains and extends the impacts...”

“The globalisation of the racial is predicated on the understanding that racial thinking and its resonances circulated by boat in the European voyages of discovery, imported into the impact zones of colonisation and imperial expansion. Racial ordering, racist institutional arrangement and racial control were key instruments of colonial governmentality and control.”

Sivanandan (2008) reflects on the dichotomy between ‘colonialism and immigration’ and racist narratives of the place of the other and of ‘here’ and ‘there’ in the UK:

“Myths and stereotypes reinforce each other. The myth sets out the story, the stereotype fits in the characters. It was said, for instance, that the post-war “influx” of West Indian and Asian immigrants to this country was due to “push-and-pull” factors. Poverty pushed us out of our countries, and prosperity pulled us into Britain. Hence the stereotype that we were lazy, feckless people who were on the make. But what wasn’t said was that it was colonialism that both impoverished us and enriched Britain. So that when, after the war, Britain needed all the labour it could lay its hands on for the reconstruction of a war-damaged economy, it turned to the reserves of labour that it had piled up in the colonies. That’s why it passed the Nationality Act of 1948 making us colonials British nationals. (Equally, when, after 1962, it did not need that labour, it brought in a series of restrictive

and racist immigration acts.) Quite simply we came to Britain (and not to Germany for instance) because we were occupied by Britain. Colonialism and immigration are part of the same continuum – we are here because you were there.”

“The same syndrome obtains today. Europe wants immigrant labour but not the immigrant, the profit from the one, not the cost of the other – except that the immigrants now are mostly from eastern Europe and what used to be the numbers theory – the fewer the immigrants, the more easily can they be “digested” – the phrase belongs to the original director of the Institute of Race Relations – is today the managed migration thesis of the government. Except, too, that the refugees and asylum seekers, thrown up on Europe’s shores, stem from the uprooting and displacement of whole populations caused by globalisation, and the imperial wars and regime change that follow in its wake. Globalisation and immigration are part of the same continuum. We are here because you *are* there.”

In this scenario there is even precarity of what legally defines a ‘British national’ as being essentially at the whim of a state governed in its own continuing colonial interests. This bucks the expectation of many that the British state is essentially the ‘just state’ (Hamid, 2017) that Muslim civil society leadership in particular aspire to and seek to persuade of Muslim humanity and thus deserving of inclusion within the story of the nation (Narkowicz, 2017).

Whilst Contractor (2017 above) has highlighted how the types of conversation between Muslims and the institutions of state need to be reset, others look to establishing a clear and honest narrative within political, academic and media discourse about the causality of the ‘problems’ ascribed to issues of Islam and ‘Muslimness’ that is fair, unbiased and reflects a wider understanding of structural and geopolitical factors rather than relying on

Islamophobic narratives to support contentious but ultimately devastating ideas and policies. Others seek to expound a clearer understanding of how racism, in particular anti-Muslim racism is a form of organisation that underpins various hierarchies of inequality in the current national and world order (Grosfoguel, 2013).

All three approaches rely on the need for ‘acknowledgement’ of certain realities. Existing and potential counter-narratives to Islamophobia in terms of conversation setting particularly in the media will be dealt with in counter-narrative eight, and the need to acknowledge hierarchies and

how to move beyond them in counter-narrative six. This section will deal with the need for academia and government and its institutions to acknowledge ongoing histories and reframe not just current ‘problems’ but question the framing of the problems themselves if Islamophobia as a form of racialised governmentality (Sayyid, 2014) is to be unravelled in pursuit of a truly post-racial state.

*Experiencing Islamophobia through the medium of the state, media, academy and other institutions*

Afzal (2017) highlights a shift in narrative whereby Islamophobia is acknowledged in some circles, yet the operation of this discourse lacks direction and efficacy:

“I feel like people are more open to talking about it now because everyone is talking about it or seeing it in Trump or this caricature. People are probably more comfortable now but it’s still deeply uncomfortable in challenging it in everyday life. So, social media and I guess challenging Trump is fine and talking in a very abstract way about how islamophobia is really bad, that seems to be okay, but on the other side I still find it very difficult to have conversations with people who think that they know everything, who think that they understand the way that Islamophobia operates in society but still get it through to them that actually it’s multi-layered and it’s still very prevalent even though people are so aware of it.”

Gendered forms of Islamophobia have highlighted street level experience and harassment of women (Islamic Human Rights Commission, 2000, Zempi & Chakroborti (2014), Ameli and Merali, 2005b, Ameli and Merali, 2015, Seta, 2016) but also the rise of Islamophobia as it impacts men through primarily the counter-terrorism laws (Rajina, 2017, Ameli et. al, 2004b). Whilst these gendered differences are now not as wide<sup>14</sup> as in previous years, they provide a way of understanding how policies and laws like the counter-terrorist regime extend in their impact not simply as an unintended consequence of otherwise robust laws responding to imminent threats or concerns, but as a form of governance based on maintaining separation and difference between groups of citizens / (non) citizens much as past forms of colonial governance operated. The street level experience of Islamophobia cannot be untied from the responsibility of the state and its legal extend over society both as perpetrator of violence and failed protector of its violated citizens.

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<sup>14</sup> See Ameli and Merali, 2015 on the parity in experiences of violence, and Deport, Deprive and Extradite (2017) on the increased targeting of women by the anti-terrorism laws and its adjuncts e.g. family proceedings etc.

Acknowledging the following have been highlighted as prerequisites to the reformulation of policy and the developing of good practice in countering Islamophobia:

- (i) the epistemologies of current security praxis and studies are at best poorly constructed and at worst deliberately disingenuous (Qureshi, 2017, Begg, 2017, Ansari, 2006, Jackson et. al., 2007, Breen-Smyth, undated)
- (ii) the UK is only nominally Christian<sup>15</sup> and that in terms of values it has an aversion to all religion thus marginalizing believers of all faiths calling into question its pretensions to liberalism (Williams, 2017, Farron, 2017, François, 2016)
- (iii) the operation of institutional racism throughout the praxis of government, its institutions and within academia resulting in flawed knowledge production;
- (iv) that the long durée of colonial history must be considered in understanding current praxes of government and the ‘problems’ and ‘frames of reference’ that result (Kundnani, 2016);
- (v) Discussing political violence but not in a vacuum. Aked (2017): ‘...if you are going to talk about that you need to talk about foreign policy, state violence as well you need to talk about policy, state violence you need to also talk about political violence in the far right as well.’”

Existing counter-narratives that have been deployed in this regard have included the following which are now themselves under critique as reproducing cycles of powerlessness:

- (i) responding to government consultations on laws and policies (IHRC, 2015);
- (ii) increasing Muslim participation in the academy, and other institutions, services and professions;
- (iii) individual and community projects that try to show Muslims in their ‘true’ light;
- (iv) inter-faith and outreach work;
- (v) awareness raising events, third party reporting projects and projects around street level Islamophobia and discrimination.

The limits to these can be summarised as them being all short-term strategies, which when operating without more long term strategic vision, can serve to simply reinforce the cycle of

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<sup>15</sup> The 2011 England Wales census found that 59.3% of the population identified themselves as Christian (ONS, 2012). However when it comes to practice, in 2016, a Church of England report found that the number of people regularly attending church stood at 18 people per 1,000 regularly attending church and were predicted to fall to 10 per 1,000 over the next three decades (Sherwood, 2016).

exclusion. All the above respond directly to narratives of Islamophobia and thus risk what Malik (2014) identified as reinforcing their connection with and thus validating narratives of Islamophobia.

Counter-narrative work cited as examples of good practice and work which address the long-term aims of countering Islamophobia begin with the need for they type of **barrier breaking interventions** in the public space evidenced in counter-narrative 3 above by Max Hill QC, as well as civil society groups led by those working with and giving voice to those directly affected.

There was some criticism (reflecting long standing concerns) of the ‘saris and samosas’ approach to education about diversity (see Ameli et. al. 2015). Participants at the IHRC & SACC workshop on Education (2017) felt that such education needed to embed things in the curriculum rather than one off lessons on multiculturalism, and that what was required was critical literacy.

Williams (2017) cites the need for both government and the state education system to be the primary recipients of counter-narratives:

“I think the two target audiences are government and I am repeatedly taken aback about how little information is in the minds of ministers and staff. How do we address this through the state education system? It seems to me to be an **overwhelming case for a really balanced religious and cultural studies syllabus to look at how religious ‘others’ are constituted and set up and essentialized.**”

The adoption by parts of the academy of the **need for decolonised curricula** has been highlighted as major step forward, with projects such as Dismantling the Master’s House at University College London initiating causes such as the Why is My Curriculum White? - and Why isn’t my Professor Black? movement - which in themselves and in concert with other movements like #RhodesMustFall and the NUS Black Students Campaign led to the establishing of degrees focussing on Black Studies and critical re-evaluations of existing curricula. At the time of writing a letter from student activists at the University of Cambridge to the English Faculty is credited as having started a process of ‘decolonization’ of the English syllabus (Morgan, 2017). The need to acknowledge begins in the realm of learning and various interviewees and general critique point to the direction of travel going in the opposite way at the level of schools with the introduction of ideas around the benign nature of British colonialism and the benefits brought to those colonised. The **latter was seen as undergirding structural racism and in need of radical transformation.**

Revisiting history textbooks at school to reflect: “rethink[ing] the stories we tell our children about who we ‘are’ and we need to acknowledge the historical wrongs that have been done in order to recognise the historical inequalities that have fed into some of the current inequalities...” (François, 2017)

The **usefulness of terms such as ‘institutional racism’** (McPherson, 1999) and **‘institutional Islamophobia’** (Mubarek Inquiry, 2004) (Ahmed, 2017, Elahi, 2017) have been oft cited, and the backlash against the terms from certain think tanks (see Mirza et. al., 2007 cited in Ameli and Merali, 2015) has only served to highlight to those concerned with tackling Islamophobia the importance of the terms. The revolving door between certain think tanks

and government and the continuous exchange of personnel between political, media and think tank positions is part of the meta-narrative of accountability and lack thereof that has run throughout this part of the research. There appears to be no accountability for the stranglehold on power but also narratives of power and the terms of governmentality exercised by increasingly smaller groups of people holding increasingly narrower views in particular with regard to Islam, Muslims and other racialized groups. **Exposing these connections** has been part of counter-narrative work of Spinwatch and others, but **accountability for this situation or ways to loosen this stranglehold** are yet to manifest in particularly consistent ways.

Existing and possible counter-narratives revolve largely but not solely outside the realm of **direct consultations** with national government as currently a futile and counter-productive exercise (Kundnani, 2017, Islamic Human Rights Commission, 2015), but does not exclude **working with local authorities**. A case in point is the work undertaken in Burnley to counter an EDL demonstration in particular and the rise of the far-right in general between the council, the Lancashire Council of Mosques, and Blackburn Cathedral (Contractor, 2017). This incident highlights how a shared sense of community against a nativist discourse was built over successive years in a manner unrelated to platitudes about ‘one nation’ (Cameron cited in François, 2016), the need for social cohesion (Cameron, 2007) and muscular liberalism (Cameron, 2011) as opposed to multiculturalism (Cameron, 2011 *ibid*).

Other counter-narrative work includes **working with the established church and other faith groups outside existing narratives of extremism and British values**. Contractor highlights the appointment of a dialog officer at Blackburn Cathedral:

“When the Blackburn Cathedral realized that, the demographics of Blackburn have changed forever... They decided to appoint a dialog officer... and her job was very much about trying to make the cathedral an open space because Blackburn is a small town and the cathedral is the towering landmark of that particular town and her job was to make Blackburn as a city more cohesive and the cathedral more inclusive.”

Although there is a huge emphasis on inter-faith work pushed by the Prevent agenda, there were many examples of inter-faith work cited that challenged the stereotypes that are perpetuated by Prevent related work e.g. Muslims in need of socialisation to the ideas of tolerance. Such alliances include those between various Jewish groups and activists (from orthodox, liberal and secular backgrounds) and Muslim groups and activists on Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions campaigns, as well as protesting for Palestinian rights, and also on social issues e.g. rights of students to express their religious beliefs.

The need for this work to be from the grassroots, and maybe supported by larger bodies who take a hands-off approach is one that Contractor (2017) recommends based on her research:

“...we asked people what they thought needed to be done to reduce discrimination on the basis of peoples’ beliefs and they said we don’t need any more laws, we’ve enough laws and policy in place. What we also discovered in that particular project where discrimination occurs, it’s not because of policy, policy is robust, it’s because of attitudes of individuals. What people suggest we do and that became a recommendation, they said we needed more dialog and faith intercultural dialog and we needed more education but in both cases the feeling was we need to move away from institutional stuff, where top down doesn’t



always work... you need some sort of middle path where you have organisations leading on things but where local groups, Islamic societies, universities, community groups, mothers' groups in our inner cities, where they are empowered and given resources through some sort of centred body to roll these things out, make them happen, make them relevant to their local needs as well because there's no point talking about national agendas when communities are worried about roads and garbage pickups or roads that are not properly surfaced so it has to be pertinent to local needs as well."

**Acknowledging the structural nature of racism** is a repeated refrain from interviewees and an emerging and urgent critique in the literature. Whilst all respondents welcomed awareness raising around the issue of Islamophobia, a frequent concern raised was the failure to conceptualise it as 'more than' 'street hostility' and discrimination. Further concerns were raised that the issue of discrimination was treated differently and almost as a form of 'Islamophobia lite' whether in awareness raising or (insofar as any institutional conversations exist) at a policy level. **Recognizing discrimination as a form of structural violence** (Johnson, 2017) was key recommendation that supports the idea of understanding and tackling Islamophobia as a series of overlapping and interlocking discourses.

There is also a need to **tackle the immediate threat to Muslim women at the street level and in public spaces**. The need for Muslim women to feel safe when in public, and not have to modify their behaviour is one shared by all women, however the threat of Islamophobic hatred being levelled at them gives an added dimension and urgency to the issues they face. There have been repeated calls from civil society for better training of police services on such issues, and also in recording and understanding the dimensions of religious hatred in attacks. A failure to understand the latter has resulted in many cases not being properly recorded and thus any prosecution that comes about does not have the religious element factored into this, once more suppressing a reality faced by Muslims from the public and legal imagination.

This 'safety' needs to extend to their interaction in everyday life at school, at work or going about their everyday business, where many report feeling they have to modify their behaviour and simultaneously not attract adverse attention by lowering their profile (Ameli and Merali, 2017). Bearing the burden of conviviality (Rajina, 2017) requires Muslim women to be always on alert to represent all Muslims because of the pervasive political, media and legal gaze on Muslims. Not having to answer questions or proactively portray 'Muslimness' as non-threatening, pleasant etc. is a form of safety (and equality with other women) currently lacking for Muslim women. Rajina (2017) compares this situation ironically with one of the much-criticised facet of the counter-terrorism regime i.e. Schedule 7, where a person held for questioning 'does not have the right to remain silent.' **The right to be silent whether before the law or as a day to day participant on the life of the nation is a key facet of citizenship** currently denied Muslims.

This need for safety and retreat from hostile environments has in part been addressed by the **creation of physical and conceptual safe spaces** (Bouattia, 2017). Whilst there has been backlash against this concept, interviewees highlighted that this space is a crosscutting issue between counter-narratives of Islamophobia.

Rowan Williams, the former Archbishop of Canterbury, was caught up in a media storm in 2008 when he gave a public lecture in which he claimed that at some point Muslim civil law (shariah) would be part of the legal landscape in the UK (much as Beth Din courts are for the Jewish community. Williams (2017) states that the status of the word ‘shariah’ at that time (and even currently) is a dogwhistle term evoking media backlash and a variety of tropes and stereotypes, and that his aim by raising it was to say: “‘shariah’ needed to be understood in its diversity... don’t assume that you from the outside can pick out the essential core meanings, we have to listen to the practitioners”. Further whilst the: “media reaction was overwhelmingly negative in a sort of know nothing way i.e. never mind what they say we know what it means and that has gone on keeps coming up on women’s rights, and issues in Islamic world. I had hoped that by addressing an audience of lawyers... that something of debate might start up, and in spite the media reports the lawyers who were there on the whole took this seriously and argued about it and of course the Lord Chief Justice a few months later took this forward.”

**Recognising the perversity and refocusing the gaze of the state** is a key demand of many interviewees. The obsession with what Muslim women wear rather than e.g. Home Office circumventing human rights rules to deport people (Ahmed, 2017) epitomises a situation that is frequently being exposed outside of government and institutional circles but which has not had much purchase within institutions and government structures yet. Whilst civil society now feels forced to externalise its complaints regarding human rights issues, it is clear the state simply regroups and recalibrates when external criticisms or directions are received. If the UK is serious in tackling social issues it needs to take on board critique like that of the United Nations which has denounced the securitized culture that prevails (Human Rights Council, 2017).

This has further purchase when discussing the anti-terrorism regime which spread across sectors and is found to work within and through family proceedings (Fero, 2017, Deport, Deprive, Extradite, 2017, Anonymous 5). Anonymous 5 stated: “cases get referred by the anti-terrorism branch to social services, and are driven not by social workers but anti-terrorism officers, with the possibility of care proceedings levelled against parents... siblings have even been split up. There are cases where bizarre stuff is happening when you go before a social worker...it’s a system that has been developed now, that is difficult to deal with... all of these cases are driven behind the scenes by police officers.”

This problem is compounded by the fact that (as with other barriers to accessing justice), family lawyers in the UK are not always or often specialised in criminal (including anti-terrorism) law and are thus not able to represent clients adequately.

Previous critique from the UN Rapporteur on Religious Freedom, Asma Jahangir raises the question, (mirrored in questions about the divining of ‘true Islam’ by government and media):

“The Special Rapporteur would like to emphasize that **it is not the Government’s role to look for the “true voices of Islam” or of any other religion or belief.** Since religions or communities of belief are not homogenous entities it seems advisable to acknowledge and take into account the diversity of voices. The Special Rapporteur reiterates that **the contents of a religion or belief should be defined by the worshippers themselves.**”

Whether this relates to Prevent and other government sanctioned inter-faith work, or the operation of policies working to socially engineer the Muslim community (Ansari, 2006, IHRC et. al. 2005) Jahangir's comment pertains in exposing how hierarchies of racism are not only undergirded by government policy but exploited by them too.

*Removing hierarchies of racism and acknowledging Islamophobia as a form of racism.*

A repeated counter-narrative over several decades has been the invoking of the 'Jewish' community as a model, whether by Muslims themselves (Rajina, 2017, Runnymede, 1997 and 2017) or by political figures (Cameron, 2007). Ameli et. al., discuss the wider implications of this with regard to faith communities (2006b). Their findings from qualitative and quantitative work, highlight Muslim expectations within the existing parameters of minority rights in the UK. The call for **parity between minoritised and/or religious communities** i.e. the acceptance of minority identity and the 'benefits' that go with it should be on a par across major religious minorities, or indeed across major religions (Beth Din courts, the Synod, Muslim arbitration). This can provide (i) examples of good (state) practice; (ii) a marker by which to measure the treatment of Muslims by the state; but counterintuitively (iii) can inhibit the improvement of the situation of Muslims but also (in this case) Jews, by using certain aspects of recognition of 'Jewish' identity as the final point of good practice regarding religious and or racialized communities in the UK.

Ahsan (2017) sounds a warning regarding monopolisation of narratives of suffering from whichever community, and emphasizes the need for there to be more than piecemeal or nominal shows of solidarity. In particular, he calls for **a more interwoven understanding and solidarity between campaigns, causes and oppressed groups**. He highlights his work with the Hillsborough Committee campaign, as well as referencing what he calls the 'repeating pattern through other suspect communities' including the Irish through the 1960s until the Good Friday agreement, the American-Japanese and their experience of internment, as well as the targeting of the white working class in the Orgreave Affair (demonised as striking miners) and the survivors and victims' families after the Hillsborough Disaster (demonised as 'scousers'):

"...there is a repeating pattern through other suspect communities, obviously Irish people in the 70's and the Japanese-Americans and their internment and so I view this as part of that wider branch of history and I am working closely with other communities... I went to the Orgreave (Miners' Strike) and memorial on 33<sup>rd</sup> anniversary and I looked some of the language used by the Tory minister and there were things said by the minister, certain things like 'extremist ways' or 'democratic ways' and obviously phrases like that... similarly if you look at the language use against 'scousers' [Hillsborough] they are firstly blamed for their own death, they are blamed for their poverty, they are blamed..."

Also highlighting commonality of (potential) experience, Rajina (2017) highlights the existence and relative security of some Jewish schools in Stamford Hill, London where the experience and institutions of the Jewish community provide for her examples of good

practice. In the maintaining of an Eastern-European, Yiddish speaking identity some eight generations or more after arrival in the UK, there is ample scope for Muslims to emulate and government and local authorities to adopt in their approach to Muslims. Rajina points to the fact that there are many schools in that community which are known to be failing schools but which have been largely left alone by the authorities because of the community's 'putting their foot down'. As an example to Muslim communities this is illustrative of how a confident and determined community can face off hostility from the authorities to maintain their access to the institutions without external harassment.

Kundnani (2017) highlights that the Muslim community's failure to draw a red line with the government over the Trojan Horse affair was a miscalculation, that has resulted in increased harassment. As a recommendation to civil society, **establishing boundaries over issues affecting the community** is part of a long-term strategy that has in the case of some parts of the Jewish community in the UK been shown to have effect.

This example bucks the narrative of minority conditionality imposed by Cameron (2007) as resting upon a critical conversation between the state and racialised minorities. Cameron (2007) claimed that the demands for Muslims to reform had precedent in the conversations between state and non-Jewish communities on one side and the Jewish community on the other fifty years previously over the possible conflicts between their identity and Britishness. It is implied in his speech that an assimilationist track taken by the Jewish community has led to their full acceptance in British society and that this is the route Muslims in the UK must take. This speech forms the basis of much policy developed and rests upon and reproduces various Islamophobic narratives of Muslims as an internal threat, disloyal and incompatible with the nation. It also revives similar anti-Semitic tropes by re-visioning the history of Jewish communities in the UK, as recent, conditional and entirely socialised to the state, and is worthy of examination and more treatment in regard to the rise of anti-Semitism in the UK in other research.

François (2017) highlights also: "the Jewish community; they have then had certain commissions put in place to assess the state of anti-Semitism in the UK and then policies can be devised off the back of those. We know that in the UK that has not been devised by the UK government in the same way for Muslims despite repeated claims to do that..."

Williams (2017) see **trends and traits of Islamophobia that mirror the anti-Semitism in Europe of earlier years and asks why lesson are not learned from this.**

A particular sector feeling Islamophobic pressure is civil society. Organisations, whether constituted as charities or not have felt the brunt of a media and political focus that singles them out in a manner distinct from other communities (see Merali, 2017a for a summary). Accountability for this situation is demanded by several respondents, but also forms the basis of expectations of equality of expectation and treatment between minority community charities. Anonymous 2 (2017) highlights a number of cases that have come to his attention of Muslim charities having inquiries and investigations opened against them by the Charity Commission based on media attacks against trustees' possible beliefs or possible damage to a charity's reputation based on confusion as to whether that charity is involved in certain events or not. Anonymous 2 notes that this has resulted in the very least, charities against whom no wrong doing has been found finding themselves at the very least, bogged down in endless rounds of correspondence with the Charity Commission caused by repeated complaints by the same members of the commentariat. At worst they have

trustees removed and replaced by trustees chosen by the Charity Commission and or had assets frozen. Issues that the Charity Commission have raised in this regard include, support for the Palestinian cause, perceived association with comedy events, perceived association with criticism of *Charlie Hebdo*. As Anonymous 2 notes, charities such as UK Torem (Islamic Human Rights Commission, 2015) have meanwhile been found to be providing financial support that included funding the purchase of equipment for Israeli Defence Forces whilst they were engaged in military actions that have violated the Geneva Conventions, and in the case of UK Torem have supported illegal settlements (White, 2017), with only minor sanction, and no finding that any of the activities mentioned are in any way contrary to what constitutes charitable aims in their opinion.

**Accusations within the third sector have existed for some time that the disproportionality of inquiries, investigations and actions against Muslim charities are an indicator of institutional racism and requires serious, independent investigation (Anonymous 2, 2017).**

Accountability for such investigations and inquiries, and the revision of both the operation of investigatory powers, but also the particularities of differential treatment facing charities whose work deals in sole or large part with racialised communities. This is particularly important when the actions of the Charity Commission appear to be pursuing an increasingly political agenda<sup>16</sup>.

Currently, without the ability to bring legal challenges against the Commission (curtailed by the issues mentioned above) Muslim civil society and the third sector have no way to challenge the decisions of the Commission. Even when the Charity Commission was forced to accept that it could not interfere (in a manner in which it had) in the funding by Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust or other charities of organisations like CAGE, and despite it being proven that part of this interference came from William Shawcross, the commission's Chair, directly, he remains in place.

A second aspect of the hierarchies of racism revolves around impact and the **making invisible of groups of people**. Ahmed (2017) highlights the plight of people rendered destitute due to the prohibitive costs of immigration applications, and the vicious cycle of being denied the right to work whilst applications are pending. People in this situation are also denied medical treatment and cannot rent properties. The latter means they are rendered homeless (either sleeping on the streets or sofa surfing). This process makes invisible those affected to such an extent that they are rendered almost invisible in any conversation about equalities in the UK. It is not that just conceptually they are considered beyond the pale, they are physically rendered invisible. The making visible of such injustice as projects like Deport, Deprive, Extradite, or the expose work on detention centres and removals (Miller, Corporate Watch et. al., 2013) needs to be continued but **the work of civil society in exposing these injustices requires in the long run, partners within institutions of the state in tackling the structural nature of these injustices** (Ameli et. al. 2004a).

Discriminatory barriers including those that prevent complaints from those who have suffered discrimination being lodged and prevent them from progressing at school or work,

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<sup>16</sup> see Merali (2017a) on the accusations of a conflict of interest regarding the appointment of former Henry Jackson Society member, William Shawcross as the Chair of the Commission

are another form of making racialised individuals invisible and groups that require redress. In this regard educational space and workplace cultures have peculiar anomalies in creating hierarchies of racism where anti-racist measures (insofar as they are obliged to exist via equalities policies) are made as a one size fits all and do not always cover issues that are a bar to Muslim participation e.g. socialising and bonding around alcohol after work, participating in school discos or dance classes, uniform requirements that do not take in the diversity of Muslim expectations and beliefs etc. **Finding ways of tackling the different experiences of inequality faced by different racialized or marginalised communities and groups within institutional settings is imperative if existing equalities norms are to be achieved** (Choudhury, 2017). This could include in the school setting, clearer guidance from government on issues such as uniform (currently there is no specific advice from the government regarding the rights to wear religiously mandated clothing); working around issues like times of fasting and breaking fast, prayer times, fasting during exam periods etc. This lack has meant that advocacy organisations are getting increased calls from families where children are now being told to remove hijabs, shave beards or are forbidden from praying at school, or whose children have been referred through Prevent because they asked for a place to pray.

As with the Charity Commission and the question of accountability, similar questions arise as to how there can be accountability for the actions of OFSTED, the schools' inspectorate. It was heavily criticised for its interventions in the Trojan Horse school affair, and its new chair (Amanda Spielman) at the time of writing is facing a campaign calling for her resignation after she issued guidance to inspectors to question pre-pubescent girls who wear *hijab* as to their reasons for wearing it. Spielman's guidance is in violation of both the existing equalities culture (Merali, 2017c) in the UK as well as established human rights norms. An open letter signed by over a thousand academics and activists lambasted this move as racist (El-Enany et. al. cited in Halliday, 2017). As an initiative started by dissenting members of the academy this letter has sent a powerful message to a state institution that their actions are at the very least being held to account in some manner. However, it is battling not just Ofsted as an institution with no accountability but the discursive practice of domination hatred (Ameli, 2012) where narratives cut across political media, educational, social and legal spheres and reinforce each other. The motions behind Spielman's move also originate in the press, as Hooper (2017) notes, in *The Times*. According to him the impact of this: '...is now shaping how parents are interacting with children at toddler age. [T]he challenges are huge and it's very difficult actually at this point to imagine where we'll be in five years or ten years.'

Zempi (2017) also calls for more accountability including from the government which: "is the indirect perpetrator but something should be in place where politicians are held accountable for creating panic. So, lies told about immigrants have gone unchallenged. If I teach my students false information, I will be held accountable. No-one is really challenging them. Maybe a parliament committee or something along the lines can ensure accountability."

In order to tackle these issues, the following were suggested as accepting that there is a pre-existing frame of reference that does not have a logic behind it but is essentially based on privileging by making visible the invisible:

Creating parity between Muslim family law councils and Beth Din courts (Ameli et. al. 2006b)

Parity in state funding and state oversight over Muslim faith schools with, in particular Catholic and Jewish schools.

Full and easily accessible accountability mechanisms for decisions taken by inspectorates (Ofsted, Charity Commission etc.), including more transparency in disciplinary proceedings against officers within these organisations, as well as accountability for the comments, guidance and work for the chairs of the organisations.

Better regulation of the public/private sector and a more robust culture preventing conflicts of interest between media professionals, and politicians, political appointees and their other affiliations, including the increasing number of active think tanks.

Highly visible meetings between institutions of the state with demonized groups.

Addressing differential treatment of racialized minorities by regulatory bodies, e.g. the Charity Commission, the Solicitors Regulatory Authority, Ofsted etc.

A thorough review of immigration rules and detentions

*A refocus on equalities, or ideas of injustice as the normative focus of the state.*

Respondents fell within two broad categories of views regarding the equalities culture in the UK. They can be summed up by Elahi (2017) who saw the best counter-narratives to Islamophobia in existing equalities measures but also the refocusing of the conversation around ‘Muslims’ and ‘social problems’ (much as François, 2017 does) onto issues of socio-economic deprivation and class.

Johnson (2017) and Kapoor (2017) conversely were very cautious about this approach. Kapoor cited above, preferred to use the word ‘injustice’ as conveying the power of the experiences being faced, and also a point of awareness raising amongst wider society. SACC (2017) uses this term in concluding its practical recommendations to the EHRiC: “there needs to be respect for the demands of justice (and recognition of the wider issues of racial justice that are engaged) in responding to Islamophobic incidents.”

Johnson (2017) elaborates on the problematics of equalities’ vocabulary and nostalgia: “I think there were moments of hope maybe... I think that we forget that there was so much violence that led to colonised people gaining their freedom – there was just so much violence. So even to describe that period of time as a potential period of hope is something I’m a little bit hesitant to do.”

Tackling the institutionalisation of inequality under a security discourse has been touched on in section three. A broader expansion of this follows.

The UK’s culture of equalities was hitherto much celebrated in civil society within and outside the UK as one of the most progressive. However, the rise of an anti-multiculturalist narrative and the rise of a nativist discourse have increasingly rendered this history as inimical to British values and a threat to the internal democracy of the UK (Merali, 2017a). In this scenario, Muslims are posited as the vanguards of multiculturalism, who are simultaneously seen to be promoting a segregationist agenda (and therefore are in need of

assimilation/integration) but also as entryists whose civic participation is construed as seeking to advance an ‘Islamist’, ‘privileging’, ‘extremist’, ‘segregationist’ cause. The rise of the obsession regarding **entryism** highlights the extent to which the Muslim ability to project themselves into the future has taken hold, whereby Muslim aspirations based on pre-existing praxis amongst the majority is seen, not as (deferential) emulation and evidence of integration but as something other, by virtue of its ‘Muslimness’ (Merali, 2017b).

**Many laws and policies still in existence need bolstering in the legal culture but also the popular imagination.** This includes rules regarding employment discrimination (Ahmed, 2017), existing equalities cultures established in education (Choudhury, 2017), the setting up of parliamentary and ministerial oversight committees for controversial or contested regulations or pressing social issues. These needed to be brought to light for a new generation as the normative culture of the UK, as well as brought to bear on issues of accountability for government institutions, in particular but not solely inspectorates (Choudhury, 2017, Ferguson, 2017, #HandsOffMuslimKids (Amalia, 2017), El-Enany et. al. 2017).

**Where new rules might be useful they could be incorporated into workplace practice in a manner similar to health and safety rules for smaller companies (Ahmed, 2017)** as well as the adoption of Diversity Charters for larger organisations, unions and employment agencies that address discrimination and provide appropriate remedies (ENAR, 2017)

François (2017) describes this **refocus on equalities as a way to cut through demonised narrative** even where there are contentious issues between the community and the state over the state’s expectations of Muslims:

“...whenever there are issues of inequality, those should be tackled head-on and I see a lot of blame on communities being located in cultural arguments like I referred to earlier, so when we talk about Muslims in any way, whether its politicians or journalists, its often a very easy way of locating the source of the problem in their identity as Muslims, so the reason we have certain schools which might be teaching things that the government doesn’t think is acceptable would be down to the religious identity of the individuals and not perhaps the deregulation of education, for example which actually allows any community to set up schools on the basis of curriculum they would devise themselves, this becomes a problem only for particular communities, home-schooling, only a problem for particular communities.”

**Dealing with the discriminatory practice of the state also found succour with the equalities narratives from within institutions.** Kundnani (2017) highlights: ‘managers at the universities did, for albeit a brief moment, want to push back against Prevent and did so to some extent. They did so in the name of understanding the equalities impact of these policies...’

Participants from within equalities bodies at the IHRC and SACC workshop (2017) highlighted the impact that Prevent had had on schools, with one equalities officer relating that head teachers had approached her office asking for directions and guidelines on how politics could be discussed at school. The report of Dean (2017) also highlighted that Muslim school children suffered inequality and were victims of hate crime, and this became a useful



tool for teachers, parents and equalities advocates in Edinburgh to get a discussion about school culture opened up, and to challenge institutional denials regarding racism.

A locus for a revived equalities culture was also raised by some interviewees with some deeply criticising the Equalities and Human Rights Commission that was constituted to replace discrete equalities bodies that existed previously. Some interviewees mentioned the EHRC simply to say they were not aware of anything they were doing on issues of racism and religious discrimination. Afzal (2017) cites incidents at university when she was involved with the students' union where EHRC reports would be:

“regularly used against any kind of event that I would try and hold the way that the outcomes of the decisions that the university made on trying to fulfil their obligation under Prevent was to stop any kind of discussions on Islamophobia or Palestine or any kind of campaigning issues.”

The need to recognize the concept of hate crime within equalities training was highlighted as imperative (and already implemented in some places in Scotland). This is something that a body like the EHRC should provide leadership on but was felt to be failing on (Jasper, 2017).

Sayyid highlights the problems caused by the constituting of the EHRC:

“The danger then is that this simplification of equality laws and the joining up of the distinct equality strands enables Britain to construct itself as a progressive, ‘post-racial’ liberal society, thus racism becomes invisible and is instead understood as a human rights issue. That is the bringing together of all groups and dispensing with single issue bodies such as the CRE, sustains and strengthens the notion that ‘we are all the same’ and as such reinforces the discourse of colour blindness, universalism and unification which masks the persistence of structural inequalities that remain embedded within contemporary Britain. [Sayyid et al 2013]”

Jasper (2017) called for the **bringing back of the Commission for Racial Equality:**

“Racial inequalities in the UK are widening according to the EHRC. Austerity has amplified racism and the EHRC whilst recording these increases is spineless in challenging Government policy that has seen incidences of race discrimination and race hate spiral. It’s time to bring back the CRE who at least had a track record of reducing racial inequalities and who in their later years, led by Sir Herman Ousley were never shy of challenging Government policy or irresponsible political rhetoric. I want equality in my lifetime and that requires urgent action. Under the EHRC we will still be having these discussion in 50 years-time.”

*Accuracy in, agitation for and sanction for failure in delivering accurate representation in particular but not solely media representation.*

The media as a source of Islamophobic narratives has been extensively outlined in previous work (Poole, 2002, Ameli et. al., 2007, Ameli and Merali, 2015 etc.). Tackling the impact of this is an ongoing project with a plethora of examples from civil society and alternative media, but considerable lack from the mainstream media and wider political culture. Whilst disproportionately affecting Muslims, the operation of mainstream media is deeply problematized in the wider UK culture, as the Leveson Inquiry (2012) bears testament too,

the business of which remains unfinished with calls for an urgent review circulating at the time of writing (Hacked Off, 2017)<sup>17</sup>.

Ameli et. al. (2012) argue that those citizens who have been incited to Islamophobia are also a type of victim of Islamophobia in that they have been pushed into action by media and political discourse. Parkinson (2017) felt that protestors attending far-right demonstrations he had covered as a journalist had been pushed to this by misrepresentation of Muslims in the media.

The recommendations as to how to deal with media cut across narratives but also sites of Islamophobia. The media in particular is acknowledged as underpinning, reinforcing, (re)producing and normalizing anti-Muslim political and public discourse. Poole (2017) describes the situation, the cause and the needed action thus:

“it is so embedded now in so many institutions and it’s become normalised and naturalised so that people don’t recognise it for what it is because if anybody criticises then you get either the idea that, if it’s a Muslim criticising Islamophobia then its extremism, if it’s not then it’s an attack on liberal values. So, there isn’t an easy answer because it’s got to come from political and social context and that doesn’t appear to be changing any time soon.”

Whether the narrative is that of Values and Britishness which then morphs into a state policy of Fundamental British Values which is then the basis of serious diversions from existing equalities praxis and the justification for various derogations from established human rights norms, this process has been repeatedly highlighted not just in the field-work for this research but for many years previously.

Tackling this falls broadly into the categories of:

Civil society initiatives and responses; successes and critiques thereof;

Mainstream and Alternative Media initiatives, media (self)regulation, reform and cultural transformation;

State re-evaluation of media monopolies and laws regulating hate speech.

#### Civil society

Whilst there has been a long history of Muslim community outreach to the media and calls on the media to interact with a wider representation of Muslims in various contexts (Ameli et. al., 2004a, b, 2005b, 2007), there remains a significant lack in media response to these issues (Narkowicz, 2017, Ahsan, 2017, Winstanley, 2017, Parkinson, 2017, François, 2017, Hooper, 2017, Salih, 2017) with significant critique coming from within and without media circles.

In terms of civil society initiatives, there was qualified support but also critique for initiatives that sought to challenge the media that used existing complaints mechanisms, in particular an initiative to use the Independent Press Standards Organisation (IPSO) to challenge misrepresentation of individual Muslims. Whilst this gave some form of redress where successful to individuals targeted e.g. Bouattia (2017, MCB, 2017), interviewees were also concerned that (a) the scope of IPSO was still limited to redress against named individuals

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<sup>17</sup> The campaign group Hacked Off is supported by civil society groups, victims of press abuse and public figures.

rather than issues of demonization and racist narratives that target communities, groups or organizations. Sanction by IPSO resulted in published apologies, usually buried in small print inside papers. Where the law was sought as a recourse for libel e.g. Baroness Warsi's settlement with the Jewish News (2017)<sup>18</sup> or Shadjareh with the Times (2008), this seemed to rely on cases where a specific falsehood had been printed rather than the more general demonisation that accompanied the claim meaning pieces written with anti-Muslim bias but which were careful not to directly make false claims about individuals, there was little recourse to the law.

Even where such claims were made, the ability of individuals to seek redress in the courts was hampered by lack of legal and other barriers already highlighted above.

Interviewees were further critical of civil society initiatives that relied on existing broadcast oversight mechanisms like IPSO and OFCOM (though OFCOM was felt to be more robust, it came under similar criticism).

The case of Kelvin McKenzie's attack on Fatima Manji, the Channel 4 News anchor is illustrative of the limits of IPSO, which found in favour of McKenzie whose article in The Sun received over 800 complaints. McKenzie had contended that the sight of Manji in a *hijab* anchoring the news after the Marseilles attacks was offensive and went on to lambast the hijab as a symbol of oppression and misogyny. Its findings, rather than highlighting and sanctioning the racist portrayal of both Manji and Muslims in general, sought instead to incorporate such representations within the frame of debate and reasonable discussion (Greenslade, 2016). Manji and her bosses had argued that the article discriminated against her as a Muslim and also incited hatred against Muslims. Poole (2017) highlights the repeated use of this type of defence as a double-standard used to silence critical voices: "There's a difference isn't there between legitimate criticism and hate speech and offensive speech which is just racist. It seems like any attempt to say 'you can't say that, that's offensive' is an attack on free speech but free speech is just said as a way of protecting privileged rights. It's not legitimate."

As Hooper (2017) highlights, Kavanagh is in fact a board member of IPSO and this conflict of interest has not been raised at any point, and that: '...these institutions need to be examined a little bit more closely by those of us in the media who are attuned to these issues. From a media perspective, I think that's the way to go.' In his opinion the current situation it is only civil society initiatives which are trying to tackle structural racist media representation that are having any effect:

"We've moved from the era when we talked about institutional racism, institutionalized racism notably around the Lawrence inquiry. We can now talk about institutionalized Islamophobia within the media...The Times and The Sunday Times, I think the newspapers that, when I wasn't looking for stories to react to, they served those stories up on a weekly basis for several years, you know, deeply, deeply damaging and unfounded allegations about people so... in terms of challenging that there's been some good work done. I think there's stuff [done]... in terms of complaining to IPSO and raising the profile of Islamophobic media coverage that has been quite useful. I think there are issues that need

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<sup>18</sup> The Jewish News agreed to pay substantial damages and print a front page apology for an op-ed that claimed she was a supporter of ISIS.

to be raised about IPSO as well, obviously, the fact that Trevor Kavanagh was on their advisory board... I think there's good work been done by MEND and MPAC and lots of community activism which shines a light on this stuff and highlights it. I think that's all really important and the fact that it is now taking place in a social media environment where things can be challenged very quickly. I think that's very helpful."

Without a longer-term strategy initiatives that sought to use IPSO and other regulatory mechanisms were at risk of re-inscribing a problematic narrative (Narkowicz, 2017) that existing mechanisms were adequate and that Muslims were unable or unwilling to use these to make reasonable claims, or that the findings of the body in cases like that of Manji were acceptable thus normalising deeply problematic understandings of free expression. This also legitimised the idea that Islamophobia in the media where it existed did so in individual cases not as part of a conscious or unconscious culture.

Veteran journalists highlighted that Muslims and Muslim civil society in particular needed to be more media savvy, particularly in dealing with the management of content rather than on issues of individual presentation. Salih (2017) argues that Muslims must learn when and how to interact with the mainstream media.

**Tackling the tendency of sensationalism** even in high-brow news magazines which tended to pit a so-called liberal Muslim voice (usually from a narrow pool of individuals associated with The Quilliam Foundation and other government backed organisations) and so-called extremist groups like Al-Ghurabah and Al-Muhajiroun against each other. This leaves out the voices of the vast majority of Muslims on any given issue and denies them a voice usually about issues like the securitized state, other community related issues or British foreign policy that are of great and direct concern to them.

Salih (2017):

"It's a way they're framing their programmes, framing their debate, framing articles, just seems very skewed to me. Even when you're doing a so-called balanced debate on a Muslim question that the very premise of the debate is very Islamophobic. There are so many things they could do differently. I guess hire more people that aren't just brown or black faces but who ultimately talk the white man's lingo and won't challenge them but hire people who will actually represent the community. And get rid of the tokenistic approach they have to hire ethnic minorities now."

For civil society, Salih argues that they should be 'encouraging a no platform policy' with both 'extreme' types of unrepresentative voices. Likewise, as a medium to long-term strategy he advocates Muslim understanding that for the media to access news content from Muslims, Muslims themselves are able to set in part the terms of their participation through such strategies. Muslims as the repository for media content are then in a position to recalibrate the relationship between Muslims and the mainstream media in a less skewed fashion.

Poole (2017) believes there are already examples of this happening. Her research has indicated that where there are anti-Muslim social media hate campaigns there are often more social media posts responding with counter-narratives and some of these are being picked up in the mainstream media thus getting through to wider society:

“But you can see examples in... Channel 4, BBC, The Guardian, local media, where its beneficial for those organisations to represent Muslims positively. So, if there’s a demand, then the media are going to start paying attention to that demand... Once organisations realise that they’ve got to meet the requirements of their audience which is getting more and more diverse then that’s when perhaps things might change a bit.”

Sinan Siyech (2017) argues that Google’s Redirect program that redirects users trying to access terrorist materials to so-called ‘moderate Islamic’ sites, should be used as a model to redirect internet users from Islamophobia. Other initiatives include the making more widely known of Google’s suppression of sites reported to them as hateful, deliberately lowering their ranking when searches are made.

However, Poole tempers this with the caveat: ‘You can see progress, you can see that those institutions are listening but in terms of the general representation, then I would say the framework of representation is getting more-narrow. There is more volume of coverage and narrower representation towards the Islamic terror framework.’

Mainstream and Alternative Media initiatives, media (self)regulation, reform and cultural transformation

However civil society practice cannot fix the power imbalance between parties. This idea of not just better representation in personnel but in product as well goes back to the Kerner Report (1967) in the US which highlighted the lack of understanding in the media of issues affecting and impacting black minorities in the US but also how that lack contributed to racist representation in the media. In order to tackle this using Kerner, Ameli and Merali (2015) suggested:

- **Expand coverage of Muslim community affairs and of race and Islamophobia problems** through **permanent assignment of reporters familiar with the issues around these affairs**, and through **establishment of more and better links with the Muslim community**. The Muslim community is a diverse one, and the media needs to engage with that diversity and not promote or rely on sensationalist or apologetic voices that simply help propagate deeply held negative ideas. Williams (2017) summarises thus: “We don’t have enough of Muslims voices invited into the public space. One of the challenges of the media is to look for a greater diversity.”

- **Integrate Muslims and Muslim activities into all aspects of coverage and content**, including newspaper articles and television programming. The news media must publish newspapers and produce programmes that recognise the existence and activities of Muslims as a group within the community and as a part of the larger community (adapted from Kerner, 1967). Ameli et al (2004a and 2007) **emphasise the idea that a dual space for minorities is essential for any society to foster a sense of citizenship among minorities**. To do this, a space for minorities to call their own is essential and a media that is supported in the conceptual sense by dominant society is essentially a part of that.

- Recruit more Muslims into journalism and broadcasting and promote those who are qualified to positions of significant responsibility. Bodi explains further that media

institutions should: '[h]elp nurture Muslim journalistic talent within mainstream media settings to promote inclusiveness to combat institutionalised Islamophobia.' Recruitment should begin in high schools and continue through college; where necessary, aid for training should be provided (Baig, 2017, Salih, 2017).

- Accelerate efforts to ensure accurate and responsible reporting of news concerning Muslims and all minorities through adoption by all news gathering organisations of stringent internal staff guidelines, but also as part of a more accurate representation of so-called 'foreign affairs' (Winstanley, 2017).

- Cooperate in the establishment of and promotion of any existing privately organized and funded independent institute(s) to train and educate journalists in Muslim affairs, recruit and train more Muslim journalists, develop methods for improving police-press relations, review coverage of Muslim related issues, and support continuing research in these fields. Bodi (2017) takes this further and argues for: 'Support [for] education initiatives for senior mainstream media personnel around issues of Islamophobia and how to avoid it.'

Johnson (2017) highlights the case of an individual Imam in Denmark in the run up to and subsequent to the Danish cartoons affair, and its resonance for now in a post-Brexit culture. The lack of redress for the individual in this matter is eclipsed by the **need for the media to understand how its vilification of someone who simply tried to start a dialog on an issue of concern and avoid conflict is indicative of a supremacist culture within the media, which reinforce state narratives:**

"...he had actually spoken to the people who ran the newspaper *before* it became an issue – before it became an international issue – and tried to get them to apologize, tried to get them to engage in a discussion. And they refused. And *then* he started talking about it internationally. And the Danish media just *hounded* him. It was really horrendous. To the extent that even after he passed away a lot of the news media were like, oh "Radical Muslim Has Now Passed Away." It was one of those moments where you realize, even this man who you know... who is really just trying to tell people "hey, the ways in which this language is perpetuating is really unfortunate" has been *hounded* from that point in time until the end of his life, which is incredibly sad. And then now, it's another moment where I've seen a lot of young Muslims, young people of colour more broadly and young Muslims specifically, thinking about what it means to grow up in Britain post-Brexit."

### *Silencing*

This repeated experience of Muslims, either as victim or as witness, sharply critiques the media and wider culture's self-perception of a free, fair and balance media. The experience of the Imam as well as the experience in curtailing of the work of Muslim journalists is set in sharp contrast with the argument that free speech is one of the fundamental values of the society we live in. Additionally, this claim ignores the heavy hand of the law to curtail and criminalise speech under anti-terrorism laws. A combination of actual criminalisation and a culture of fear, means that Muslim voices are silenced, even when they are expressing thoughts and ideas no different from non-Muslim peers which go unsanctioned. It is the media's role to highlight these anomalies at the very least, and to campaign for a more open space for dialog rather than pursue restrictive practices in framing stories and curtailing the ability of journalists, particularly Muslim journalists from pursuing stories within the mainstream (Baig, 2017, Salih, 2017, Bodi, 2017).

*Truth-telling and Tackling Bias*

Berger's critique (2016) of the functionality of current news media as reporting a political discourse 'emptied of any meaning', which presents and classifies the world with the 'jargon and logic of management experts' is particularly revealing of the challenge faced by counter-narrative work that seeks to tell 'truth' or be 'accurate'. In Berger's analysis of the news as the showing of a succession of spectacles, 'deprived of context, in numbing succession' coming as shocks not stories is a reflection of the critique of many interviewees of how Muslims, Islam or related issues are portrayed, the cumulative effect being to shock and scare rather than to make known.

Winstanley (2017) highlights role of Electronic Intifada, Salih (2017) the role of 5Pillars.com in trying to report accurately on issues that have been very much skewed in their framing in the mainstream media. Whilst Salih claims there is no such thing as an 'independent media' and there should be no pretence regarding this, Winstanley and Hooper (2017) argue that the reporting of truth is the main way to tackle the issue of negative framing in the mainstream media. Winstanley highlights the operation of anti-Muslim narratives in political and media discourse on Palestine, as Palestine is a Muslim majority nation: "one of the main narratives against the Palestinians by Israel and its supporters in the West is that they're Islamic extremists, Palestinian organizations are Islamic terrorists and Palestinian resistance movements are terrorists. The issue is Islam is negative and negative portrayals of Islam in this country come up a lot in those portrayals. There's quite a big crossover between the pro-Israel lobby and what's often termed counter-jihad movements... quite often they cross over quite a lot with pro-Israel organizations."

Likewise, Hooper (2017) highlights work at Middle East Eye that tries to 'present the Middle East in a more intelligent way that reflects the reality on the ground more than traditional narratives'. However, he notes pessimistically that this issue of framing or creating wider counter-narratives may not be something within the remit of journalists. He sees the role of journalists and civil society intertwining to raise awareness of Islamophobia and the problems of framing. To that end: "The racism paradigm is useful in the sense that a lot of people who may have been racist in a fairly unthinking way perhaps thirty or forty years ago, I suppose there's a positive social trend in some aspects and we just need to continue pushing ahead with that in terms of how Islamophobia is framed but the key to that is obviously addressing issues with foreign policy."

Parkinson's (2017) work on the rise of the far-right in the UK over a number of years is another example of building a significant body of work for short and medium-term awareness raising, particularly when through one media outlet.

Mills (2017) extends this to wider issues with regard to the role of the BBC in promoting a widely pro-government narrative in its output. Both and numerous others emphasise the need to persist with such narratives despite attacks from anti-Muslim commentators, as an essential part of creating and maintaining alternative/Muslim space for expression and agency. Salih and others acknowledge that this will not in itself address the hegemony of ideas in the mainstream. Indeed, there is an increasing view that responding to, lobbying and negotiating with the media is not a useful long-term strategy, whilst such methods must

be employed in order to fulfil short term functions like the highlighting of discrimination case victories (Ahmed, 2017), or to get redress for personal violations (Bouattia, 2017). Parkinson (2017) expresses the frustration of many including within journalism at the failure of the post-Leveson culture. Whilst there are many fines given to newspapers there: “[has] got to be more accountability and more punishment towards the people in that profession when they do something like that. It’s not happening. If a journalist makes up a story or completely misrepresents a story and it aids and abets a racial or hatred angle, I’m afraid they should probably lose their job and they shouldn’t be employed again because they have broken the golden rule of the ethics of journalism.”

Anonymous 3 (2017) and Anonymous 4, journalists, spoke of the impact of the Cathy Newman affair as highly demoralizing for journalists of colour in mainstream settings, as well as journalists close to the Channel 4 news team.

In 2014, scandal hit Channel 4 News when its presenter Cathy Newman was found to have lied about a negative encounter at a mosque. Parkinson describes the responsibility of journalists and the failure highlighted by this incident: “any news outlet can be guilty of that, some more than others. I mean, for instance, what I would consider probably one of the best go-to news outlets would be Channel 4, but remember what Cathy Newman did and made up a story about when she went to the London mosque and she was told to leave because she was a woman. They released video footage that showed her going in and leaving on her own accord. I mean, why would you do something like that? As a journalist, you have a responsibility to make sure you’re not making up stories, you’re not actually helping a racist or a hatred narrative. It’s our job to be there to show things that are really going on.”

Parkinson (2017) highlights the **need for unions to take a more active role in lieu of more regulation**, using a case where a Paparazzi had been expelled from the National Union of Journalists after appearing on a TV show. Whilst unions tackling major newspapers and their staff would probably require a legal fighting fund, the possibility has been proven. Resources for media to help news media transform itself exist aplenty, with UNESCO, the Fundamental Rights Agency, the Ethical Journalism Network and various Muslim civil society groups having issued recommendations, guides, best practice exemplars on a number of issues, however the uptake remains small. These guides vary in their approaches with many highly sympathetic to the ‘dilemmas’ faced by the mainstream media (Ethical Journalism Network, 2012). Others provide sophisticated analyses, case studies and good practice guides on issues like the reporting on terrorism that avoids making generalisations that promote anti-Muslim or more generally demonising narratives. These guides are an existing form of counter-narrative that enriches the media environment should the mainstream media decide on self-evaluation and cultural transformation on this issue as they have done on other issues, notably the reporting of sexual orientation (Ameli et. al., 2007).

A caveat offered by Hooper (2017) is worth noting with regard to the role of journalists charged with exposing Islamophobia as being an essential short-term aim, but which does not work without longer term thinking and wider support regarding the transformation of the media culture:



“Going forward, in terms of how we address it, I suppose journalistically, my interest is always in finding stories that expose the inconsistencies, the hypocrisies; how this Islamophobic ideology surfaces in terms of public policy or how people are treated and journalistically, that’s quite straightforward, we just keep finding the stories that tell us that that is happening. That’s absconding responsibility a bit because it leaves it for others to think about what we do with that. I think there’s an inherent danger in that, as well, in the sense that if my career depends on finding examples of Islamophobia and reporting them then I’m going to continue...”

Beyond this a **genuine dialogue between mainstream media and Muslims**, whether through a broad range of civil society organizations or outreach to the grassroots that is based on Kerner principles of identifying Muslim issues as part of the news media landscape, rather than in a sensationalist fashion.

The **strengthening of existing complaints mechanisms** (Hacked Off, 2017, Bouattia, 2017, Ameli and Merali, 2015, Parkinson, 2017, Baig, 2017) is a short-term demand which itself will only fulfil the function of widening scope for redress as a short-term strategy. Without partnership from main media organisations, the cultural shift that is needed is unlikely to happen.

Poole (2017) argues that there are existing accepted levels of regulation of broadcast media and also regulations for social media that can be a starting point for printed press regulation:

“...there’s lots of opposition to that but it could be regulated like broadcasting is. The problem is the media is becoming more fragmented so more difficult to regulate, but there are some steps to regulate it. So, with the internet, there’s been more pressure put on digital companies to regulate content that appears on their platforms. So, it is possible to put pressure on companies to do that.”

Bouattia (2017) argues that one of the functions of organisations like IPSO must be to **monitor media representation of minorities both in the case of where individuals are targeted by negative media complaints, but in terms of general trends of representation of minoritized groups**. As much research already exists on the representation of Muslims in the media pre-dating 9-11 (see e.g. Poole, 2002, Poole and Richardson, 2006, Richardson, 2004) as well as a substantial research post that date, it seems clear that external pressures are needed to make the mainstream media engage with these findings. Whistleblowers from inside the profession, reference cases where news media have cynically stoked anti-Muslim hatred even where inaccuracies exist. Despite this being revealed in the Leveson Inquiry into media practices, the resulting body set-up to replace the existing press complaints mechanism (IPSO) has no mandate to initiate complaints against papers when such issues are exposed, or tackle wider issues of demonization, monitoring etc. Part of this lack has been attributed to the setting up of IPSO as a holding organization until the **second part of the Leveson Inquiry is completed**<sup>19</sup>. However, the political backing for the second part of the Inquiry seems to have dissipated and campaigners are worried that despite

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<sup>19</sup> This part of the Inquiry was delayed for criminal proceedings against certain newspaper personnel were complete. Now completed there has been a delay in announcing the start date from the government, and there have been rumours that the government does not want it to restart (Hacked Off, 2017).

previous assurances, no such Inquiry will now be completed (Hacked Off, 2017). Whether via Leveson Part II or some other form of Inquiry, the outstanding issues raised in that report like the demonization of groups, need to be addressed.

#### State measures

##### *Breaking up / preventing monopolies*

Aside from Muslim critiques of the operation of the mainstream media, there is a more general critique about the power of certain figures and corporations in monopolizing newsmedia. The role of the state in ensuring that there are no monopolies of ownership (Ahsan, 2017 and Parkinson, 2017) goes some way to minimizing damage caused by the trends in certain media that work in tandem with political discourse and policy development. Bodi (2017) conceptualizes it further to clarify how imbalance of power that impacts minorities affects the idea of media equality and balance. He advises that the government must: **'[t]ake steps to resist the trend towards consolidation in the media industry as minority groups do not have the financial clout to buy into conglomerates.'** Poole (2015) advises that there are measures that grassroots civil society can and do take the lead on: **'small measures from the ground up, you're talking about educational measures, about lobbying certain organisations that are willing to listen like the BBC and Channel 4, The Guardian.'**

This does not of course prevent cross-cutting narratives of Islamophobia pervading when there is a ubiquitous culture of anti-Muslim hatred. The Ethical Journalism Network (2012 onwards) has provided a guide to Hate Speech for journalists, however this relies on self-regulation, which has been demonstrably inconsistent and unaccountable. This raises the spectre of the need for tighter and consistent hate speech laws. Whilst issues like the 'glorification of terrorism' and 'incitement to religious and racial hatred' are covered in parts of the anti-terrorism and existing criminal law, their extend seems to be heavily biased towards prosecuting Muslims and racialized groups. There is an argument that such laws must either be used against non-racialized perpetrators including those given a media platform e.g. Katie Hopkins whose columns and social media comments have been heavily criticized for demonizing Muslims, migrants and other minorities<sup>20</sup>. Whilst curtailing speech is always a controversial demand, the current situation where the speech of Muslims is criminalized but that of those who call for a 'final solution' against Muslims is not, cannot be allowed to continue. Either there is consistent application of these laws, or their total repeal or a total review to make effective the boundaries that have always existed regarding what is and is not hate speech and can and cannot be allowed. As Narkowicz (2017) explains:

" It's like when you think about women and it's not okay to say certain things about women, it's not okay to sit on morning TV and say all women are stupid and they're less intelligent... in the UK that is not acceptable because it is not acceptable in the mainstream... it is unacceptable and why. Well we allow hate speech in the media and we don't punish hate speech like Katie Hopkins', why doesn't she get punished? I don't understand why she wouldn't be charged for her hate speech or spreading hate. So when people see the media and celebrities doing it it is becoming okay and I don't think we can expect the media to

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<sup>20</sup> Hopkins had called for a 'final solution' after the Manchester Arena attack in 2017, and had previously called migrants 'cockroaches.' (Topping, 2017)

change much but it is the government that should lead on this, the government should say these are not our values, we don't promote hate speech, the rest have to catch up with that."

Bodi (2017) sums up his concerns by: '[u]rg[ing] member states to **enact anti-hate speech legislation to criminalise Islamophobia and other forms of hate expression** in the media.'

A cultural shift in understanding who is part of the national, and how national histories have been intimately intertwined with Muslims and Muslim cultures and nations over centuries.

In her critique of the academy Rajina (2017) highlights how at the outset of her PhD research she found that work on the Bengali community focused on their perceived problems e.g. socio-economic issues rather than their views. Tied to this was the failure to look at the relationship between that community and its existence in the UK physically and in the long durée imagination where the histories of the UK and Bengal are intimately intertwined. More **academic but also cultural review of these histories** is a way of resetting the collective imagination as to who is part of the nation. These attempts are not necessarily in and of themselves a panacea and those attempting to do this need to be mindful not to reproduce cycles of exclusion of Muslim and other racialized voices. Thus recent attempts to address the critique of the British penchant for costume dramas undermining black representation, by having a more diverse set of walk on parts as well as minor characters (see e.g. *Howards End*, 2017, *Doctor Who* (Orthia ed., 2017) and *Gunpowder*, 2017) has also come under fire from both critics of the exclusion and critics of the inclusion. Whilst the latter attempt to hold on to the fallacy that no such diversity existed (and have been refuted in de Lisle, 2017 and Turner and Diver, 2017), the former hold that the inclusion of visual diversity without then also factoring what the impact of racialization meant in those contexts is another way of sanitizing a history fraught with the inequalities created by empire. Making sure that there is better consultation in cultural production obviates some the above problems and indeed those created and discussed around the National Youth Theatre's cancelling of *Homegrown* discussed above.

The idea of immigrants and migrants being outside the accepted understanding of what is the nation, also needs challenging by cultural and news media, not least the histories averred to by Sivanandan above regarding the creating of British nationals out of the peoples of the empire and their subsequent expulsion from that category. Efforts like those of *Forgotten Heroes* (*Forgotten Heroes 14-19*, 2017) that highlight the Muslim contribution in terms of manpower in the First World War are a civil society initiative with very little uptake by the mainstream imagination that is itself being moved into new and restricted narratives of that episode in history. This shift in narrative regarding the Great War is indicative of a wider trend to disassociate not just groups of people but groups of ideas from that of Britishness. Where once there was a thorough and almost commonplace critique in cultural production, education and newsmedia of the First World War as a largely imperial war that saw much unnecessary slaughter of young European men (itself a critical history from which Muslim and other racialized bodies are erased), there is now in its place an idea that this as a war fought for human rights and that any dissenting narrative of that war is somehow anti-British (Merali, 2014). That these narratives come from the same narrow political stables is again a cue to the question of accountability and control of the major institutions in the UK narrowing, with less opportunity for dissenting voices to be heard.

Afzal (2017) reflects on such initiatives as being conflicted and suggests that Muslims themselves need not take this track to prove their worth:

“If we want to talk about the Muslim contribution then it’s fine to talk about it in ways that highlight that this happened and the fact that it’s hidden or covered up and it’s not mentioned and it’s an erasure of history, that much I can understand. But what I don’t understand is this need to go so much further and act like we’ve got something to prove because we don’t.”

Rather than having an *Indigenes*<sup>21</sup> moment in the UK, there is instead a pushback against that history with Christopher Nolan’s film *Dunkirk* coming under heaving criticism for its erasure of non-white faces from its retelling of that moment. **The attempts to interrogate historical erasure**, even in the most conformist manner (Forgotten Heroes does not challenge current narratives of the First World War) are left almost entirely to civil society and there must be **uptake amongst wider cultural producers, rather than the rise of a culture of erasure**.

This erasure reiterates the narrative of Muslims as invaders (Merali, 2017a), which finds realisation in policy and media discourse around immigration and the taking in of refugees. The need to **delink the ideas of migration and invasion** is imperative. The EIS’s three booklets for schools on ‘The Myths of Immigration’ are an example of how this can be practically achieved at a young age (2017). Ahmed (2017) outlines how the effects of immigration rules on racialized communities include: destitution, exclusion from services (medical, educational), and homelessness. This comes as the result of dehumanization and the work of campaigners and journalists like Anonymous 4 (2017) tackle this narrative but have no working partner at the level of the state. As Kapoor (2017) and Kundnani (2017) contend, there is a need for organization outside of advocacy with the state which tries to (re)connect the idea of the ‘other’ be it Muslim, immigrant, migrant or any other type or combination of types of racialized ‘other’ with members of wider society. This **widening or equalizing of what it means to me part of the nation** should have an inevitable knock on effect on legal interpretations of rules (Ahmed, 2017) just as the converse is currently seen to be true in equalities related law and policy.

Johnson argues that beyond this type of inclusivity there is a need for ways to deal with white supremacism within political and cultural discourse. This in and of itself need not be a specific project. The almost accidental impact of TV personality Nadiya Hussain has been highlighted by many interviewees as one which has had an almost entirely positive impact on the story of what it means to be part of the story of the UK (Hamid, 2017, Rajina, 2017, Johnson, 2017). Hussain won a reality baking show and has since gone on to present many programmes dressed in hijab. This **process of normalization of Muslim symbols and faces in the cultural life** of the nation, is not without problems (Johnson, 2017). This in itself is an **indictment of what Johnson (2017) describes as the liberal self-perception of the state that requires further exploration in cultural circles**. Liberalism has been reimagined by both proponents (Huntington, 1996, Ferguson cited in Skidelsky, 2011) as a strict adherence to a certain set of values rather than as a system of tolerating different views and values (Farron, 2017 and Williams, 2017).

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<sup>21</sup> The 2006 film *Indigenes* (Days of Glory in the English version) The deals with the contribution of North African soldiers to the Free French Forces during the Second World War and, controversially, with the discrimination against them. The film's release contributed to a partial recognition of the pension rights of soldiers from former French possessions by the French government

Without this cultural shift, the type of Islamophobic harassment from colleagues and even managers that Ahmed (2017) reports as the daily log of calls to his practice, are considered by the perpetrators to be entirely normal and indeed liberal acts. As Bouattia (2017) and various others have indicated, there has to be more sustained work on exposing this contradiction at the heart of the self-perception of the state as liberal, in order to tackle the normalization of right-wing ideas under a liberal garb.

Aked (2017) referencing Kundnani's (2017) call for a new peace movement, sees the recapturing of liberal arguments as a way of reimagining Muslim rights:

"when he [Kundnani] says radicalism [is] not necessary being a bad thing... at root it can mean political engagement and again it is a liberal narrative to say that political engagement is the right of Muslims as much as anyone else... [it is] a positive narrative to put forward that not many people would not deny... The fact that now if people are organizing against Prevent, that itself is now deemed as suspect of extremism, but it comes down to democratic values. I am speaking in broad terms, but I think those are the three key words, democratic values, equality, anti-racism,..."

**The debating of fascism and fascists is reported by various as a particularly alarming development.**

Poole (2017) describes the situation where far-right voices are finding a platform on mainstream media through the idea of 'balance':

"...this idea of a neutral mainstream that's been normalized and these other groups with other voices were operating outside of that kind of mainstream so if you get one from one side and one from the other then you've got a balance. But that is deceiving because it covers over the fact that a lot of these views are being related in the mainstream but the way they're being discussed is perhaps less sensationalist in terms of the way they're framed so... that's not an example of balance."

In November 2017, LBC contacted the chair of IHRC to discuss the Defence Secretary's comments that British born Daesh fighters should be killed by drones. Shadjareh (2017) writes that he:

"asked, 'are you saying the discussion is 'should we use drones to assassinate British citizens on nothing more than a level of suspicion rather than using due process?' ... The LBC producer failed to understand that persisting with such a discussion perpetuates the idea that only certain people are thought of as human enough to be worthy of due process."

**Addressing this shift in the values of the reporting center or of balance between extremes that allows far-right narratives to be normalized needs to be urgently addressed by editors.** Poole (2017):

"...it is problematic **the media and the government** don't listen to, **engage with certain parts of academia because there is the research there that could... be tapped into**, the government said they want to deal with extremism and radicalisation and yet they don't listen to all the studies that are out there, they only listen if it fits into their idea of what needs to be done and that communication between academic and state institutions like the media, that's where a lot of progress can be made but they don't want to see the problem. **It's not that there is no knowledge being produced. It just isn't being listened to.**"

Sheridan and Gillett (2005) make similar demands with regard to their work and Bar-Tal and Labin's (2001) where they establish a link between a rise in racism and racist attacks post-large scale events (Sheridan and Gillett's study looked at 9-11), however there appears to be no obvious take-up of this as an issue worthy of policy.

### Recapturing and creating further space for Muslim narratives of being

The need for movement building (Kundnani, 2017 and Bouattia, 2017) has already been averred to. The role that such movements have includes creating spaces for those marginalized to be able to not only speak freely but to take control of their own narrative and participate in movement building on the terms set by those narratives. In lieu of a sympathetic state that encourages / protects the spaces needed, this role must fall onto nascent movements. This is not something that can be adequately fulfilled by the workings of individual or small groups of civil society organisations.

The spaces needed within such movements suggested by respondents cross-cut sectors, but include arts spaces (Rajina 2017, Ahsan, 2017), alternative media (Winstanley, 2017, Salih, 2017 and Hooper, 2017), spaces for self-care which include the ability to create alternative narratives to the ‘constant cognitive abuse’ that Johnson (2017) identifies as the state of the post-9-11 generation which does not know of any other type of narrative except the types outlined in the introduction above. Kassam (2017) describes this need based on his own experience as a *raison d’être* for the creation of The Muslim Vibe (a media hub that straddles news and cultural stories for Muslims):

“I have discovered my identity but for us growing up at least my generation it was a very difficult time and space that we were in and now there are so many conflicts... So, it’s important to create spaces where people can actually champion this identity... growing and developing themselves.”

Examples of how this could work include the aforementioned example Homegrown. How could a movement (a) step in in cases where a play like Homegrown was effectively censored / pulled? Is there or can there be made space where such a work could be performed with the support, financial and otherwise, outside of the mainstream. This support would need to include the ability to withstand political and (pseudo)legal pressure e.g. through Prevent mechanisms or the anti-terror laws, as well as the support required of any artistic production.

The erasure, not only of ‘Islamic’, or ‘Muslim’ voices, but histories is not simply a local or regional one. Hoskote (2007 in ed. Merali, 2008) describes the portrayal of the ‘House of Islam’ post-9-11 in the global media as a ‘politics of image which presents the House of Islam as a repository of horror, showing it chiefly through images of violence, terror, desolation, the unreason of the mob, the intolerance of pulpiteers – the model of reportage from zones of crisis and conflict.’

Hoskote continues:

“The tendency to reduce Islam’s richly variegated tradition to... bigotry ... and violence..., the reflex of picturing it as a breeding-ground for fire-breathing *ayatollah* and kamikaze martyrs, obscures the fact that Islam was - for nearly a millennium – a vibrant cultural framework that linked South and West Asia with North Africa and West Europe, synthesising Arab, Greek, Persian, Indian, Turkish, Mongol and Chinese influences. During this millennium, civilization was embodied by the House of Islam (with its emphasis on the illumination of learning, urbane sophistication, social and geographical mobility, and a mercantile economy)...”

As Ameli and Merali (2015) note:

“That tendency to reduce can only be tackled through serious reassessment of how representation is produced. It is not enough (though much needed) to simply refrain from negative stereotyping. There has to be the enrichment of representation that humanises all subjects, and in the cases of out-groups like Muslims, this can only come from the presentation of the idea of a ‘House of Islam’ that has historical context and civilizational meaning.”

This contextualization can only come in the present circumstances within wider political movements that understands the wider global as well as the local context of this erasure and this history. There exist many arts projects that require further support from movements including, the Khidr collective, Oomk, Variant Space and the Khayaal Theatre Company. An arts fund to support such initiatives Amal has been recently set up and provides support that is less tied to established funds which have or are perceived to have political conditions attached. The Saqi gallery and publishing house is an older example of this praxis with similar initiatives in Muslim civil society e.g. Kube publishing, IHRC Gallery and Bookshop, Algorithm, Amrit publishers, Turath, Islamic Texts Society and other publishing houses and galleries.

Existing projects already work in hybrid political spaces sometimes working within the mainstream and at others within discrete sections of or wider sections of movements. Better understanding of the nuance and thus the power of this diversity can form the basis of kinder and more egalitarian movements (Salih, 2017), Kassam, 2017 and Ameli and Merali, 2015).

Likewise the proliferation of alternative and semi-alternative media provides a basis for creating narratives and spaces for existing or marginalized narratives of being (Bodi, 2017). Whilst these do have and should have more impact on the mainstream media, it does not have to be the prime aim of such initiatives (Salih, 2017). Having a space of recognition (Kassam, 2017) has a palliative effect on those whose voices have been suppressed. Attacks on any part of these spaces need to be understood as an attack on all (Salih, 2017). In particular the independence of those initiatives, whether from state interference and engineering (Salih, 2017) or attack or usurpation by other states, (notably Saudi Arabia, Salih, 2017b and Williams, 2017). Salih (2017b) describes the quandary of a ‘Muslim’ media currently, with some becoming: ‘irresponsible sectarian mouthpiece which is only good for advancing western/Saudi/Qatari foreign policy and destroying other countries’. Having a media that report on politics, rather than becoming involved in propagandizing for any state or project is the pre-eminent challenge for movements.

Whilst the above again rely on civil society to take the burden for what should be the normative and transformative project of the state, the meta-narrative of accountability remains. As Bouattia notes:

“...it’s an incredibly incredibly worrying time to be Muslim and the more that I travel and meet with other groups, the greater the problem [I see]. And whilst I’m under no illusion that, in relation to the state or, big institutions and their roles and intentions – I think there needs to be pressure and accountability around questions of what the hell is happening around Islamophobia around the world. And there needs to be an international recognition of some of those things, and at least processes and spaces where you can challenge and start to have real pushbacks on the kind of international policies that we are seeing and the treatment of Muslims in every space.”

A strong peace movement (Kundnani, 2017) cannot challenge injustice without being attacked itself. The type of attacks that even ‘mainstream’ figures in the political establishment have faced e.g. former cabinet member Baroness Warsi and London Mayor Sadiq Khan are indicative of the need for counter-narratives of normalization of Muslim presence (Williams, 2017). Both Warsi and Khan were attacked for links to or sharing platforms or facilitating entryism of ‘extremists’ and by dint of, somehow evidencing extremism themselves. Extremism and radicalization as terms are easily bandied about in the current culture of securitization and their instrumentalization in Islamophobic narratives has been discussed in Workstream 1 (Merali, 2017b). According to Williams (2017), these types of attacks are a:

“...major distraction because it draws us back to the particularist question i.e. if you are a Muslim then you must have this agenda and if you don’t have this agenda it’s only because you are concealing it very successfully... it’s a bit like the way historically in Europe people have talked about Jews in public life... I think there’s quite a bit to be learned from the history of anti-Semitism... I have just been reading Simon Schama’s ‘History of the Jews: Volume 2’ and page after page have sparked in my mind regarding Islamophobia...”

“We need to make those connections more publicly because those who have learned something from the history of anti-Semitism need to be prodded to do something about Islamophobia.”

This dovetails with the liberal self-perception of the state (Johnson, 2017), which at the moment stands exposed as a myth to many of those interviewed. To those that share this self-perception, the liberalism of the state has been undermined by its commitment to the Prevent programme and its failure to tackle Islamophobia and other forms of racism, and its undermining of the institutions and culture that hitherto provided some protection from and sent a normative signal about racism at the individual and structural level. The wider question of whether the abuses of minority rights, as well as the structural and individual violations of civil and political rights enshrined in the European Convention on Human Rights by the praxis and increasingly the overt ideology of the state (under successive governments) cannot be solved within civil society. Whilst this is the locus of a vociferous debate, itself targeted and often silenced by state forces, it is ultimately the institutions that make up the state and the wider institutions that legitimize the power of nation states as arbiters of social mores to address both violations of these norms but also how accountability and recompenses can be affected in the short and the long term. Until then, the despondency of many of those interviewed, that there will be and cannot be anything of use offered from state institutions will remain.

## **Conclusion**

Two recurring concerns came across in this research. Firstly, a sense that engagement with government, media and other main institutions was in large part futile, and where warranted was to be done with little expectation of reciprocity. The British Muslims’ Expectations Project (Ameli, et. al., 2004 – 2007) had reported that despite very negative experiences, and low levels of satisfaction, Muslims in the UK (and indeed those interviewed as experts, both Muslim and non-Muslim) had believed in and advocated greater participation in political and educational fields, and even (though the media was cited as the



main cause of Islamophobia at that time) with the media. By 2015, in terms of Muslim responses, this faith in the political process had collapsed (Ameli and Merali, 2015) and this is mirrored here. The narrowing of representations of 'Muslimness', the gradual exclusion of Muslims from public and political space by accusations of extremism and entryism, and the rise of a nationalistic and nativist discourse around Britishness that constructed its identity against various tropes of 'Muslimness', all served not simply as barriers to Muslim participation in the life of the nation, but as markers of expulsion of the Muslim subject from equality as citizens and protection from and equality before the law. Arendt's description (Ameli and Merali, 2015) of the transformation of the state from the instrument of law to the instrument of nation pertains in this regard to describe a process of identity formation (Fundamental British Values) that when interrogated, has little or no coherence, but which is mobilised against racialised others, in particular by the instrumentalization of Islamophobia. Migration and the so-called migrant crisis, immigration and equal citizenship for racialized minorities are all subsumed under the overwhelming banner of Muslim problems and distract from the crisis at the heart of British society (Kundnani, 2017).

The second concern was that despite more than twenty years of conversations, research and advocacy on the issue of Islamophobia, not only was there little or no significant progress from institutions or the state in tackling the problem, there was a marked downward turn. Islamophobia in British society was universally considered to be normalised to the extent that the sense of hopelessness in mainstream institutions and the political process was in many cases directly a result of this normalization. The state had presided over and reproduced through various legal measures including but not solely anti-terrorism laws and policies a state of exception, wherein not only had a group of people been dehumanised enough to become a 'hated society' (Ameli, 2012) but that the process of creating 'hated societies' is one that is legitimised by the state. In this scenario where the legitimisation of an 'environment of hate' has not only trumped internal and external perceptions of the UK as a multicultural state, but has become part of the fabric of a national story of what it means to be British. Not only is Britishness navigated through a denial of 'Muslimness', it is also represented through the articulation of supremacism as a normal facet of law and nation.

Almost twenty years after the McPherson Inquiry gave rise to the term 'institutional racism' the UK, rather than moving towards a culture and praxis that embraces the need for developing analysis and praxis based on this idea, has regressed to a stage analogous not simply to pre-McPherson but even pre- the Scarman Report (1981 cited in Lea, 2003). The Scarman report, undertaken by a Conservative peer under the auspices of a Conservative government which looked into the riots of 1981 by largely black youth, expressed sentiment that would be crystallised in the term 'institutional racism' by Macpherson nearly two decades later. Scarman wrote of practices which are 'unwittingly discriminatory against black people.' (Scarman 1981 para 2.22) and 'police attitudes and methods have not yet sufficiently responded to the problem of policing our multi- racial society.'" (Scarman 1981 para 4.70) (both cited in Lea, 2003). Scarman saw the riots as an expression of 'a demand for inclusion in social citizenship rights by those who had become marginalised through a combination of racial discrimination and economic decay. His proposed reforms were directed to this end.' (Lea, 2003). In the wake of riots in 2011, the UK government did not call for an inquiry, instead setting up a cross-party panel whose findings cited criminality and

poor character amongst rioters as a causal factor, again ignoring the possibilities of there being pre-existing structural and institutional problems (Ameli and Merali, 2015).

Acknowledging the problem of Islamophobia and its structural nature were demands to the state and institutions that formed the crux of existing and possible counter-narratives to Islamophobia. Normalising the possibilities of 'Muslimness', in whatever form without continuous sanction and engineering from the state, and admitting to the diversity of the nation formed the next most powerful counter-narrative strand. Self-analysis by the state and its institutions to its claims of liberalism but also the charges levelled against it of institutional racism (including Islamophobia) as an urgent project upon which policies and laws must be based, enacted, reviewed and or repealed formed the third strand. The final strand rested on the idea that the state and institutions' obsessions with 'Muslimness' needed honest reflection and appraisal and failing that the mechanisms for accountability for what ultimately was the experience of individual and group vilification and demonization at the hands of an ever-narrowing political agendas needed to be made more robust where they existed and needed to be created where there was an absence.

These four strands also contained recommendations for civil society (in lieu of and in parallel with any institutional counter-narratives). Creating and or developing the existing movement(s) for social justice, with an emphasis on alliance building between other marginalised groups. Within this 'internal' solidarity, building between disparate Muslim groups and also different regions was highlighted. Using the arts and creating and developing existing alternative art spaces was another recommendation. Likewise, the need to strengthen advocacy and legal support services from within the community and develop more alternative media (in parallel with but of less significance than entering mainstream media) were highlighted. However, developing and asserting Muslim autonomy in all its diversity was seen as both with precedent (with many seeing this as the route parts if not all of the Jewish community in the UK had taken) was seen as key in fending off the encroaches of institutionalised forms of Islamophobia on the daily health and well-being of Muslims and other marginalised groups in the UK.

Whilst the feeling was in some ways pessimistic as to the trends of state and the region as a whole, the determination to struggle for justice for everyone suffering the crises of modern Britain was pre-eminent and agreed upon as the urgent project of civil society.

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