

PART III: DIFFERENT CONCEPTIONS OF ISLAMOPHOBIA

12 Islamophobia and the Muslim struggle for recognition

Tariq Modood

It was not very long ago that Anglophone scholars of racism understood racism in terms of biology, and specifically in terms of the black–white binary. At the same time, other scholars, especially in continental Europe, understood racism in terms of antisemitism, especially in the recent biologized forms that Europe manifested in the 20th century. When it began to be clear that these two paradigms were failing to capture some contemporary experiences, such as anti-Asian cultural racism in Britain or anti-Arab cultural racism in France, some scholars began to move away from these paradigms. Even so, the pull of these biologicistic models was so strong that even today many scholars of racism understand cultural racism in quasi-naturalistic terms, seeing culture as a ‘code’ for the biological racisms that they find more intelligible. Western European Muslims have found these scholarly hegemonies an especially galling obstacle to getting academia and fellow citizens to understand the exclusionary discourses and misrecognitions that Muslims are subject to. Following the assertive Muslim agency triggered off by the *Satanic Verses* affair and other Muslim controversies, as Muslims responded to such hostilities and articulated their misrecognition, they were constantly told, especially in Britain, that there is no such thing as anti-Muslim racism because Muslims are a religious group and not a race. Hence Muslims could legitimately ask for toleration and religious pluralism but not for inclusion in anti-racist egalitarian analyses and initiatives. While this view continues to be expressed even today, and some deny that there is a racism that could be labelled ‘Islamophobia’, it no longer has the hegemony it once did.

In that sense, the concept of Islamophobia and the study of Islamophobia has come of age. It is being studied in terms of its specificity, untrammelled by narrow paradigms of racism, based on other times and other oppressions, and studied alongside more familiar racisms such as antisemitism and anti-black racism. While, then, understanding some contemporary treatment of Muslims and aspects of their societal status in terms of ‘racialization’ is an advance, the conceptualization of Muslims in the west should not be reduced to racialization or any other ‘Othering’ theoretical frame such as Orientalism. By definition ‘Othering’ sees a minority

in terms of how a dominant group negatively and stereotypically imagines that minority as something ‘Other’, as inferior or threatening, and to be excluded. Indeed, the dominant group typically projects its own fears and anxieties onto the minority. Minorities, however, are never merely ‘projections’ of dominant groups but have their own subjectivity and agency through which they challenge how they are (mis)perceived and seek to not be defined by others but to supplant negative and exclusionary stereotypes with positive and prideful identities. Oppressive misrecognitions, thus, sociologically imply and politically demand recognition. Our analyses therefore should be framed in terms of a struggle for recognition or a struggle for representation (Modood 2005).

Recognition of course does not mean thinking of Muslims as a group with uniform attributes or a single mindset, all having the same view on religion, personal morality, politics, the international world order and so on. In this respect Muslims are just like any other group – they cannot be understood in terms of a single essence. No one in the social sciences thinks that identities are based on cognitive or behavioural properties that are shared by all who may be members of a relevant group such as women, black people, gay and lesbian people and so on. If group members do not share a common essence then they cannot be simply demarcated from non-group members because there will be many cases where individuals are not simply on one side of the boundary or the other. So, groups cannot have discrete, or indeed fixed, boundaries as these boundaries may vary across time and place, across social contexts, and will be the subject of social construction and social change. This ‘anti-essentialism’ is rightly deployed in the study of Islamophobia and Muslims. It is a powerful way of handling ascriptive discourses, of showing that various popular or dominant ideas about Muslims, just as in the case of women, gay people etc., are not true as such but are aspects of socially constructed images that have been made to stick on to those groups of people because the ascribers are more powerful than the ascribed. Anti-essentialism is an intellectually compelling idea, and a powerful resource in the cause of equality.

It is also common, though, for authors to accuse each other of essentialism. This is because there are different versions of anti-essentialism. Some sociologists interpret the 'anti' to mean that all groups are fictitious constructions and that the task of sociology is to 'deconstruct' them. If we take this approach there is no space left for genuine group identities, and so none for recognition or group accommodation. I think groups are necessary both to social science and to anti-racism or egalitarian politics, and so I work with an alternative interpretation of anti-essentialism derived from the philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein (1968). His concept of family resemblance offers a way of recognizing that just as it does not make sense to say that games or languages do not exist because they do not share a common, definitional essence, so the lack of group essences and discrete, bounded populations with unchanging characteristics is not a good reason to assert in an *a priori* way that groups do not exist. Rather, we have to have a more flexible, looser and more variable notion of a group and of group membership that allows for open-textured and overlapping boundaries and overlapping memberships. If it seems difficult to reconcile this with our *a priori* concept of group, let us call the entities 'groupings'. The key point I drew from Wittgenstein was that once we stopped demanding that groups measure up to our impossible definitions we would lose the temptation to conclude that groups suffer from an ontological deficiency, that they do not 'really' exist (Modood 2013). Another way of putting it is that just as the complete self-made individual of some liberal theories does not exist, it does not follow that individuals do not exist, that we have to give up 'individual' from social science vocabularies; so, similarly, with groups.

Essentializing often takes the form of 'Othering' or 'racialization', the ascription of various negative features and roles that are supposed to define a group of people. These can take many different forms. Some of the most common are to do with having lower intelligence, with being less capable of disciplined, responsible behaviour, and with a propensity for criminal or violent behaviour. In relation to Muslims, some of the negative traits are an obsession with religion over other aspects of life, moral conservatism, especially in relation to sexuality, patriarchy, and a tendency to act on religion or politics in extreme and violent ways.

Analysis of Othering is clearly an important tool when it can be deployed to show the operation of these negative perceptions in the media, in news reports, in political discourses and the way public

concerns are raised and expressed (e.g. in relation to 'radicalization' or women's dress), in television programme content, in the activities of the security services and so on. There is, however, a limitation to such analyses of Othering or racialization, namely that sometimes there is a lack of agreement between those doing the Othering and those being Othered about whether certain features are necessarily negative. Most people will agree that to describe a group as less intelligent is to say something negative about it. But is this the case with religious strictness and moral conservatism? Here it is possible that the dominant group may take one view of the matter, namely that such attitudes and behaviours are negative and backward, but the minority – that is to say, substantial numbers within the minority – may refuse the suggestion that such characterizations are negative. In recent years, we have seen this most starkly in Europe, in the dominant society's view that the wearing of the headscarf or the burqa by Muslim women is a sign of oppression. Despite the dominant society delivering this judgement through the popular and intellectual media, the numbers of women engaged in such practices has increased and the increase has been accompanied by the women in question saying that they are donning such clothes out of choice, and not in compliance with the demands of Muslim men.

To accept, to qualify or to resist such Muslim women's perspective is to invoke a normative framework. In recent years aspects of feminism and liberalism (e.g. 'western feminism' and 'muscular liberalism') have been cynically and insincerely used to critique and undermine various Muslim practices and claims for accommodation, including issues of women's dress. However, not all such appeals have to be cynical or insincere. They can be principled and reasonable (without necessarily being valid). Without trying to spell out in any detail the sincere and insincere versions of these highly complex and varied 'isms', I am simply making the point that some such normative framework is necessary. An analysis of Othering, e.g. of how the fact of living within a hegemonic secularism subtly influences Muslim subjectivity, is incomplete without an appeal to a normative framework, for without that we cannot know to what extent the influence is a result of an exercise of self-interested power, of domination, and to what extent it is an aspect of benign social change on the part of Muslims themselves, who on a reasoned basis come to adapt their practices and modify their sense of what it means to be a Muslim. To stick with my earlier example, to argue that the hijab, or niqab or burqa, are or are not a form of oppressive Othering is not just a matter of empirical

inquiry or discourse analysis but implicitly or explicitly appeals to how to distinguish between what is negative and what is positive in the characterization of Muslims. If it is implicit, it needs to be made explicit. Either way the normative presuppositions need to be questioned; that is to say, they cannot be taken for granted but stand in need of argument and justification. Without such justification not only may an analysis of Othering be incomplete or distorted, but it may itself be an exercise in Othering, namely in seeing the groups in question as prejudicially Othered as, for example, religious conservatives when that is exactly how the group may wish to think of itself and to be respected for being.

This will of course be an empirical matter. But it may also be a refusal to accept the group on its own terms. That may not be wrong as such. My point is that to accept or not to accept will require a normative argument and so perspectives such as Orientalism or anti-Islamophobia are incomplete without normative argument. Thus, the kind of normative disavowal that one finds in the influential work of, say, Talal Asad is misplaced. He has been a powerful force for getting us to rethink secularism but his conceptual framework does not explicitly help us to determine whether secularism is a good thing, or which version of secularism is better than another. Or, to put it another way, everyone will agree that Islamophobia must be distinguished from reasonable criticism of Muslims and aspects of Islam, yet not only is this a difficult distinction to make but it begs the question of what are reasonable criticisms that Muslims and non-Muslims may make or discuss, in relation to some Muslim views about, say, gender or education or secularism. Not only must the study of Islamophobia not squeeze out the possibility of such discussion, but by showing us where it becomes Islamophobic – by caricaturing, by assuming that all Muslims think in a particular way, by creating a climate in which reasonable dialogue is impossible – it should help to guide us on to the terrain of reasonable dialogue. Merely identifying the unreasonable and the populist is not enough; our frames of analysis should lead us to the reasonable, to what criticisms may be made of Muslims and/or Islam and what criticisms that Muslims want to make of contemporary western societies too are worthy of hearing. The minority in question must be able to negotiate, modify, accept criticism and change in its own way; a dialogue must be distinguished from a one-sided imposition.

Let me give another example. It is generally agreed that Islamophobia is part of the backlash against multiculturalism, and this is indeed important to

bring out given that, especially in Britain, 'race' and/or class perspectives have tended to dominate analyses in relation to minorities. We need, however, to go beyond identifying the racisms and insecurities, cultural and material, that are among the sources of anti-multiculturalism. We need also to identify principled and reasonable concerns that may be part of anti-multiculturalism or criticisms of aspects of multiculturalism. This means a normative reference point for evaluating criticisms of multiculturalism and for offering reasoned and effective responses to such criticism (Modood 2013). This may be to offer suitable and reflexive understandings of multiculturalism that are able to take criticisms on board, while also pointing out the weaknesses in the criticisms. Or it may be to offer an alternative standpoint. What is not adequate is to merely identify and rhetorically condemn the backlash without considering what is right and wrong in the criticism of multiculturalism – or, to return to the main example, popularly expressed criticisms and anxieties about Muslims and Islam.

Islamophobia should therefore be studied within a normative framework, and not just one that exposes the normative presuppositions of others while evading the challenge of justifying one's own normative presuppositions. The framework I use is that of multiculturalism, or a struggle for recognition and institutional accommodation. In the 1970s and 1980s a certain type of anti-racism developed in the academy and in certain polities like Britain. While critically alerting society to various forms of direct and indirect racism, it tended to frame non-white minorities in terms of racism, even to the point of creating a singular subject as the victim of racism, namely 'blacks', as if such groups of people had no identities of their own that were equal to those identities ascribed to them by white people (or by the political project of blackness). I have indicated that there is a danger that 'anti-Islamophobia' could go the same way as the earlier form of anti-racism, and some of the ways that this can be avoided – namely, to ensure that Islamophobia does not become the primary analytical frame for the study of Muslims in the west but that it is situated within a broader 'struggle for recognition' frame, a normative framework which prioritizes groups fighting negative outsider perceptions by giving normative and political weight to insider identifications in all their plurality.

13 What's in a name?

Shenaz Bunglawala

Twenty years on from the reintroduction of the term 'Islamophobia' into public and policy discourse, are we closer to approaching analytical rigour in the framing of the concept and the formulation of metrics of assessment to enable reasoned and reliable comparative analysis on whether 'conditions for Muslims in Europe' are worsening, as Douglas Murray (2006) infamously called for, or improving? As we reflect on the intervening period since the word was first put into contemporary circulation to name and challenge hostility towards Muslims and its practical consequences, is it time to consider jettisoning 'Islamophobia' in favour of any of the myriad of substitute terms that have since been coined? Is 'Islamophobia' more a hindrance than a help to those of us concerned about negative outcomes for individuals who are, or are assumed to be, of Muslim background?

In its report of 1997, the Commission on British Muslims and Islamophobia deemed that sufficient evidence existed to substantiate their assessment that 'anti-Muslim prejudice has grown so considerably and so rapidly in recent years that a new item in the vocabulary is needed' (Runnymede 1997). The Commission's introduction (note: not invention) of the term Islamophobia into policy discourse from 1997 has provoked many varied reactions to the phenomenon (or lack thereof, as some would have it), its usefulness in capturing historical, contingent and contextual antipathy towards Islam and Muslims which reverberate to the present day, and its application in differing contexts in the multi-layered policy landscape where its corrective purpose is its most visible form. The 1997 report primarily engaged a policy discourse and proposed corrective strategies, with its emphasis on national and local government initiatives and interventions by Muslim and non-Muslim civil society organizations to tackle Islamophobia in the UK, having identified its existence, form and breadth.

It is perhaps worth reflecting on the prevalence of the concept in the contextual spheres where its corrective purpose is directed, if only to offer insight into the domains where contestation of and mobilization around the concept have in some ways projected themselves on the utility ascribed to Islamophobia. Disagreements over conceptual clarity and analytical rigour notwithstanding, 'Islamophobia'

is a term more widely used by British Muslims than in policy discourses about tackling discrimination or prejudice experienced by Muslims. In other places, Islamophobia is referred to in policy documents with an assumptive bias, with the implication that the term is sufficiently well understood not to require clear definition. In more recent developments, we find a reversion to categories of race and discrimination based on ethnic markers. What accounts for these shifts, and what do they mean to the value and significance of Islamophobia as a concept?

It is the case that more attention has been devoted to problematizing the term itself than to the phenomenon it seeks to describe. There's the preoccupation with the suffix, connoting 'irrationality', which some would argue inadvertently advantages those whose hostility is cold and calculated, bearing no relation to the irrational at all.

There's the normative disquiet about supposedly placing religion above criticism and thus rendering Islam superior to all else that it might reasonably, and rightly, be considered fair to criticize. Moreover, with the continued use of connotations to circumvent the use of the word 'Islamophobia', might we make better progress in tackling the impact by displacing the obsession with one word and making use of substitutions?

There's 'anti-Muslim racism', for those who want hostility towards Muslims to be recognized, as a process and in outcomes, as similar in type to colour-based racism.

Or 'anti-Muslim prejudice', for those who favour a milder terminology to capture bias motivations that hinder equal access to goods, services and life chances.

'Anti-Muslim discrimination' has its uses too, although the term would appear to be too narrowly construed and too weak to reflect the broad range of adverse outcomes, from violent assault to recruitment bias, that is currently evoked by the more wide-ranging use of 'Islamophobia'.

I want to show that while these different terms have gained currency over the last 20 years, retaining the word 'Islamophobia' to describe

'unfounded hostility towards Islam [and] also to the practical consequences of such hostility in unfair discrimination against Muslim individuals and communities and to the exclusion of Muslims from mainstream political and social affairs' (Runnymede Trust 1997: 4) is necessary for two reasons. Firstly, it is necessary because analysis of media reporting on Islam and Muslims shows that 'Islam' and 'Islamic' are more likely to be negatively framed in the British press (Baker et al. 2013, Baker and McEnery 2015b) than 'Muslims', thus placing group association and (perceived) group membership at the core of collective stereotyping and its consequences. Secondly, with the growing propensity in the British media to blame 'extremist Islam' for radicalization and terrorism, and the frequent use of the phrases 'Islamist extremism' or 'Islamist terrorism' in political discourses, reverting to a victim-centred terminology (focusing on the 'Muslim', not 'Islam'), risks bifurcating the counter-narrative and dislodging it from contextual factors that are themselves collectivizing and homogenizing when it comes to Islam and Muslims.

If the point of departure for identifying Islamophobia in practice is the presence of 'Muslim or Islamic identifiers' (Allen 2010: 62), then reporting on Islam and Muslims in the British press offers plentiful food for thought. Media and its bias against Muslims occupied considerable attention in the 1997 report, and, were the exercise of the Commission to be repeated 20 years on, it would probably find much the same today. I rely on two pieces of academic research using corpus linguistics to illustrate the importance of retaining the use of the term 'Islamophobia' precisely because it centres the focus of hostility on Islam, and consequently Muslims.

In their analysis of a corpus of 200,037 articles, or 146 million words, on the representation of Islam and Muslims in the British national newspapers between 1998 (a year after the publication of the Runnymede report) and 2009, Baker et al. (2013) find no mention of the term 'Islamophobia' in the period 1998–2003. Islamophobia makes its first appearance in the corpus in 2004, reappearing in 2005 and 2006, the first of these denoting the publication of the follow-up report, before falling off the radar, while terms such as 'discrimination' and 'diversity' becoming more notable among 'hate and tolerance' keywords.

Baker et al. (2013) found that 'Islamophobia' (and related terms 'Islamophobic', 'Islamophobe', 'Islamophobes') occurred 2,169 times, or 12.73

times per million words, in the 1998–2009 corpus. There were 1,574 occurrences of the term itself, suggesting that it occurred more frequently than its related terms. In a random selection of 100 occurrences analysed closely, Islamophobia was used 'sarcastically or to deny that the concept exists' a third of the time (33 occurrences). Frequency of usage is thus a necessary but not sufficient condition to probe the term's acceptance and penetration in public discourse.

In a later study, which I commissioned in 2015, by Baker and McEnery (2015b) analysing corpus data for the period 2010–2014 (consisting of almost 80 million words) 'Islamophobia' (and the related terms) appeared 1,706 times, or 18.61 times per million words, indicating that, proportionally, discussion around the concept has increased over time. A similar analysis of 100 occurrences in the second corpus found that incidence of sarcastic uses or denial of the term fell from a third to a fifth (21 occurrences). The term itself occurred in the corpus 1,087 times, again appeared in the corpus more frequently than the related terms.

Comparing the average frequency of occurrences per year in the two corpora reveals an almost doubling in the number of mentions of Islamophobia, from 131.66 (1,574 mentions across 12 years, 1998–2009) to 217.4 (1,087 mentions across 5 years, 2010–2014).¹⁰

Given the concentration in occurrences of 'Islamophobia' as a term in the first corpus in the period 2004–2006, what might account for its revival in the second corpus?

Table 13.1 illustrates the frequency of mentions of the word 'Islamophobia' (and related words 'Islamophobic', 'Islamophobe' and 'Islamophobes') by British national newspapers in 2010–2014, as well occurrences per million words.

We can see that the left-wing newspapers (*Guardian*, *Independent*, *Mirror* and *Observer*) mention Islamophobia a third more often than the right-wing papers, a combined total of 1,051 mentions compared with 659 mentions (61.5% compared with 38.5% in right-wing newspapers), though the left-wing newspapers' overall contribution to the corpora comprises 42.6% of the total and that of the right-wing newspapers 57.4%. It is fair to say that Islamophobia is more likely to be a matter of interest on the left of the political spectrum than on

¹⁰ I am grateful to Professor Paul Baker of Lancaster University for the average frequency per year figures for the two corpora.

Table 13.1: Frequency of use of ‘Islamophobia’ and related words in British national newspapers, 2010–2014

Newspaper	1998–2009		2010–2014	
	Number of cases	Occurrences per million words	Number of cases	Occurrences per million words
Express	100	15.57833	89	25.35279
Guardian	602	24.72824	724	36.67562
Independent	430	16.80218	183	24.00714
Mail	214	12.43014	85	15.80155
Mirror	60	7.4373	33	10.58573
Observer	137	13.34634	111	31.56634
People	1	1.507859	2	5.94838
Star	17	6.368315	17	12.64952
Sun	49	9.76406	42	10.16676
Telegraph	201	12.46448	181	14.33871
Times	358	12.08566	243	13.09181

Source: McEnery and Baker (2015b).

the right. This is not surprising given the locating of Islamophobia within debates centred on race, equality, diversity, integration and identity, issues that are more likely to be encountered on the left than on the right.

If one of the assumptions made in the first decade since the Runnymede report was that the media was where the report’s binary construction of the concepts of ‘open’ and ‘closed’ views of Islam were ‘at their most useful’ (Allen 2010: 54), because of the ability to ‘to identify Islamophobia in certain given situations’ (Allen 2010: 52), the paucity of mentions of the concept in the media over the greater part of the two decades since the 1997 publication would suggest that its ‘usefulness’ has been limited to classifying and analysing media content, rather than succeeding in popularizing the concept in everyday discourse or raising awareness about what it is and why it matters.

To look closely at how Islamophobia has been constructed in the media over the two periods of analysis, we can look to the collocates, or word associations, used alongside the keywords (Islamophobia, Islamophobic, Islamophobe,

Islamophobes). Collocates are words which appear alongside a keyword more often than can be put down to mere chance. Table 13.2 shows the top 20 collocates of the keywords in the two periods.

The collocates show the association of Islamophobia with racism and other forms of group-based antipathy, such as antisemitism, homophobia, sexism and xenophobia. The collocates also show how Islamophobia is reported as increasing, with ‘rampant’, ‘rise’, ‘risen’ and ‘upsurge’ appearing in the first corpus and ‘rife’, ‘virulent’ and ‘tide’ appearing in the second. Islamophobia appears as taking institutional form in the first corpus, presumably relating to the second report published in 2004, where the term ‘institutional Islamophobia’ was coined (Runnymede Trust 2004). In both corpora, the top 20 collocates refer to significant events in relation to tackling Islamophobia. In the first corpus the words ‘Commission’, ‘forum’ and ‘against’ refer to the second commission and the establishment of the first Islamophobia monitoring body, the Forum Against Islamophobia and Racism. In the second corpus, the words ‘Warsi’, ‘dinner-table’, ‘hotline’, ‘tell’ and ‘mama’ refer to the speech by Sayeeda Warsi in 2011, in which she declared Islamophobia

Table 13.2: Top collocates for ‘Islamophobia’ and related terms, 1998–2014

1998–2009	2010–2014
antisemitism, racism, racist, accusations, xenophobia, forum, against, homophobia, institutionalised, institutionally, Mido, institutional, bullying, rampant, prejudice, Commission, rise, risen, upsurge, verged	racism, racist, antisemitism, incidents, dinner-table, Warsi, mama, hotline, virulent, accusations, rife, chanting, homophobia, socially, tell, homophobic, collective, sexism, witch-hunt, tide

Source: McEnery and Baker (2015b).

had passed the 'dinner-table test' (Batty 2011, BBC News 2011), and to the coalition government's support for a third-party initiative to record anti-Muslim hate crimes, the Tell MAMA hotline.

Turning to my second point, about collectivizing and homogenizing discourses, there are two findings from the corpus linguistics analysis that I wish to focus on. The first relates to the prevalence of radicalization as a subject in the corpora and the rise in 'extremist Islam' as the dominant explanatory factor. In the 2010–2014 analysis, Baker and McEnery found that when 'Muslims are discussed as a collective group the most salient pattern is in the context of the radicalisation of young British Muslims' (Baker and McEnery 2015a).

When analysing the causes of radicalization offered by the British press, Baker and McEnery found an 'increasing attribution of blame for radicalisation on extremist Islam – in 1998–2009 this occurred in 1 in 3 cases. By 2014 it is 2 in 3 cases' (Baker and McEnery 2015a).

Secondly, and related to the first point, references to extremism were also found in negative association with the term 'Islamic'. Baker et al. (2013) found that in the 1998–2009 corpus, references to extremism occurred next to the word 'Islamic' one in six times, thereby concluding that 'Islamic is now difficult to use in a neutral way as it is so heavily laden with negative overtones and disapproval'. The negative association persists in the second corpus.

It is hard to see, given the breadth of subjects that would fall under the descriptive power of the term 'Islamic' (food, dress, lifestyle, schools, finance, etc.) how a focus on Muslims but not Islam would provide redress for both the object of hostility and its victims. Would it be reasonable to expect Muslims to adopt a utilitarian approach to challenging biased attitudes, focusing on the victims (Muslims) but not the object of hostility (Islam)?

There is some evidence that public policy discourse is moving in this direction, with Islamophobia rarely appearing in policy documents and references to race or ethnicity prevailing over religion in reports assessing 'conscious' and 'unconscious bias' and their effects. The hate crime strategies published in 2012, the updated version in 2014 and the revised strategy in 2016 make no mention of Islamophobia (HM Government 2012a and 2014, Home Office 2016), and the cross-departmental working group set up to provide a consultative forum for civil society

organizations, policymakers and academics is named the 'Anti-Muslim Hatred Working Group'.

It seems to me circuitous and disingenuous to omit Islamophobia from explicit mention in such formats: much more so when the wider context of negative associations centring on 'Islam' and 'Islamic' is taken into consideration. Anti-Muslim hatred cannot be divorced from the pervasiveness of anti-Islam discourses, in our print media and as explanations for radicalization in our political discourse.

There is a normative and positive reason for Muslim civil society organizations to adopt 'Islamophobia' as favoured terminology while its relevance in policy discourses, for the most part, seems to be waning. Disputed definitions aside, 'Islamophobia' presents Muslims with an opportunity to address both the causes and the effects of anti-Muslim animosity. The 1997 report, with its typology of open/closed views of Islam, did precisely this by presenting the effects on Muslims of closed views. While the definition offered by the report may have been too expansive to be useful, the centrality of negative views about Islam for Muslims as victims was instrumental to devising initiatives to tackle the causes as well as the effects.

At a time when the terms 'Islam', 'Islamic', 'extremist Islam' and 'Islamist' are prolifically used and laden with negative overtones, is it so surprising that 'Islamophobia' retains its potency in naming the object of hate?

14 Fear, indifference and engagement: Rethinking the challenge of anti-Muslim bigotry

Kenan Malik

The original 1997 Runnymede Trust report observes of the word 'Islamophobia' that 'it is not ideal' but is nevertheless 'a useful shorthand way of referring to dread or hatred of Islam – and, therefore, to fear or dislike of all or most Muslims' (Runnymede Trust 1997). I want to argue in this chapter that the word is not just 'not ideal' but deeply problematic, and one that makes it more difficult to challenge bigotry and discrimination against Muslims.

The term has come to be used by both proponents and opponents of bigotry to blur the distinction between criticism and hatred. On the one hand, it enables many to attack criticism of Islam as illegitimate because it is judged to be 'Islamophobic'. On the other, it permits those who promote hatred to dismiss condemnation of that hatred as stemming from an illegitimate desire to avoid criticism of Islam. In conflating criticism and bigotry, the very concept of Islamophobia makes it more difficult to engage in a rational discussion about where and how to draw the line between the two, and about how to challenge the latter.

I am not simply making a semantic or terminological point. I am questioning, rather, a particular way of looking at the problem that seems often to compound, rather than alleviate, the problems facing Muslims.

In thinking about how to deal with anti-Muslim bigotry and discrimination, we need to distinguish four categories: criticism of Islam; hatred of Muslims; discriminatory practices; and violent acts. For reasons of space, I will, in this chapter, deal largely with the first two issues – that is, issues primarily of speech and thought – and will have little to say about the latter two, though the question of how to confront discrimination, in particular, raises equally challenging issues.

When it comes to the criticism of ideas, nothing, in my view, should be out of bounds. Nothing should be unsayable simply because someone finds it offensive, or because it is culturally or religiously sensitive. It is a view that today finds little resonance. Much of the discussion about Islamophobia revolves around questions of what speech should be limited and how.

To unpack this discussion, we need again to separate out certain distinct categories. We need, in particular, to distinguish between the giving of offence, the promotion of bigotry or hatred, and the incitement of violence. The boundaries between the categories are blurred, and have deliberately been made more so in recent practice and policymaking. The 1986 Public Order Act, for instance, forbids the use of 'threatening, abusive or insulting words or behaviour, within the hearing and sight of a person likely to be caused harassment, alarm or distress thereby', a phrasing that conflates offence, hatred and violence. The use of the concept of Islamophobia has helped further erode such distinctions. The distinctions are, nevertheless, important, as are the different ways in which we should respond to the different categories.

I will argue in this chapter that the giving of offence should be acceptable in an open, plural, democratic society. The fomenting of hatred can be deeply problematic, creating fear within certain communities and begetting violence. But while bigotry and hate speech need urgently to be tackled, they need tackling primarily at a political and moral level, rather than through the use of legislation to restrict speech. The legal line should come at the point not of incitement to hatred but of incitement to violence; direct incitement should be an offence, just as the violence being incited is an offence.

It has become commonplace to argue that while free speech may be a good, it must necessarily be less free in a plural society. For diverse societies to function and to be fair, so the argument runs, we need to show respect not just for individuals but also for the cultures and beliefs in which those individuals are embedded and which help give them a sense of identity and being. This requires that we police public discourse about those cultures and beliefs both to minimize friction between antagonistic cultures and beliefs and to protect the dignity of those individuals embedded in them. As the sociologist Tariq Modood has put it, that 'If people are to occupy the same political space without conflict, they mutually have to limit the extent to which they subject each others' fundamental beliefs to criticism' (Modood 2005).

I want to argue the opposite: that it is precisely because we do live in a plural society that we need the fullest extension possible of free speech. In a plural society, it is both inevitable and, often, important that people offend the sensibilities of others.

It is inevitable because where different beliefs are deeply held, clashes are unavoidable. Almost by definition such clashes express what it is to live in a diverse society; they should be openly resolved rather than suppressed in the name of 'respect' or 'tolerance'.

And it is often important because any kind of social change or social progress means offending some deeply held sensibilities. Or to put it another way: 'You can't say that!' is all too often the response of those in power to having their power challenged. To accept that certain things cannot be said is to accept that certain forms of power cannot be challenged.

The notion of giving offence suggests that certain beliefs are so important or valuable to certain people that they should be put beyond the possibility of being insulted, or caricatured or even questioned. The importance of the principle of free speech is precisely that it provides a permanent challenge to the idea that some questions are beyond contention, and hence acts as a permanent challenge to authority. This is why free speech is essential not simply to the practice of democracy, but to the aspirations of those groups who may have been failed by the formal democratic processes: to those whose voices may have been silenced by racism, for instance. The real value of free speech, in other words, is not to those who possess power, but to those who want to challenge them. And the real value of censorship is to those who do not wish their authority to be challenged. Once we give up on the right to offend in the name of 'tolerance' or 'respect', we constrain our ability to challenge those in power, and therefore to challenge injustice.

Commentators and critics often talk about 'offence to a community'. And from *The Satanic Verses* to *Charlie Hebdo*, speech regarded as offensive to Muslims is often described as 'Islamophobic'.

More often than not, though, what is deemed an 'offence to a community' refers in reality to debates within communities. Some Muslims found *The Satanic Verses* offensive. Others did not. Few Muslims objected when the Danish cartoons were first published. Only months of campaigning, primarily by Saudi Arabian authorities, turned the

issue into a flashpoint (Malik 2009: 142–147). It is because what is often called 'offence to a community' is in reality debate within communities that so many of the flashpoints over offensiveness have been over works produced by minority artists – not just Salman Rushdie, but also Hanif Kureishi, Monica Ali, Sooreh Hera, Taslima Nasrin, M. F. Hussain and countless others.

Part of the reason that the debates within communities are often ignored, and the spotlight shone only on the 'offence', derives from the way that many today have come to understand the meaning of community and of diversity. Anti-Muslim bigots look upon Muslims as comprising an undifferentiated lump. Muslims, in their eyes, constitute a single, homogeneous community, all speaking with a common voice, all defined primarily by their faith, all hostile to 'western values' and all bearing social views that have remained unchanged for over a millennium.

Put like that, few liberals would agree with such a perspective. Yet, the common liberal or left-wing view of Muslim communities is not that different.

Naser Khader is a secular Danish MP of Muslim background. He tells of a conversation with Tøger Seidenfaden, editor of *Politiken*, a left-wing Danish newspaper that was critical of the Muhammad cartoons. Seidenfaden claimed that 'the cartoons insulted all Muslims'. Khader responded: 'I am not insulted.' 'But you're not a real Muslim', was Seidenfaden's response (Malik 2009: 164).

'You're not a real Muslim.' Why? Because to be a proper Muslim is, from such a perspective, to find the cartoons offensive. Anyone who is not offended is by definition not a proper Muslim. The argument of the liberal anti-racist here meets that of the anti-Muslim bigot. For the latter, the real Muslim is the reactionary Muslim; for the former, the liberal Muslim is not a real Muslim. And in eliding criticism of Islam with hatred of Muslims, the concept of Islamophobia helps makes it easier for the bigot to portray his bigotry as criticism of Islam and for the liberal to view criticism of Islam as a form of bigotry.

This leads us to the questions of bigotry and of incitement to hatred. It is one thing to cause offence; it is quite another to foment hatred. If the giving of offence should be acceptable in an open, plural society, hatred, bigotry should not. How, then, should we challenge such bigotry and hatred?

Hate speech laws – the outlawing of certain forms of speech defined as hateful – have become accepted as essential weapons in combating bigotry. But just as the received wisdom that it is morally wrong to give offence is misplaced, so is the received wisdom that hate speech and bigotry should be outlawed. We certainly need to resist all attempts to use criticism of Islam to demonize Muslims. But criticism, of whatever kind, even if it is hateful or bigoted, should be seen as a moral and political, not legal, issue.

The argument that we should censor speech to prevent bigotry raises a number of questions. The first is about who decides what should be censored.

In January 2006, Iqbal Sacranie, then secretary general of the Muslim Council of Britain, made some derogatory comments about homosexuality on Radio 4's *Today* programme. Homosexuality, he said was 'harmful' and 'not acceptable'. According to Sacranie, 'scientific evidence' showed that homosexuality led to 'illnesses and diseases' (BBC News 2006).

Sacranie saw himself as merely expressing what he considered to be the Islamic view. Many gay groups saw his comments as promoting hatred. Scotland Yard's community safety unit launched an investigation into whether Sacranie's comments constituted 'hate speech', and whether he had fallen foul of the 1986 Public Order Act, which forbids the use of 'threatening, abusive or insulting words'.

In response to the police investigation, 22 imams and Muslim leaders wrote to *The Times* (2006) demanding the right to be able to 'freely express their views in an atmosphere free of intimidation or bullying'. They added that 'We cannot truly claim to be a free and open society while we are trying to silence dissenting views'. Many of those same leaders had called for Salman Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses* to be banned. Sacranie himself had said of Rushdie, immediately after the Ayatollah Khomeini issued his fatwa calling for the author's murder, that 'Death is too good for him'. And every one of the signatories to the *Times* letter had wanted the Danish cartoons, published just four months before Sacranie's comments, to be censored.

The kind of hypocrisy, or moral blindness, expressed by those Muslim leaders is widespread. Many of those happy to see cartoons lampooning Mohammed draw the line at anything mocking the Holocaust. Many gay rights activists want Muslims to

be prosecuted for homophobia but want the right to criticize Muslims as they see fit. Racists such as Nick Griffin of the British National Party (BNP) or Tommy Robinson of the English Defence League (EDL) want to be free to spout racist abuse but want Muslim clerics locked up for doing the same. And so it goes on. The argument for the censorship of bigotry quickly degenerates into the claim that 'my speech should be free but yours is too costly'.

The problem of censoring bigotry is not simply the difficulty in defining what it is that should be censored. It is also that the consequence of such censorship is not what many believe it to be. Banning certain forms of speech does not reduce or eliminate bigotry. It simply festers beyond the public gaze. Sheffield University social geographer Gill Valentine, for instance, suggests that hate speech restrictions do not reduce bigotry but rather 'change its form' and 'privatize' it. 'The privatized nature of contemporary prejudice', Valentine argues, 'makes it more difficult to expose and challenge, producing a frustration that offenders are "getting away with it", and making it harder to identify patterns of prejudice in form and intent.' For those 'critical of the progressive social norms ... there is a sense of anger and frustration that their views are being silenced in public by the law'. The danger, Valentine concludes, 'is that if these mutual and antagonistic senses of injustice are not openly acknowledged they might be exploited by extremist political parties and erupt into tension and conflict' (Valentine 2014).

The rise, in the past few years, of anti-immigrant, anti-Muslim political parties throughout Europe bears out Valentine's warning. The emergence of such organizations has been regarded by some as showing the necessity for even tighter controls on bigoted speech. In fact, the attempt to outlaw bigotry through censorship has itself provided some of the fuel for such bigotry.

The consequence of challenging bigotry through censorship also leads 'anti-racists into a false comfort zone, where it feels like the basic arguments against prejudice no longer need to be put', as the journalist Paul Mason (2014) has put it. It helps absolve us, in other words, of the responsibility of tackling such ideas openly and robustly.

It is, in my view, morally incumbent on advocates of free speech also to challenge bigotry. Part of the reason for free speech is to be able to create the conditions for open, robust debate, conditions necessary to allow us to challenge obnoxious views.

And part of the reason that such obnoxious views continue to flourish is that too many remain keener to censor than to challenge.

It is worth noting too that, just as with the attempt to censor offence, minorities themselves are all too often the victims of legal constraints on bigotry. The 1965 Race Relations Act introduced Britain's first legal ban on the incitement of racial hatred. The first person convicted under its provisions was not a member of the National Front or of the Racial Preservation Society but the Trinidadian Black Power activist Michael X, sentenced to 12 months' imprisonment in 1967. Four members of the Universal Coloured Peoples' Association were also convicted that year for stirring up hatred against white people at Speakers' Corner.

In the 1960s and 1970s, incitement laws were often used to target black activists whose views were regarded as unacceptable or dangerous. Today, those with unacceptable Muslim or Islamist views are more likely to be targets. In Britain, Muslims with unpalatable views, from Samina Malik (the so-called 'lyrical terrorist') to protestors against the Danish cartoons, who were jailed for up to six years for chants that 'solicited murder' and 'incited racial hatred', have felt the coercive impact of such laws (BBC News 2007a, 2007b). In France, after the *Charlie Hebdo* killings, the government organized a huge march through Paris in defence of free speech. It also used hate speech laws to criminalize those who dissented from the official view, from the antisemitic comedian Dieudonné to schoolchildren who refused to honour the slain cartoonists (Agence France-Presse 2015, Amnesty International 2015). Many countries now use hate speech laws to outlaw support for the anti-Israel BDS (Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions) movement.

Critics of such policies usually cry 'Islamophobia'. But what has helped legitimize such actions is the way that anti-racists themselves have both demanded the criminalization of hate and helped expand the meanings of 'hatred' and 'incitement'. When the state gets to criminalize dissenting speech, even if it is bigoted, minorities themselves too often suffer.

All this suggests that the concept of Islamophobia not only elides criticism and bigotry in a problematic fashion, but is also an expression of a wider way of thinking about racism, and of how to combat it, that seems to me unhelpful. To understand this better, let me finish by returning to the question of 'diversity', of

how we conceive of it today, and of how we should conceive of it.

When we talk about diversity, what we mean is that the world is a messy place, full of clashes and conflicts. That is all for the good, for such clashes and conflicts are the raw material of political and cultural engagement. The importance of diversity is that it allows us to expand our horizons, bringing different values, beliefs and lifestyles face to face, and forcing us to think about those differences. Only this can create the political dialogue and debate necessary, paradoxically, to help forge a more universal language of citizenship.

But the very thing that is valuable about diversity – the cultural and ideological clashes that it brings about – is precisely what many fear. That fear can take two forms. On the one side there is the nativist sentiment that immigration undermines social cohesion and erodes our sense of national identity. Islam, in particular, elicits such fear. Many view Islam through the lens of the 'clash of civilizations', a perspective that leads politicians and commentators – not just on the right but self-proclaimed liberals too – towards deeply illiberal arguments: insisting, for instance, that Muslim immigration must be limited, or that racial profiling is necessary in the 'war on terror', or that it is not possible to be racist against Muslims because Muslims are not a 'race'.

And on the other side there is the multicultural perspective, that sees Britain, in the words of the Commission on the Future of Multi-Ethnic Britain, whose report was published by the Runnymede Trust in 2000, three years after the Islamophobia report, as 'a community of citizens and community of communities', in which equality 'must be defined in a culturally sensitive way and applied in a discriminating but not discriminatory manner' (CMEB 2000). In practice, the idea of a 'community of communities' has helped erode that of a 'community of citizens'. Diversity is too often 'managed' by putting individuals from minority communities into particular ethnic and cultural boxes, defining needs and aspirations by virtue of the boxes into which people are put, and allowing the boxes to shape public policy. Muslims in particular have come to be seen less as citizens who happen to be Muslim than as Muslims who happen to live in Britain.

At the same time, defining equality in a 'culturally sensitive way' has led many to view respect for others as meaning the need to accept their ways of being, and to regard criticisms of, or challenges

to, others' values or practices as 'insensitive', even racist. As a result, boundaries between groups have increasingly become policed in an effort to minimize clashes and conflicts.

The one perspective encourages fear, the other indifference. What neither begins to address is the question of *engagement*. Engagement requires us neither to shun certain people as the Other, with values and practices inevitably inimical to ours, nor to be indifferent to such values and practices in the name of 'respect', but rather to recognize that respect requires us to challenge the values and beliefs of others. It requires us to have a robust, open public debate about the values to which we aspire, accepting that such a debate will be difficult, and often confrontational, but also that such difficult, confrontational debate is a necessity in any society that seeks to be open and liberal.

It requires us, in other words, to remake the very framework within which Islam, and Muslims, are viewed from both sides of the debate.

15 Islamophobia and antisemitism

David Feldman

Islamophobia became a matter of public debate in the 1990s and ever since then its congruence with antisemitism has been a recurrent theme. As early as 1994, three years before the publication of *Islamophobia: A Challenge for Us All*, the Runnymede Trust convened a commission on 'the persistence and dangers of antisemitism'. One member, Akbar Ahmed, expressed his hope that the Trust would set up a similar commission 'to study prejudice against Muslims and Islam'. His colleagues agreed to the extent that they included the aspiration in their final report (Runnymede Commission on Antisemitism 1994: 15). This tentative connection drawn between Islamophobia and antisemitism has been supplemented and developed more systematically in the last decades by scholars, as well as by institutions whose aim is to combat racism and discrimination. Together they suggest that Islamophobia and antisemitism should be conceived within a single frame of analysis and action, though they differ over how exactly this should be done. In the following pages I explore these attempts to bind together opposition to Islamophobia and antisemitism. However, I also highlight the social, political and conceptual constraints that limit the impact of ecumenical anti-racism of this sort, and which promote division between Muslims and Jews.

In 1978 Edward Said drew attention to the connectedness of antisemitism and aspects of what we would now call Islamophobia when he observed that 'Orientalism' in its 'Islamic branch' and antisemitism 'resemble each other very closely' (Said 1978: 28). Orientalism, for Said, was the nexus of western knowledge about the Orient which both expressed and enabled western power over the Middle East. Without denying the significance of modern empires and what they have conceived as their civilizing mission, more recent writers have emphasized the common roots of antisemitism and Islamophobia in a conception of Europe, and of modern national identity within Europe, which has been essentially Christian. In 2002/3 the European Union Monitoring Commission Board chairman, Robert Purkiss, illustrated the currency of this idea that Muslims and Jews alike faced a single source of discrimination and hostility:

Our conceptions of European identity are significant drivers of anti-Semitism and Islamophobia. One of the similarities between anti-Semitism and Islamophobia is their historical relationship to a Europe perceived as exclusively Christian. Jews have of course suffered the most unspeakable crimes by European Christians. But it is true that all other religions, including Judaism and Islam have been excised from the prevailing understanding of Europe's identity as Christian and white. Both Islam and Judaism have long served as Europe's 'other', as a symbol for a distinct culture, religion and ethnicity. (Bunzl 2007: 9)

Increasingly, scholars have argued that the process of stigmatization and discrimination experienced by Muslims and Jews has not only marked them as religious minorities but has also been characterized by their 'racialization'. Religious differences, they argue, were conceived as immutable cultural differences which converted the messy diversity of Muslims and Jews into the collective 'Muslim' and 'Jew'. These negative stereotypes did not denote differences of belief only but were markers that saturated their subjects' being. Often these stereotypes were linked with ideas about lineage, blood and phenotypical characteristics, but the more vital point is that both Jews and Muslims were branded with negative generalizations that were about not only their religious lives but their immutable attitudes and behaviour more broadly (Meer 2014).

Other writers have focused less on religion, or on the common processes of racialization, and more on the ways in which the histories of Islamophobia and antisemitism form a shared story. For Matti Bunzl the relationship between the two is sequential. Since the 19th century, he suggests, secular ideas and projects have formed the mainspring of prejudice. Antisemitism in the late 19th and early 20th centuries was anchored in ideas about race, was fuelled by nationalism and turned on the question of whether Jews could be included within the new national communities. Islamophobia, by contrast, Bunzl sees as a phenomenon of the late 20th and early 21st centuries, fuelled by geopolitical conflicts in the Middle East and by population movements that have brought millions of Muslims to Europe. It does not turn on religion or race, he proposes, but on the idea of civilization and the notion that Islam engenders a worldview that is fundamentally

incompatible with western culture. In this way Bunzl connects antisemitism and Islamophobia but does so by arguing they have performed similar functions at different times in Europe and within different political systems (Bunzl 2014).

Most recently, Gil Anidjar, James Renton and Ben Gidley have argued that Islamophobia and antisemitism have changed over time but they have changed together. Jews and Muslims were jointly expelled from Iberia in 1492 and the idea of Europe never broke free of Christendom. Jews were 'the Other' within, Muslims the external 'Other', one that appeared increasingly threatening, following the Ottoman seizure of Constantinople in 1453. In the 19th century Jews and Muslims were jointly conceived as Semites, bound by a linguistic and racial heritage as well as by Abrahamic monotheism. Arabs were Jews on horseback, as Disraeli wrote. It was only in the 20th century, Renton argues, following the alliance in 1917 between the British Empire and Zionism, that European notions of Muslims and Jews entered a new period in which Jews ceased to be 'Oriental' and Islam was reconceived as a political problem (Anidjar 2003, Renton and Gidley 2017, Renton 2017).

These efforts to draw Muslims and Jews closer together by highlighting the combined development of antisemitism and Islamophobia are a significant and collective intellectual achievement. They are also a political intervention. Relations between Jews and Muslims in the UK are often distant and sometimes vexed. This is the case notwithstanding the everyday interactions between Muslims and Jews in employment and consumption and the valiant efforts by a few to build understanding. In this context, by insisting on the histories and challenges shared by Muslims and Jews, the scholars and activists I have been discussing push back against the current.

The lack of contact between Jews and Muslims in Britain arises in large part from their divergent social experiences. Whereas the Jewish population is mainly UK-born and coded as 'white', just over half of the Muslim population in Britain was born outside of the country, and it is composed largely, though by no means entirely, of people of colour. Moreover, the class profiles of the two populations diverge widely: 50% of Muslims in the UK are living in poverty, and Muslims constitute the religious population most likely to experience poverty, whereas Jews are the least likely, with just 13% living in poverty. Just 9% of Jews live in social rented accommodation compared with 27% of Muslim households, and Jewish households are correspondingly more

likely to own their homes. At the upper end of the scale, we find Muslims are the religious group least represented in 'top professions' in England and Wales in proportion to their total number while Jews are the most highly represented proportionate to their total number. These different experiences generate spatial as well as social distance: 46% of the Muslim population live in the 10% most deprived areas in England; the figure for Jews, by contrast, is just 3% (Graham et al. 2007, Muslim Council of Britain 2015, Feldman et al. 2017, Heath and Li 2015, Reynolds and Birdwell 2015).

Differences in social class are supplemented by political divergence. Most British Jews are now supporters of the Conservative Party, whereas Muslims tend to support Labour (Heath et al. 2013, Survation 2017). Further, Jews and Muslims tend to have contrary and, often, deeply felt allegiances in the conflicts produced by the creation of the State of Israel in 1948, by the Nakba, the policies of the state of Israel and the development of the Palestinian national movement. If we turn from these allegiances overseas to the ways in which Muslims and Jews are represented within domestic political debate we see a further striking dissimilarity. Whereas Jews have been portrayed by David Cameron and other political leaders as a model minority – law-abiding, aspiring, with a strong sense of collective identity that dovetails with patriotism – Muslims are presented as a group that places itself and others in jeopardy – inhabiting a culture of poverty, insufficiently integrated into British society, and a source of sympathy for terror and the nation's enemies (*Jewish Chronicle* 2011, Gov.uk 2015).

These social and political differences are matched by the suspicion with which significant elements in the Jewish and Muslim populations regard each other. Since 2000 there has been a steady rise of recorded antisemitic incidents in Britain and this has been matched by a growing fear of antisemitism among the British Jewish population (Feldman et al. 2017, FRA 2013). Although there is no credible evidence that Muslims are responsible for the rise in the number of reported antisemitic incidents, some individuals and institutions assert that 'radical Islam' is the primary driver of antisemitism in the UK (Feldman et al. 2017). This suspicion of the Muslim population among some Jews is returned in kind by a significant minority of Muslims. The most recent and extensive survey of antisemitism in Britain found that most Muslims do not respond positively to antisemitic statements but, at the same time, antisemitism 'is consistently higher among the

Muslim population of Great Britain than among the population in general' (Staetsky 2017: 6, 56).

In the face of much that pulls Jews and Muslims in different and sometimes opposite directions, when scholars and activists point to the shared foundations and functions of Islamophobia and antisemitism they highlight the common sources of prejudice that have afflicted both groups. Nevertheless, the very terms that we use in these discussions – Islamophobia and antisemitism – are sometimes used in ways that subvert this fragile solidarity. A greater awareness of where the terms come from and how they are used will bring this into view and make us more aware of the pitfalls and complexity we face.

The term 'antisemitism' was first popularized in Germany in the late 1870s and 1880s. Here self-proclaimed antisemites argued that equal rights for Jews – which had been decisively achieved only in 1871 – had been a grave mistake and that the state should take urgent action to protect Germans and Germanness from Jews and Jewish influence. It was only at this point that the word was taken up by Jews and their allies, and by commentators, and was disseminated rapidly across languages as they fought to sustain and vindicate equal rights for the Jewish minority. It meant something very specific: the attack on the Jews' legal and political rights. As one German-Jewish Zionist put it in 1913, 'the antisemitic movement grew up on German soil; it is almost as old as the enfranchisement of the Jews' (Feldman 2017). Two points follow from this. First, although we have become accustomed to thinking of antisemitism as 'the longest hatred', synonymous with all forms of anti-Jewish prejudice over millennia, the term both is quite young and originally had a very narrow and precise meaning. Second, we can see how the charge of antisemitism was closely connected to a programme of claiming rights for Jews: in this case, equal civil and political rights in Germany.

In other words, objections to antisemitism were never just that. In the late 19th and early 20th centuries antisemitism was identified with an assault on equal rights. This conception of antisemitism did not disappear in the inter-war years. Indeed, the victories of National Socialism in Germany and Austria illustrated its continuing relevance. After 1945 the campaign against antisemitism extended to Jews in the Soviet Union. For some this was a fight to secure Jews their rights under the Soviet constitution, for others it was Jews' human rights that were at stake, and for others still the campaign for Jews to be allowed to leave the USSR and go to Israel was a struggle for their national rights as Jews.

The campaign against antisemitism at the same time invoked a set of rights that was being violated.

What then of Islamophobia? In a suggestion that meshes well with the development of the concept of antisemitism, AbdoolKarim Vakil proposes, 'Islamophobia ... is about contestation and the power to set the political vocabulary and legal ground of recognition and redress, naming and claiming Islamophobia as a social category with legal purchase' (Vakil 2011: 277). As presented by Runnymede in 1997, Islamophobia was anatomized and analysed in the context of liberal and social democratic values. Indeed, the harms identified as Islamophobic make no sense without these other, positive values. 'The term Islamophobia', the report stated, 'refers to unfounded hostility towards Islam.' The report went on at length to develop a contrast between what it called 'closed' and 'open' views of Islam. 'Phobic dread of Islam' is said to be the recurring characteristic of closed views which have malign practical consequences: first, unfair discrimination against Muslim individuals and communities and, second, exclusion of Muslims from mainstream political and social affairs. This we might take to be the liberal characterization of Islamophobia, derived from a tradition of late-20th-century responses to racism. The roots of the problem are seen to lie in prejudice, in faulty cognition, and the answer lies in respect for empirical variation (which will undermine any negative generalization about Islam or Muslims) and rational debate. The goal of policy should be to promote equal opportunities and harmonious relations between members of different communities. The key recommendation, therefore, was to extend anti-discrimination legislation to cover religious as well as ethnic minorities (Runnymede Trust 1997).

In the same ways that the charge of antisemitism has carried an assertion of the Jews' claims for rights, so too the charge of Islamophobia claims rights in the name of the Muslim population. In the years that followed the Runnymede report's publication we also see the charge of Islamophobia being articulated in a new register. Tariq Modood has reflected that the expression of grievances concerning Islamophobia in Britain is closely connected to a rise in Muslim consciousness and a 'struggle for recognition' (Modood 2014). Salman Sayyid similarly proposes that 'an understanding of Islamophobia in absence of an understanding of the way in which there has been a global reassertion of Muslim identity is difficult to sustain' (Sayyid 2011: 11). There has been a shift from the universalism that shaped the attack on Islamophobia in 1997. At the very least, this

perspective has been supplemented by one that privileges specifically Muslim interests.

international differences that currently drive Muslims and Jews further apart.

We can see something similar in the case of antisemitism. Through much of the 20th century the meanings attached to antisemitism rested on universal ideals as well as Jewish interests – upon the ideas of equality vested in Jewish emancipation and minority rights. This concept of antisemitism has not disappeared but it has been supplemented and sometimes overshadowed by a concept of antisemitism that is attached to the defence of Israel, its right to exist and its policies. The creation of the State of Israel in 1948 marked a radical break in Jewish history. When Israel is the subject of debate the charge of antisemitism may still invoke the rights of a historically persecuted minority, such as whenever Jews are libelled as a uniquely self-interested and darkly conspiratorial force. However, the charge of antisemitism often arises in contexts in which Jews defend the policies of a state which defines itself as Jewish and in which Jews compose the majority of the population, in which the non-Jewish minorities suffer some systematic disadvantage and which since 1967 has exercised dominion beyond its internationally recognized borders (Peleg and Waxman 2011). When the charge of antisemitism arises in the context of debate on the politics of Israel/Palestine it is wielded, in part at least, as an adjunct to state power and not as an auxiliary to the claims of a vulnerable minority.

The changed appearance of the politics of anti-antisemitism renders common cause with anti-Islamophobia decreasingly likely. Paradoxically, one tendency held in common among Muslims and Jews in recent decades only serves to deepen separation: namely, the politics of identity. A large majority (93%) of British Jews report that Israel forms part of their identity as Jews, and 90% support Israel's right to exist as a Jewish state (Miller et al. 2015). This is one potent reason why rhetorical attacks on Israel are experienced by them as attacks on their identity as Jews and are labelled as antisemitic. In the case of Islamophobia too, AbdoolKarim Vakil notes, 'Where Islam is integral to Muslim identities, the denigration of Islam impacts on Muslim respect and self-worth' (Vakil 2011: 276).

An anti-racist politics built on the language of rights may (just) be able to negotiate the space between Jews and Muslims both in British society and as they respond to conflict in Israel/Palestine. But an anti-racist politics built on the politics of Muslim and Jewish identity will help entrench those domestic and

16 The Runnymede Commission on British Muslims and Islamophobia: A history

Robin Richardson

The Runnymede Commission on Islamophobia and British Muslims had its formal origins in a Runnymede project in the early 1990s concerned with antisemitism. One of the recommendations arising from that project was that a similar project should be established concerned with Islamophobia (Runnymede Commission on Antisemitism 1994). Less formally, it arose from discussions among Runnymede's staff members and some of its trustees about the nature and definition of Runnymede's core subject matter, race relations. These latter discussions had been influenced by contact with the An-Nisa Society in north-west London, the journal *Q News*, the development of plans to create the organization that in due course became known as the Muslim Council of Britain, and personal and professional contact with the author of a range of papers and articles about British Muslims and the forms of discrimination they encountered, Tariq Modood. I was for my own part director of Runnymede throughout the three years, 1993–1996, during which the plans for a commission on Islamophobia gestated and were finalized, and acted as drafting editor of the commission's report in the period 1996–1997.

Terminology

It was in May 1996 that the first meeting took place of, as it was at that time called, the Runnymede Trust Commission on Islamophobia. From the outset there was a lively and lengthy discussion about the terms of reference for the commission, starting with its proposed name.

Some of the commissioners supported 'Commission on Islamophobia' as the project's title and were not prepared to modify it in any way. They had agreed to be members of the commission, they indicated, on the understanding that the proposed title would not be changed. Others said that, minimally, the title needed modifying but preferably should not contain the word 'Islamophobia' at all. Arguments underlying the latter position included: the concept of phobia is unacceptable, since it implies deep-seated mental illness and should only be used in medical contexts and by medical experts; the word 'Islamophobia' is virtually unknown in the wider world and its use in the title of the commission would provoke derision

or anger, or both, among people unfamiliar with it; all the commission's members were UK citizens or long-term residents of the UK and as a group they would not have appropriate expertise or credibility to talk about Islamophobia even in the rest of Europe, let alone in the world at large – and for this reason if no other the title must imply a focus on Britain rather than on everywhere; and the hostility that Muslims in Britain and the world experience from others is to an extent caused by themselves and their worldview and behaviour, and the commission should signal awareness of this in its very title.

Those who did not want the word 'Islamophobia' in the commission's title coalesced around the view that the title should be 'Commission on British Muslims'. This was unacceptable to others, particularly in view of some of the arguments that had been advanced in support of it. Eventually the chairperson proposed 'the Commission on British Muslims and Islamophobia'. No one objected.

In various ways these arguments and disagreements have continued to be replayed in national conversations about Islamophobia over the last two decades.

Origins

The Runnymede Trust was founded in 1968. Up until about 1992 the dominant terms in Runnymede's discourse were 'race', 'race relations' and 'colour' – the Trust's work reflected, that is to say, the conceptual consensus established by the Race Relations Acts of the 1960s and 1976. The dominant discourse portrayed everyone as either white or coloured – or, according to the terminology developed in the eighties, white or black (later, since about 1998, white or BME – Black and minority ethnic). The worldview reflected in this language was derived in part from the United States and in part from Britain's experience as a colonial power.

Alternative worldviews were, however, advocated within the Runnymede staff team and by some of its trustees, and in 1992 the Trust set up a commission on a form of racism that was clearly not essentially to do with colour: antisemitism. As stated above, one of the report's formal recommendations was

that there should be a broadly similar commission on Islamophobia.

It took almost two years to begin implementing this recommendation. There was difficulty in agreeing who should be approached to chair the proposed commission on Islamophobia and how to choose its members. Some of the trustees were concerned about such a radical departure from the prevailing race relations paradigm enshrined in the 1976 Act, and had unhappy memories of how CARD (the Campaign Against Racial Discrimination) had fragmented and collapsed in the 1960s.

Discussions and disagreement

In due course, however, a commission was established that had substantial expertise and credibility. The chairperson, Gordon Conway, was entirely clear that the commission was about Islamophobia, not about British Muslims, but equally clear that it was about the impact of Islamophobia in Britain, not in the world generally. In early 1997 the commission published and circulated a consultation paper. This was entitled *Islamophobia: Its Features and Dangers* and took the form of an A5 24-page booklet. It concluded with five principles or propositions to guide further action. Also, there were nine questions for discussion and consideration. The five propositions were as follows:

- Urgency. Islamophobia is a serious and dangerous feature of contemporary affairs and culture. It is urgent that substantial measures should be adopted to confront and reduce it.
- Many roles. Many different people in Britain have significant roles to play, both separately and in cooperation and coordination with each other. They include politicians and journalists, both nationally and locally; opinion-formers and policymakers in a wide range of fields, including education, the justice system, employment and government; church leaders; and prominent members of Muslim communities.
- Many tasks. Many kinds of action are required. No one measure will be sufficient in itself. Changes in the law on discrimination are probably required, for example, but so also are less tangible and visible measures relating to attitudes and beliefs, and to building trust and respect.
- A significant distinction. A distinction needs to be drawn, by both Muslims and non-Muslims, between phobic opposition to Islam on the one

hand and reasonable criticism and disagreement on the other. Not all criticisms of Islam are intrinsically phobic.

- The international dimension. Islamophobia within Britain is affected by trends and events elsewhere. So also, within Britain, are Muslim self-definitions, perceptions and identities. The international dimension needs to be borne in mind, but is no excuse for not tackling Islamophobia within Britain with great urgency.

The written responses to the booklet were overwhelmingly positive, particularly from Muslim organizations and individuals. They included a remarkably substantial submission from the Islamic Foundation, and this was invaluable when the commission came in due course to formulate its final report. There was virtually no response from the race relations world. The booklet was sent to all race equality councils in Britain and to a wide range of race equality officers in public bodies. Very few, however, replied.

Outcomes and reflections

Islamophobia: A Challenge for Us All was published in autumn 1997 and was launched at the House of Commons by then-Home Secretary Jack Straw. It made 60 formal recommendations and many of these were in due course implemented, though not necessarily – of course – as a direct result of the commission's report.

Key recommendations included the following:

- Government departments, bodies and agencies should review equal opportunities policies in employment, service delivery and public consultation, and ensure these refer explicitly to religion as well as to ethnicity, race and colour.
- The Department for Education should collect, collate and publish data on the ethnic origins and attainment of pupils in all schools ... and on the religious affiliations of pupils in all schools; should review and if necessary modify the criteria and procedures for providing state funding to religiously based schools, to ensure they do not discriminate against Muslim bodies; ensure Muslim educationists, as also educationists from other faith communities, are involved in discussions of education for citizenship; give guidance to registered inspectors on points to look for when reporting on the arrangements which schools make for the pastoral, cultural and religious needs

of Muslim pupils; encourage more Muslims to train as teachers, including but not only for the teaching of religious education.

- The legal system should make discrimination on religious grounds unlawful; ensure that proposed new legislation on racial violence makes reference to religion; and the Public Order Act 1986 to make incitement to religious hatred unlawful.
- Healthcare organizations should develop guidelines on good practice in healthcare relating to religious and cultural needs, including topics such as the following: employment and use of non-Christian chaplains, religious observance, diet and food ... consultations and contacts with local faith communities, advocacy and befriending services.

However, some of the potentially most important recommendations were ignored or misunderstood. Consider, for example, recommendation number 56, very slightly adapted for quotation out of context:

- Race equality organizations and monitoring groups should address Islamophobia in their programmes of action, for example by advocating and lobbying for the policy and procedural changes recommended in this report.

It was further clarified that this would entail reviewing the definition of racial harassment used in policy documentation and ensuring it contained an explicit reference to religion, and routinely complaining to the Press Complaints Commission and to the newspapers concerned when it was considered that coverage of Islam or of Muslims had been inaccurate, misleading or distorted. Race equality organizations did not comment formally on this recommendation, let alone make any attempt to implement it. Instead, they put their weight behind moves to define Islamophobia as nothing more than 'discrimination on grounds of religion or belief'.

Conclusion

The task of an operation such as the Commission on British Muslims and Islamophobia is to do what is doable and say what is sayable, in the circumstances and constraints of its time and history, and with the human and material resources available to it. This chapter has in effect implied that the commission on Islamophobia was as successful as could be reasonably expected. The fact remains, however, that the dominant race relations paradigm was not at the time affected, and still has not been

materially affected 20 years since the commission's report was published.

With hindsight it is easier than it was 20 years ago to see some of the things that went wrong or were inadequate, and to engage in some wistful 'what if' questions:

- What if the commission had engaged, from the very start, with senior civil servants at the Home Office?
- What if Runnymede had continued to give it high-profile support?
- What if the commission had found a way of raising and discussing difficult and sensitive questions about complexities, conflicts and dilemmas within and between British Muslim communities, and if it had then discussed and given guidance on the ensuing responsibilities of public bodies?

Well, 'what if' questions have their uses. In particular they can help us to look again at potential and possibilities in the here and now, and to do what is doable, and say what is sayable, here, now, today.