

Reflections on the Future of Islam in Britain

رؤى حول مستقبل الإسلام في بريطانيا

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ملخص: في سياق الحديث عن مستقبل المسلمين البريطانيين، يمكن للمرء أن يكون ميثوسًا منه خاصة فيما يتعلق بالتحديات التي يواجهونها، وهي كراهية الإسلام والتكامل والإرهاب والتطرف والإعلام. وعند الاستماع إلى وجهات النظر حول الخطأ في سياسات التعددية الثقافية والهجرة، والبعض الآخر الذي يشعر بالقلق من التنبؤات الديموغرافية، قد يشعر المرء أن توقعات الأغلبية المسلمة في بريطانيا قد تكون حقيقة. ومع ذلك فإن السؤال الذي يجب طرحه هو ما إذا كان الإسلام يمثل تهديدًا للهوية المسيحية الراسخة لبريطانيا أو أن القصة بأكملها ليست سوى مجرد خرافة. إضافة إلى ذلك، يحتاج المرء إلى معرفة ما إذا كانت الحالة المتشائمة للعلاقات بين المجتمعات الإسلامية وغير المسلمة يمكن أن تتغير: يتوقف العنف والتحامل، ويختفي الشك. حدد مفكرون مختلفون رؤى متعددة حول مستقبل الإسلام في الغرب بشكل عام، لكن ذلك يعتمد على الإسلام أولاً، ثم الوقت المناسب لمعرفة ما هو النهج أو الاقتراح الصحيح. ويأتي هذا المقال ليستكشف الرؤية الغربية حول مستقبل وتحديات الإسلام البريطاني، ورؤية المسلمين الأوروبيين في أعقاب النهضة الإسلامية المعاصرة في بريطانيا. لم تثبت المخاوف الغربية ولا الحلم الليبرالي صوابًا في حين أن الإسلام لا يزال ثابتًا وجذابًا لكل من واجهه.

كلمات مفتاحية: مستقبل الإسلام البريطاني؛ الإسلام؛ المسلمون البريطانيون؛ التحديات؛ الإسلاموفوبيا؛ الأحكام المسبقة؛ الرؤى؛ الإحياء؛ الإسلام؛ بريطانيا.

Abstract: In the course of speaking about the future of the British Muslims, one can be hopeless especially with regard to the challenges they are facing namely Islamophobia, integration, terrorism, radicalization and media. Listening to views on being wrong on multiculturalism and immigration policies, and others being alarmed by demographic predictions, one would feel the projection of a majority Muslim Britain could be a fact. Still, however, the question that needs to be raised is whether Islam is a threat to Britain's long-established Christian identity or the whole story is but a myth. In addition to this, one needs to know if the pessimistic state of relations between Muslim and non-Muslim communities can change: violence and prejudice stop, and suspicion disappears. Different thinkers outlined multiple visions about the future of Islam in the West in general, but it depends on Islam first, and then on time to tell whose approach or proposal was right. This essay explores both the Western vision about the future and challenges of British Islam and that of the European Muslims in the wake of contemporary Islamic revival in Britain. Neither the Western worries nor the liberal dream proved right while the faith remained constant and appealing to whoever encountered it.

Keywords: Future of British Islam; Islam; British Muslims; challenges; Islamophobia; prejudice; visions; Islamic revival; Britain; appealing.

1. Introduction: Religion on the whole was of domineering nature in that it was at the origin of humanitarian principles, the human rights laws, and religious minorities' treaties¹. It also was the reason behind intolerance, persecution, conflicts and even wars. Loss of human life because of religion made the issue complicated, and areas related to the protection of religious rights for minorities remained problematic. By the same token, the affair of the role and impact of Islam within Europe caught the attention of many thinkers and politicians. In particular, the rise and spread of Islam in Britain tended to offer an exception to the considerations along which the principles of European and international law were formulated. In 1966 (and in force from 1976) Article 18 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights provided that «Everyone shall have the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion. This right shall include freedom to have or to adopt a religion or belief of his choice, and freedom, either individually or in community

1- Treaty of Vienna (1607) to protect the Protestant minority in Transylvania, the Peace of Westphalia (1648), and others to protect minorities in the Ottoman territories. See Wolfgang Heinz, *Indigenous Populations, Ethnic Minorities and Human Rights* (Berlin 1988); S. J. Anaya, *Indigenous Peoples in International Law* (New York, 1996).

with others and in public or private to manifest his religion or belief in worship, observances, practice and teaching... » (United Nations Human Rights Office) However, this freedom of religion contributed to the expansion of Islam at a pace that seems to threaten to subordinate Christianity to Islam in its homelands. Therefore, in practice, the promise of religious tolerance is being violated.

2. The Western Vision: Although the rapidity with which Islam is expanding is less than that of its early advancement of the seventh century, the current revival of Islamic spirit is generating much astonishment. The seventh century historical and phenomenal growth with which Islam reached the most distant parts of the world did not result in any rivers of blood, fields of corpses, burnt towns, property confiscation, prison scandals, massacre and rapes. Yet, many Europeans predicted and still predict waves of clashes to come from the present time's Islamic resurgence and rivers of blood to flow.

2.1. Enoch Powell's Prophecies: Whoever hears the name 'Enoch Powell' would think of the famous speech 'Rivers of Blood' which he delivered to a Conservative Association meeting in Birmingham on April 20th, 1968. He was born a Tory which means a man who admired the British institutions, mainly the constitution. Yet, he fought that party through his own vision of a Tory. He criticized the British policies as regards immigration, the waste of public money, and warned separate parliament for Scotland. Almost half a century ago, his predictions on how Britain's joining the then-called Common Market would strip her of its economic sovereignty (Heffer. *The Daily Mail*) His moral reputation was reflected in his voidness of any taint of racial, but culminated in many politicians attacking him as a racist because of his many speeches on immigration. His arguments were so powerful that Mrs. Margaret Thatcher (Prime Minister of the UK from 1979 to 1990) developed her economic policy directly from his critique of the Heath government.

Powell was believed to have a gift denied to most politicians, which was of making prophecies that proved exact long afterwards. With respect of this, Simmon Heffer (Powell's biographer) said : « he was right about Europe; right about the single currency; right about economic management; right about Lords reform; right about devolution; right about American imperialism; and, with even Trevor Phillips, the figurehead of the Equalities Commission, now arguing that multiculturalism has failed, right about that, too» (Heffer). Why then was he dismissed from the Shadow Cabinet if he were such a shrewd politician (MP)? He warned Britain, through a meeting talk in his

Wolverthampton Constituency not to ‘be mad’ and allow 50.000 Commonwealth immigrants to settle every year there. If not, Britain will be like a nation «busily engaged in heaping up its own funeral pyre» (Powell). His warning that an influx of immigrants, as witnessed by his constituency, caused a breakdown in community relations outraged Ted Heath and led to his political career’s ruin. Not only was he marginalized because his speech was delivered without his prior warning to his fellow shadow Cabinet member, but because he was right and talking about some unpleasant truths as well.

Powell’s Birmingham speech was replete with Biblical and classical imagery and quotations. With a reference to the Roman Poet Virgil, he warned «like the Roman, I seem to see the River Tiber foaming with much blood» (The Telegraph). This was interpreted as a prophecy that immigration was a threat to the British social harmony, and as a right prediction owing to the race riots that came and went from time to time. However, neither did the Tiber foam nor did Powell himself use the phrase ‘Rivers of blood’ with which he has become linked. Based on Biblical strategy, can Powell be denounced as a racist while he was a devout Christian? It was first believed by many thinkers that he was simply setting out conservative policy, but his language to present that caused an outrage. For others, he was Britain’s very own Samuel Huntington. A third view, Philosopher Roger Scruton, sees Powell as someone interested in truth and its logical conclusions (qtd. in Scafield 320).

The current Islamic revival in Britain alongside the English Summer riots of 2011 and the urban riots of 2012 are often referred to indicate Powell was right in his predictions as regards Britain’s apocalyptic future. In the Spectator, it was stated he «knew full well what England was getting into by opening her borders to Muslims and foreign Afro-Caribbean races» (Taki). If we assume most demographers agreed with his predictions, why then did the political establishment reject him and remain in denial? The situation did not change for the time being since the British politics is always split into two sides: one that supports truth-denying and the other is for truth-telling. There is also George Walden who raised the issue of the British silence on the Islamic problem in his ‘Time to Emigrate?’ which is written as a loving letter to a son thinking of leaving his country which has become a jungle overrun by immigrant barbarians and ceased to be the cultivated peaceful land it used to be. Yet, the rest of analysts would say this is an inevitable consequence of democratic politics in the West in general. Wherever someone else

suffers, as in France, the authorities will claim that they could not have done more. For fear of accusation of racism, or for something else, minority growth and the spread of its attitude are expected to continue to be tolerated (Enoch Powell's 'Rivers of Blood' speech, *The Telegraph*).

Although a lot of people in Britain think immigration was causing serious problems, and communalism will have dangers; the fact that Powell was denounced and became an infamous British political figure made the discussion of multiculturalism fearful if not impossible while the latter seems to be imposed on Britain; the fear seems inherited by the subsequent generations of politicians, too. In the *Telegraph* and in an attempt to prove that Enoch Powell was right about mass immigration threats after the Paris attacks of November 2015, his biographer denied that it was Powell or fear of generations, and stated it was the existence of a «group within Britain's community of predominantly decent, law-abiding and highly civilised Muslims who were determined to impose primitivism and savagery first on their co-religionists and then if they could, on the rest of society» (Heffer).

Powell was certain that the increasing proportion of British-born children of immigrants cannot be a solution for the process of integration, but the case is the opposite. He predicted the problem to be deeper, and his repatriation agenda was meant to avoid that bad reality. Enoch's name was associated with the 'send them back' slogans then and now, but this was impossible. The proof is that in 1968 Powell spoke with urgency because he felt it was too late to send immigrants back. Moreover, immigration control for him would be less important to offer a solution. What about nearly half a century later? Is it much too late, too? Powell's point proved right, and this is what he is remembered for nowadays. Nevertheless, some people still see his fragmented British nation prediction as valid for certain time while invalid in the twenty first century Britain.

2.2. The Clash of Civilizations: Much was made about Islam conquering by the sword, and much is still being made about Islam taking over much of Europe. Equally, some natives might scaremonger and tell their people that the future of Britain will be the rise of a Muslim majority state within. Fears of mass conversion, high birth rates, the issue of immigration, and the imposition of the Shari'a law are what make regular headlines about Muslims wanting the flag of Islam to fly over Buckingham Palace. Although there is no evidence whatsoever for any form of religion being imposed in Britain, worriers predicted a rise in the number of conflicts and clashes that will happen because «the fault lines

between civilizations will be the battle lines of the future» more than twenty years ago (Huntington, ‘‘The Clash of Civilizations ?’’).

Samuel P. Huntington’s thesis of the clash of civilizations is still generating debates over current affairs. This was originally published in the influential journal *Foreign Affairs* in 1993 to suggest that the next pattern of conflicts would be the return of traditional rivalries between nation states. Later, the article was developed into a separate book entitled, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of the World Order*. Huntington’s view of the world political realm as a set of eight distinct civilizations of which the Islamic and Western civilizations would be in continuous conflict because of the negative nature of the former has been much criticized by the people who do not think a clash is possible between Islamic and Western civilizations and reject the negative picture he painted for Islam and the binary opposition he reinforced in his reference to Islam versus the West. Now, that Islam has gone everywhere and by taking the fact that Muslims are the believers of Islam anywhere into consideration, the opposition in Europe will be between European Muslims and Europeans. The West is no longer a separate sphere on its own since Muslims living there are part of it as well, and in this way Islam merges into the West to change the dichotomy (Klausen VIII). This opposition is most apparent in the battle of thoughts that seems to coin contradictory words and phrases to identify the different people. In Great Britain, for instance, we find British Muslims but not British Christians; we find a British Pakistani, but not a British Welsh.

It is within Huntington’s indirect suggestion that Muslims’ mixing of religious matters with political and social issues blocks all possible developments of freedom that many of the current British extremist views are drawn. This theory is more often than not referred to in connection with any type of disagreement between Muslims in the West and its natives. It portrays the Islamic culture not able to accommodate democracy (29). Although he believed that one needs new sources of identity to face the challenges of urbanization and modernization which are found only in religion whose revival is a reaction against secularism, moral decadence and individualism, he found Muslims unable to adapt to their new European environments (264). This is due to their revival of Islam which stands as a demonstration of their anti-Westernism. William H. McNeill agrees with Huntington in his assault on the American assumptions that their national version of human conception is the universal and most valid type. In his ‘Decline of the West?’ he criticized Huntington for his inefficient recipe for adjusting relation between large

blocs of nations (The New York Review of Books). He attributed that to his inability to show why the decline of the West, and the weakness of his suggestion that identity reaffirmation by repudiating multiculturalism would protect the Western values. This sounds strange because civilizations need to interact with one another, and this has historically been the common case even across very long distances.

Concerning the revival of a certain culture, Huntington was right in his view that when modernization functions, a foreign culture makes slow progress to absorb elements of the Western culture, but when the effect of modernization increases, Westernization decreases and the non-Western culture goes through revival. This is the same case with Islam in Britain. The renewed confidence of British Muslims continues to attract the media which perpetually feeds the public opinion with anecdotes reported as facts. The distortion in media coverage and books like the one by Samuel Huntington is what contributes to the prevailing lack of knowledge about Islam and associating it with extremism. Clearly enough, further modernization, cultural misunderstanding, and attempted universal imposition of Western decadent values are causing resentment not dangerous deviance among Muslims, and they are strengthening their commitment to their indigenous cultures. Huntington, thus, was not exact in his findings about the potential for Islam to succeed in the European context. Though after five years, the terrorist attacks in the USA (2001) stopped all doubts about his proposals; the more visible presence of Muslims in the West, and the revitalization of their Islamic culture opposes the foundation of his views on possible religious clashes. In fact, religious leaders from both Christian and Islamic circles share the same opinion on issues such as Secularism, homosexuality, and corruption.

The general expectation that the gospel would spread across the world thanks to the Christian missions and in no more than a century is not so prevalent today as it was in the optimistic years of the 19th century. It is evident that some of the territory where Christianity had once taken root has not remained Christian. Islam, in contrast, «can point to a steady geographical progression from its birthplace and from its earliest years... whereas the Jerusalem of the apostles has fallen, the Mecca of the prophet remains inviolate... Islamic expansion is progressive; Christian expansion is serial» (Walls13). Some analysts attribute Christianity's consistent wane to its reliance only on conversion whereas Islam's resiliency is related to its dependence on both conversion and reproduction. Although the West is at the apex of its power, non-Western cultures are returning to their roots and this would

lead to ethnic conflicts according to Huntington who assumes the most violent of which would be involving Muslim societies and concerned mostly by political values. Indeed, long-standing differences in political values are based on religious cultures, but why he argues this would lead to conflict between and within nation-states remains unclear. The foreseeable cleavage might be between Western democratic values and the developing world, the West in general and Islam, the non-Islamic societies of the West and their Muslim communities, or a single Muslim community among these.

Some of the most important non-Muslim arguments against Huntington's clash theory are its overgeneralization in reference to all European Muslims as being supporters of violence and terrorism. His controversial thesis is considered by many to be a 'self-fulfilling prophecy' and a totalizing approach to Islam that fuels ignorance. In the context of European Muslims, Klausen denied the fact that Muslims tend to be terrorists and claimed that there is very little support for the Muslim terrorist movement in European Muslim communities. Although Huntington speculated at length about what was then the future- that cultural revivalism would dominate the international scene- there is still no evidence for his claim after more than twenty years. In spite of the accelerated process of globalization, the re-Islamization and retraditionalization are taking place in the 21st century peacefully. And if they generated conflicts, this has historically been the case and there is nothing new if they continue to happen. British Muslims, for instance, master the skills of democracy and succeed in attracting thousands of British natives to their faith. If Islam had bloody borders, not a single man in Britain would have interest in it.

Huntington's generalizations have also invited criticism for their failure to realize the importance of global economic and political factors in addition to the impact of globalization. His predictions about deep disputes between the West and Islam contradict the most challenging model relationship that exists between the west's most democratic and secular republic of the USA and the kingdom of Saudi Arabia which is the world's most fundamental Islamic country. To both countries, weapon importation and oil exportation seem to defeat any religious disparity or cultural difference. Similarly, his report of a possible clash between China and the West has not occurred until now. On the contrary, economic relations continue to disregard cultural beliefs. Another illustration could be within the borders of the UK where no inter-cultural quarrels, proposed by the thesis of Huntington have happened though the

2011 UK census showed that about 55% of London residents would be non-white British people. To be sure, he would not have been wrong if he only supposed there would be more emphasis on identity: ancestry, language, traditions and religion. Escalating globalization has indeed put a limit to some new political ideologies and there seems to be a decline in focus on civic belonging giving way to cultural and religious assemblage of peoples. Yet, his belief in future clashes as a result of these gatherings has not been evident. A good case in point that refutes the supposed conflict between Islam and the West is Indonesia where the largest population of Muslims lives harmoniously with the rest of the population. Terrorism has been the sole issue used to strongly uphold Huntington's thesis. Although it was not enough to justify that, the instance of September 11th, 2001 has countless been referred to. Attacks such as the Madrid train bombings (2004), the London underground bombings (2005), Mumbai events (2008), and Paris attacks (2015) are considered as obvious examples of the foreseen civilizational clash and the violent interaction between Islam and the West. Britain, in particular, is believed to be the birthplace of most Islamic terrorists. Recent research reports (Centre for Social Cohesion 2010) showed Britain's terrorists as Muslim, young, educated and likely to flee to the Middle East or pledge allegiance to Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS). This is often pointed out to support the significance of the clash theory in the multicultural societies of Europe in general, but it still fails to recognize the fact that Muslims involved in terrorist organizations constitute an extremist minority. The theory, then, cannot be violated when it ignores the different sects of Islam and their internal conflicts, the various groups of Muslims, and looks at Islam from a confrontational view. In fact, it is in Britain that animosity as a result of sectarian divides of Islam is most evident. Tension mounts to consider Shi'a as not Muslims by their Sunni counterparts, and there are also tensions caused by a particular strand of Sunni Islam (Wyatt. "Sunni-Shi'a Divide in the UK") Of course, this would also lead to clashes if sectarian divide worsens but this will victimize Muslims themselves not their host societies.

There is a firm belief among many scholars that a silent revolution is going on among Western Muslims, and Islam is being revitalized throughout that. The evolution in the ways Islam is adapted and devotion to its principles is kept substantial are so unique that Islam is being purified for the first time in the West in spite of being bound both by the specific laws of the Western country and its own laws of Shari'a at the same time (Ramadan 4, 97; Klausen 9). Klausen agreed that there is a

revival movement of Islam in Europe (9), but there is still a lack of intra-communal dialogue. This is what Ramadan wanted to change by persuading Muslims to become full participants in the Western societies and forget about the bi-polar Islamic stance towards the West – abode of Islam vs. abode of war. He also considered the West as Muslims' home since the five fundamental rights are guaranteed there (the right to practise Islam, the right to knowledge, the right to establish organizations, the right to autonomous representation, and the right to appeal to law) (70). Consequently, the West should be the abode of invitation instead. However, the proof that implicitly the West has long been considered as such is that conversion to Islam has been going on vibrantly ever since Muslims stepped into Europe. Ramadan's requirements for Muslims are to study and reinterpret the textual sources of Islam according to the contemporary context of the world (37), but this reformist approach is criticized by both Muslims and Westerners. The former category disfavors the rereading of the sacred texts while the latter fears it would be a tactic of gradual Islamization¹. The current state of affairs shows that there are both a strongly traditional version of Islam, and a series of proposals to develop an English brand of Islam². It is a kind of intellectual revolution taking root in the UK, but the clash theory is still not a reality. The contributors to this conflict of thoughts are too many: secularists, conservative Europeans, Muslims, extremists on sides, democrats and so forth. What is undeniable amidst the multiple attitudes of these participants in the British scene is that Islam continues to challenge the European frameworks. Klausen believes that the European political system must change for this new interest group of Muslims (108). With the emergence of Muslim political elite, it is possible to facilitate the accommodation of Muslims, the unification of their political dialogue, and the introduction of suitable policies. Irrespective of their ethnic background, British Muslim citizens, for instance, have been the subject of debates on a meaningful plan for their cohabitation from multiculturalism to new Britishness.

Indeed, there are still some painful issues that result from the combination of factors such as the nature of Islamic civilization in the West and their relation, the diversity of this civilization, the representative Muslim voice, Islamophobia, media coverage, and the

1- See Melanine Phillips, *Londonistan : How Britain is Creating a Terror State Within*.

2- See John Bingham. *The Telegraph* 12/09/2016. How Church Choirs could hold secret to reinventing Islam as 'English Faith'.

British government approach to British Muslims and their integration. This is along with lesser aspects such as debates over faith schools, the headscarf, full veil, arranged marriages, some Shari'a laws and other Islam-related controversies. While these cannot cause a national clash in Britain, it is still required to settle all of them, to acknowledge British Muslims as ordinary people and to look at them through the lens of British citizens with complete rights. Islam has become an inseparable element of the lives of British Muslims, and a social reality as well. This has always been true of the faith. Hamilton Gibb stated that «Islam presents a classical example of an entirely self-sufficient, self-enclosed and inbred culture. Of course, it is a universal trait to divide mankind into the 'we-group' and the 'they-group', but Islam has from the beginning, and to a degree far beyond other Mediterranean societies, institutionalized its sense of difference and of superiority» («The Heritage of Islam in the Modern World»⁴). However, the role and influence of Islam within Britain has become a complicated affair amidst the issues of the 'war on terror' and the 'clash of civilizations'. Meanwhile, Islam continues to challenge the myths and stereotypes about it. Its domineering nature is clear in its modern manifestations along with the optimism of its adherents.

3. The Perspective of European Muslims: Among Europeans themselves there are a lot of people who dismissed the idea that Europe is heading toward a future of chaos and bloodshed. As the threat from ISIS extremists grows, the European Union's Head of Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Federica Mogherini asserted that the threat would unite Europeans with the Muslims of Europe since Islam belonged in Europe and 'political Islam' was a firm part of Europe's future¹. The British Prime Minister David Cameron insisted that ISIS instead be referred to as 'Da'esh' because Islamic state was offensive to Muslims. It seems, then, unavoidable that Islam will continue to build a political presence where the millions of its members flowed. Nevertheless, most Europeans think Islam is only an ideology that needs force to be suppressed in the way they had behaved with Communism and Nazism, and that it grew amongst them because they did not pay attention or they were doomed to inactions by their own democratic practices and governmental policies. Muslims, however, see the growth of their religion as a result of progress, power and perfectness.

1- See the full text of Federica Mogherini at 'Call to Europe V: Islam in Europe' (June 24th, 2015).

3.1. A Liberal Version for Islam: Not only are the British concerned about the growth of Islam, but the British Muslims amongst them are more concerned about the right sort of Islam they should embrace. The development of Islam in the West in general and in Britain in particular has called governmental involvement. Under the pretext of fighting Islamic extremism and Islamic-inspired terrorism, official interference came in form of government-sponsored attempts to promote a liberal version for British Islam. There were various strategies such as arranged partnerships with community leaders and faith-based organizations. Accordingly, the British government guaranteed a constant link with its Muslims especially the conservative forces amongst them in order not to allow other alternative groups to grow and challenge the national order.

Faith communities, on their part, were given prominent role in government thinking through the interfaith networks, and faith schools were promoted. Secular bodies started to fund Islamic institutions in hope of promoting moderate Islamic communities. The Muslim Council of Britain (MCB) is one of the bodies that satisfied the British approach to moderate Islam promotion. However, it attracted critical media soon after it boycotted the Holocaust Memorial Day commemoration and became unfavoured as a partner.

Tony Blair's government intervention to promote moderate Islam in Britain has unintentionally contributed to the promotion of Islam itself and consolidated the power of religious identity. Though planned as a regime to control religious rise and social organization through the divide and rule practice by neoliberals, it brought them opposition. Defining the terms moderate and liberal itself seemed problematic, the provision of counter attraction did not seem successful for liberal Islam, and the possibility for it to offer an alternative to the decadent Capitalist and secular life seemed weak. Neoliberal Islam was believed to offer no hope for the future; yet, more Islamic religiosity was much more attractive for the Islamic ideological solution it supports. For many researchers, also the suppression of Left opposition left space for the rise of Islamic radical forces.

In the past, liberals tended to advocate multicultural policies while conservatives saw multiculturalism as a threat to Western values. The London bombings (7/7 attacks), however, made liberals join the conservatives in thinking that multiculturalism promoted Islamic extremism and gave rise to Muslim political leadership (MCB). The

Policy Exchange (PX) think tank¹ started to publish major reports on Islamism and Muslims²; the Sufi Muslim Council was supported as an alternative Muslim representative body, and Britain's mosques were believed to distribute radical values that should have been the subject of greater regulation to be replaced by moderate Islamic values. Gordon Brown believed that not only would the promotion of moderate Islam resolve his nation's most important challenges, but it was to renew the sense of patriotic purpose (Brown. "We Need"). He gave directions to the British citizen to revive his Britishness into a new one based on six essential pillars including institutional reform, renewed local government, rebuilt civic society, citizenship seriously taken, better integration of minorities, and being always internationalist (Brown, "The Future of Britishness"). The perception that little 'third world colonies'³ had appeared in Britain to damage its quality of life along with the shift in emphasis from concern about Third World immigration to focus on Muslims in Britain go back to 2002 when many writers expressed that there would be an unprecedented rise of Muslims in Britain. For a case in point, Anthony Browne wrote for The Times on how 'Britain is losing Britain', and following the 7/7 bombings he paid attention to Islamic groups in Britain arguing they were planting the seeds of Islamic fascism⁴. Worries that Islamism would impose a theocratic version of Islam over society persisted. Multiculturalism, then, arose among mainstream liberals to mean diversity among, not between groups. However, only a minority of Muslims: feminist Muslims, gay Muslims, ex-Muslims, and secular Muslims advocated the liberal values. Of course this would lead to more anxiety to tame some of the members of the Muslim community in Britain. For the first time, the English attempts to promote greater integration seemed complicated and made it clear that Islam was different from the other faiths in matters of assimilation. To be clear, around more than a century ago, East European Jewish immigrants

1- It is the leading UK think tank shaping the policy agenda since 2002. It describes itself as seeking localist, volunteer and free-market solutions to public policy problems, with research programmes covering education, social reform, energy and environment, Britain's place in the world, economics and industrial policy, housing policy, demography and immigration and security.

2- Examples of these are: *When Progressives Treat with Reactionaries* (2006), and *'Living Apart Together'* (2007).

3- Small ethnic communities transforming Britain through mass migration.

4- This idea was based on facts like Adolf Hitler being a bestselling author in Muslim countries and that Muslim brigades fought for the Nazis, in the Balkans and in the middle-east.

did not pose the same problem. By contrast, they became the required sort of English men and their faith did not arouse any type of resistance to change. The result that liberal multiculturalism reinforced religious identity within faith groups brought it much criticism. Political thinking, in the name of defending diversity, can be seen as a means of empowering religious identities. Therefore, policies had to be carefully made in fear of causing any possible change for the British society.

British Islam seems to be strong because it is being built by a confident generation of home grown Islam proponents. The stereotype that authentic Islam cannot be born in non-Islamic states because it can only be brought from Muslim states like Pakistan or Saudi Arabia will be broken down. The other stereotype that, apart from Islam, all Muslim population share the destiny of belonging to the third world; hence, Islamic revival is often interpreted as being only a third world predicament can only be a mere accusation. Furthermore, most people today think it is impossible to mould Muslims in their homelands according to European principles of modern times so as to compete European Muslims, but it would be possible from European Muslims- particularly the British born ones.

The marriage of Islam with the West is nothing more than the union of spirituality and a civilization different from that where spirituality originated. Theologians and intellectuals, however, went deeper into the character of this union to speak about the secularization of Islam, a new form of occidental religiosity, the beginning of spiritual modernity, Euro-Islam and European Islam¹. The debate over the union of Islam and the West was also approached from different perspectives- political science and philosophical, jurisprudence and theological ones. As to theology, Tareq Oubrou² argued that the divine scriptures should be interpreted nationally, transnationally and globally; hence, his new term geotheology. He advocated the use of hermeneutics as a device and made his note that it was not a direct reading of the divine texts but their interpretation and translation. Against what some secular liberals want,

1- There are many versions of the idea of European Islam. These are Bassam Tibi and Tariq Ramadan's respectively. Euro Islam stands for Islam in Europe whereas European Islam is often referred to as a modern (reformed) form of Islam.

2- The French imam-theologian Tareq Oubrou is a prominent voice of the emerging "European Islamic thought". He uses Islamic classical jurisprudential devices (such as fatwas), contemporary hermeneutics and critical thought, and personal communion with the divine (spirituality) to renew the understanding of God, Man, and the Qura'n in the European context.

the hermeneutics he is supporting does not cut links with the sacred and make breaks with the past. Nonetheless, he aspires to put an end to the burden of European believers who are divided between secular and religious laws; so, he aims at fusing the two laws to see a theological secularization of Islam in the future of modern liberal societies of Europe. Bassam Tibi is another advocate of the idea of secularization of Islam, but he adopted a direct approach based on the rigid dichotomy (private vs. public) which was softened by Tariq Ramadan who claimed it is a set of basic guiding ethical principles of the revealed book vs. complementary man-made ones. Still another path in the European Islamic thought was founded by Abdennour Bidar who challenged this entire dichotomy, the Islamic thought in its classical forms and the European secular thought. Instead, he suggested a rational theology approach which consists of three stages of intellectual development: self Islam as a personal experience in a secular context, the reading of sacred texts in light of modernity values, and opening new paths of thinking not only for Islamic thought but for the Western thought as well because the opposition between modernity and Islamic thought will not be the way for the future civilization of man.

Just as the renewal of Islamic spirit in a Muslim's soul gives it more vitality and power, renewing the conception of religion in general in the secular societies is far better than trying to liberalize Islam. Taha Abdurrahmane suggested a framework of three steps: humanization, historicization and rationalization. His European Islam version defends man's inheritance of the world, emphasizes the need of working well for the world even if the matter starts privately, and calls for re-reading the Qur'an in the light of German legal theory hermeneutics in spite of his support of the separation of religion from politics. It is necessary to renew European view of Islam to make non-Muslims re-visit its universality since the well being of the world is a shared responsibility; not only a religionist's or Muslim's affair. Most of the Muslim scholars living in Europe invoked this principle along with the revival of the prophetic example that shows the beauty of the faith. For many reformists, for the success of European Islam, it should also be rationalized and allowed visibility in the public sphere. The idea of European Islam is not necessarily the idea of liberal Islam. Its conceptualization according to Muslim European scholars, who are part of the Western vision, justifies that it embraces modernity values without cutting ties with the divine. That is to say European Islam does not negate the values of liberty, equality and fraternity. Most important about

it is that its support of modernity is neither Eurocentrist nor Islamocentrist. It is both traditional and reformist. The former means it preserves the sacred and the latter means that it embraces modern values, but it re-interprets them according to the divine. If this were the common vision of European Islam in the West, it would prosper furthermore. Without this attitude, the faith is on increase but with it the age of terror would be recalled as a hysterical epoch.

The topic of liberalizing Islam is still problematic for most Muslims, but greatly important for those who wish to see Islam have as little conflict as possible with secular liberal ideals. The difficult project of reforming Islam can be attributed to the vision of non-Muslims to Islam as being like Christianity and in need of its Martin Luther¹. Yet, Islam has never had a Catholic-style clerical class with a pope at its top and against whom an Islamic reformation be targeted. Islam has already been reformed, and the reforming movements have only made it much more rigid and insecure than beforehand. More cognitive rigidity towards religion cannot lead to a future with less clashes and violence. Non-Muslims who want to find out more about Islam or are about to convert may be introduced to a wrong version of the Islamic faith, or they may be frustrated to find their worst fears confirmed. Whereas the Christian reformation involved a revolt against the papacy, encouraged individualism and made modern science possible, Islamic reformation or the attempt to modernize or moderate Islam would challenge beliefs rather than institutions and would question equitable Islamic rulings that have never aroused extremism or radicalism to be replaced by others leading to irrelevance and chaos. Indeed modernity has brought about some significant changes in Islam, but the contemporary Islamism is not the required modern ideology for Islam. This continues to be at odd with traditional Islam. Hence, the adherence to Islamic principles is what has helped Islam remain visible and dynamic both in Europe and the Islamic world. The revival of classical Islam is what will guarantee the continuation of that. The call to modernize Islam seems ironical to many people in the West. A blog about Catholic, Muslim and secular interaction in the modern world issued an article entitled 'Does Islam Need to Be Modernized?' in November 13, 2010 in which it was stated that «it is also ironic that Muslims are being called to become modern at

1- Martin Luther (1483-1546) was a German professor of theology, composer, priest, monk, and a seminal figure in the Protestant Reformation. Luther came to reject several teachings and practices of the Roman Catholic Church. He strongly disputed the Catholic view on indulgences.

the very time when modernity with all its premises and promises is increasingly called into question in the West that gave birth to it. We believe we have seen through the pretensions of modernity's optimism and its grand narratives. And yet here we are wishing it, even wanting to impose it, on others» (Madigan)

4. Conclusion: Muslims are very much part of the British society, but they are often seen as a nation being created within another nation and who will have its own very separate future (Phillips¹ qtd in Dolan). Although they feel a strong sense of belonging, the media in Britain obsesses over them as the others living within their society while there is a real public debate and a starting point for each proposal of cohesion and better future for Britain's multicultural society that Muslims are a problem. Muslims are in denial and they voice loyalty, commitment and remedy instead. They think their badly needed principles would lead to progress, peace and equality.

The future of the British society and that of Islam are directly interconnected because the worldwide revival of Islam is the clearest reason that pushes anybody to be interested in understanding the world's present and future change. In spite of the predictions that the situation will most likely get worse in Britain, and the foretold deliberate civilizational destruction, the continuous revival of the spirit of Islam in Europe under all conditions and contexts attracts more attention to the faith. The great liberal dream of a secularized "Western Islam" has not worked out as the liberals hoped. Yet, those who understood Islam and its assertiveness always knew it would never change, and continue to have interest in the faith along with peaceful coexistence with its people.

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