PPN Working Paper

Developing an Assessment Framework for (Muslim) Movements and Organisations (October 2009)

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1. Aims:

The purpose of this paper is to explore ways that the assessment of (Muslim) movements and organisations can be conducted more effectively by governments and their partners within countries.

It should be noted that this is not a prescriptive initiative but an exploration of how a more common framework for assessment, that informs more constructive engagement, can be established, while at the same time giving room for national implementation and thus allowing for the local context to be considered.

2. Background:

A considerable amount of interest seems to be now shown in initiatives to understand and map Muslim communities, organisations and networks at either a local (city), national or European level. A number of recent initiatives at academic and policy level have added some considerable detail to our understanding of the European Muslim Landscape.

Despite the potentially useful nature of this growing databank, the subject is not without its challenges and debates. Much of this perhaps rests on the purpose behind the mapping and assessment exercises and the methodologies employed in the process of any categorization and

classification. If the mapping process is to avoid a crude 'profiling' of Muslim groups and networks, and genuinely add to our understanding of a very complex spectrum of opinion – as all would agree is necessary – it is important that the methods employed, the frameworks of reference and the language that is used is appropriate and well thought out and that the limitations of such attempts are clearly born in mind.

3. Purpose:

The purposes behind assessment exercises vary and may include the following:

- Mapping and assessment with a view to understanding the theological and demographic diversity, *per se,* for academic interest or as a means to better informing policy and engagement.

- Assessment with a view to creating better channels of communication into what is perceived to be a 'hard to reach' group of people.

- Assessment to identify weaknesses in community development terms and to feed into empowerment programmes, e.g. mentoring or leadership development.

- Assessment to create better service delivery mechanisms, for example in raising educational standards, poverty alleviation, etc.

- Assessment in order to inform work to enhance cohesion within and between communities.

- Assessment in order to identify those at risk of radicalisation, or indeed those who could be the cause of extremist views or facilitate the process of radicalisation.

Of course, this is not an exhaustive list, and multiple purposes could lie behind any given assessment exercise. But it is important to have a sense of clarity and transparency at the outset, as this would influence the range of methods used. Understandably, in recent times the last purpose has been forefront in the minds of policy makers, and it could also be argued that all the approaches listed above have some importance in initiatives aiming to preventing violent extremism.

4. Method:

With respect to the method, some of the challenges that need to be addressed are:

- How to produce an objective and consistent frame of reference, if and when categorizing movements or organisations, that if necessary could be applied to other communities – i.e. there is a suitable 'control' mechanism and justification for the approach? It has been suggested that adopting a Human Rights framework for evaluation may be the most objective benchmark.
- How not to stigmatise or exceptionalise Muslim groups / communities in this process? In an atmosphere of sensitivity regarding violently extremist discourse, it can sometimes become all too easy to confuse ultra-conservative opinion as dangerous or leading to violence – e.g. tendencies of self-segregation, or the wearing of veils may not be conducive to life in modern Europe, but are not signifiers of violent attitudes.
- Negotiating an appropriate language to describe movements, groups and religious denominations that is ideally acceptable to and can be owned by that community, or at the very least can be objectively and academically justifiable. E.g. some may not feel comfortable being described as Wahhabi, Brelwi or Islamist – all are contested terms even though they fall on different parts of the Islamic spectrum of thought, and are in popular usage.
- Authenticity – it is also important to be able to verify claims about groups and claims made by groups, in order to arrive at an acceptable quality of information. Again, with the current sensitivities it is not unknown for groups to brief against each other, or for others, to present one discourse to the public while another operates internally.

Based upon the above challenges, it is important to bear in mind the limitations of a paper of this type. One needs to keep in mind at least the following six points in this regard:

a. Creating a typology of social phenomena inevitably involves some degree of stereotyping and generalisation. Here this is done with the intention of understanding differences rather than homogenising. However it should be born in mind that a tremendous amount of diversity exists within denominations and trends as we shall see.

b. The movements and organisations identified are constantly evolving in response to internal and external stimuli. Given that over the past fifty years European Muslims have

experienced migrations, settlement, dislocation from established traditions, adaptation and integration into new cultures, shifts in class boundaries and education, among other social upheavals, it would be expected that a great deal of change is occurring within trends, even as we observe and study them.

c. There is a problem of language as Muslim opinion has not yet established itself adequately in this field of study. Hence titles such as 'liberal', 'moderate', 'fundamentalist' and 'radical' can be used differently. Other words such as 'orthodox', 'conservative' and 'reform' have connotations in other religions that may or may not help in effective communication.

d. Perhaps most significantly, studies show waxing and waning religious affiliation among new generations of European Muslims. With a significant but slow trend towards secularity. However, the political climate does bear heavily on Muslim youngsters and identity politics can often mean the revival of religious discourse, or perhaps more accurately, political discourse in the guise of a religious one. Amidst all this, affiliation can be transitory and often not rooted. It is therefore very difficult to say how Muslims define themselves in denominational terms without large-scale surveys. It is known for example that identity shifts are taking place, and especially those communities that have moved from an overwhelmingly rural environment to cosmopolitan European cities have found the adaptation quite challenging in terms of maintaining religious traditions.

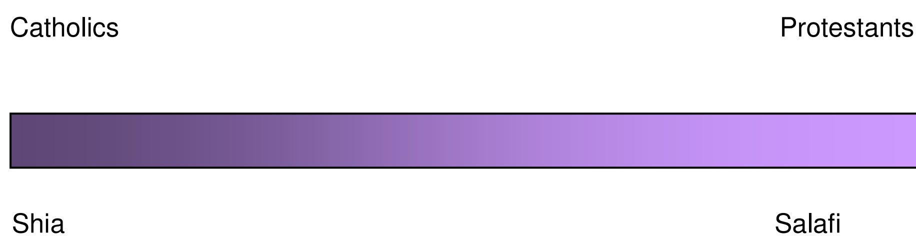
e. Assessment of organisations will inevitably require some form of subjective analysis and value judgment of their activities, ideas and attitudes to be applied. Furthermore, the quality of information available may not be the same for all organisations.

f. We are considering movements and organisations here, rather than individual Muslims and their attitudes, practices or thoughts. Arguably, the organised sector would not represent the majority of Muslims – even if this represents significant power bases among Muslims by definition and virtue of being organised. It is important to note that resilience may be lower within individuals that are not part of a strong religious/social network and they could move more easily from indifference to extremist positions in response to active radicalisation.

5. Existing Typologies

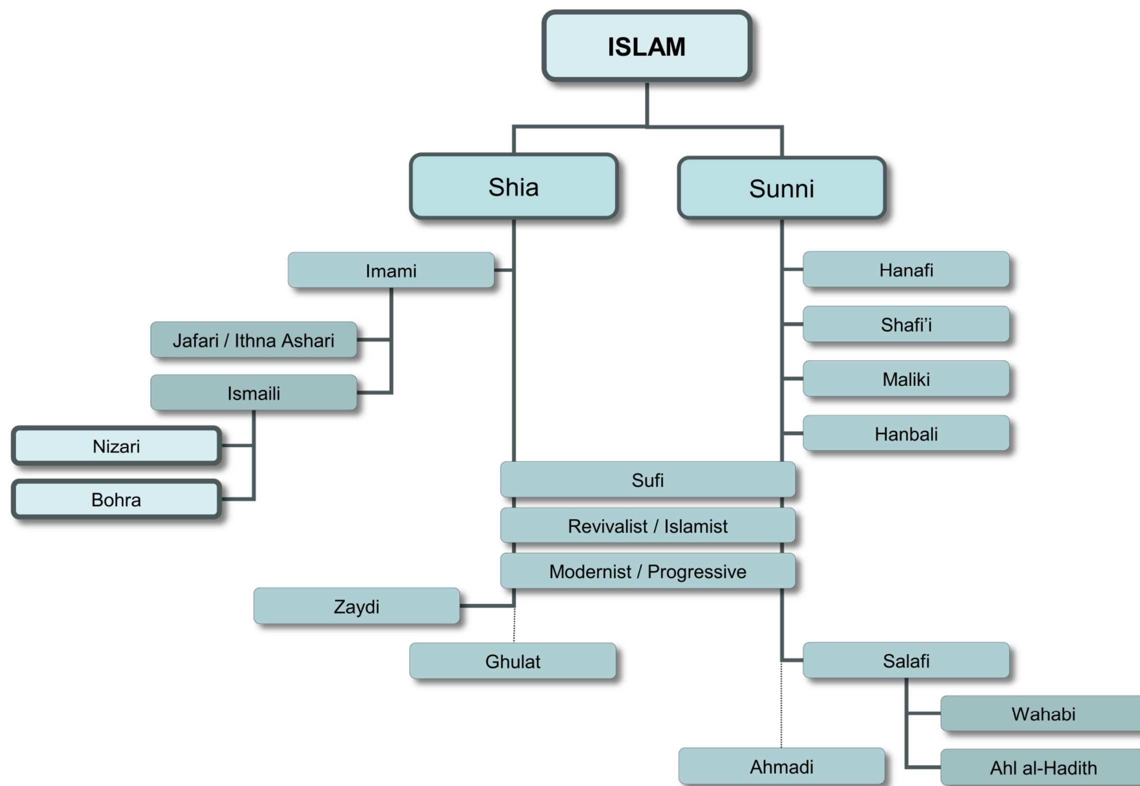
A number of important endeavours have been made by academics to typologise the contemporary Muslim presence in the world, though current typologies of Muslim trends are being challenged by the contemporary evolution of Muslim thought, settlement processes post-migration and emerging and evolving transnational influences. At the most basic level one could draw a continuum of Muslim opinion that resembles, to some extent (and the extent is debatable, but this continuum is used here to give a feel for the differences) the Catholic and Protestant divide within Christianity.

Fig. 1: Continuum of Muslim thought and comparison to Christianity



This is drawn as a continuum to show that people don't fit into neat boxes and indeed can move from one place to another from time to time. The analogy holds in that Catholics and Shias have a greater sense of centralised and collective authority, the left of the spectrum tends to be more ritualised the right end of the spectrum tends to attract literalism, yet more individualised forms of authority, hence correlations can be made between Protestant Fundamentalism and Wahabism (which would be a sub-set of Salafi thought). This analogy with Christianity also flags up the fact that there are many sub-groups within denominations, e.g. Protestant thinking varies from Lutherans, to Calvinists, to Presbyterians. Also terms like 'evangelical' can mean quite widely different approaches. However the analogy may quickly break down beyond this, especially when one begins to look at numbers, doctrinal issues, conservatism/liberalism, etc. This shows again that labels such as liberal, reform, modernist, progressive are highly subjective terms and, especially where they carry an established connotation within European Christianity, may not hold up in examining Islamic trends.

Fig 2: Mapping Muslim groups by historical affiliation:



This model represents the typical bounded view of denominations based upon historical affiliations and emphasises theological and legal schools of thought. While the legal schools have become accepted categories, labels surrounding the intellectual trends can be scrutinised much further. They have served as useful tools to label the Muslim trends of the 20th century but it seems they do have their limitations if they are to be used in any serious analytical capacity, especially for our discussion.

A number of major socio-political events have affected the Muslim world over the last century, of these perhaps the two most important were: i) the onset of colonisation – such that by 1920 around 75% of the Muslim world was under European rule, and ii) the fall of the Caliphate in 1924. Much of the contemporary discourse around social change in Muslim thought was developed in the context of anti-colonial struggles and the attempts in the early 20th century to re-establish the Caliphate. This restorationist approach was adopted by a number of anti-colonial movements across the Islamic spectrum, creating a fascination with the (Islamic) state as the central pillar for the establishment of freedom and justice. However, 20th century Islamic

movements' experimentations with the state have not been a happy experience. Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, Iran, Sudan, Afghanistan and other states were built in the name of (different brands of) Islam and have all, in one way or another, not lived up their original ambitions. The failure of political Islam (Roy, 1994) in this regard has led to the search for a new Islamic paradigm for social action which may well give prominence to the drive towards a more 'civic Islam'. Further to this, a large number of Muslims have began to live as minorities over the 20th century (estimated to be over 30% of all Muslims) to whom the pursuit of an Islamic state is either irrelevant or not of local concern. Through migration and settlement in urban environments, the shift from rural to urban lifestyle and the impact of urban living on the family, schooling, distribution of wealth have had important influences on the lives of these Muslims in the diaspora. Globally, events such as 9/11, and domestically in a UK context, 7/7, have created a security panic across the world and a mode of important introspection among many Muslim thinkers and activists. Given this complexity amidst transnational influences, how does one begin to talk of a new typology that may be more suitable for analysis?

Sharif's work (1963) charts the historic theological, philosophical and mystical branches of Islam, as well as the development of the legal schools of jurisprudence[1]. A more sociological approach was taken by Gellner who talked of 'high' literate, educated and urban Islam and 'low' folk, superstitious, rural Islam, and their contrasting positions in light of the advancement of modernity. However, much of the modern trends visible today are also deeply connected with reactions to the political upheavals in the Muslim world during the 19th and 20th Centuries. In particular the sense that as a result of Colonialism and the loss of Muslim authority, Muslim civilisation has reached a low point. Wilfred Cantwell Smith (1957) noted that:

> The fundamental malaise of modern Islam is a sense that something has gone wrong with Islamic history. The fundamental problem of modern Muslims is how to rehabilitate that history: to set it going again in full vigour, so that Islamic society may once again flourish as a divinely-guided society should and must.

In addition to the challenges of modernity and political events of the Muslim world, Arkoun (2000) also adds that globalisation has had a profound impact on Muslim trends because it "upsets all the known cultural, religious, philosophical and politico-juridical traditions".

[1] Much earlier works attempting to analyse the different trends and pathways of Muslim thought can also be found in Muslim historical accounts and sociological analysis, for example by ibn Khaldun (d. 1406).

Nasr (1987) has identified at least four major trends amongst Muslims in the last century: Mahdist millennialism, which gave rise to movements that declared the end of time (mostly early twentieth century and with little impact today); Wahhabi and neo-Wahhabi fundamentalism; modernism and traditionalism. These are all identified as broad and complex orientations that can also mix and intertwine (see appendix for further explanation and background to these names). Wahhabism and neo-Wahhabism, in Nasr's thought, includes movements such as the conservative Salafiya in Saudi Arabia, the Muslim Brotherhood and other political phenomena as well as elements in Iran and the influence can even be found among aspects of reform trends among some Sufis. Modernism includes those that have looked to the West for inspiration and have taken on board elements of nationalism and socialism for example. Nasr's preferred category is traditionalism which he describes as emphasising internal revival, placing strong emphasis on the Islamic tradition and Sufism "which they consider as the heart of the whole body of Islam, whose limbs, governed by the Shari'ah, are animated by the blood flowing from this heart…their attitude to the world, including the modern world, is not of passive acceptance. They criticise the modern world in the light of immutable principles and view it as a canvass, alluring from afar but shown to be of an illusory nature when examined from close quarters." In contrast, Rahman who is widely regarded as a modernist, emphasises the negative consequences of over-reliance on tradition, which he believed lead to an ossification of Muslim thought and the 'closing of the doors of ijtihad'. Rahman (2002) asserts that under pressure from orthodoxy, Islamic spirituality gave rise to neo-Sufism, a reformed and more tradition-bound, orthodox brand. He also distinguishes between 'modern reform' and 'pre-modern reform' and places Wahhabism in the latter category.

Esposito (1999) elaborates on these ideas further by identifying four slightly different categories: secularist, conservative/traditionalist, neo-revivalist and neo-modernist. By adding the secularist as a separate category, Esposito distinguishes between modernists who stress renewal and reform of Islam, but essentially believe in Islam having some social relevance and those who believe that religion should be restricted to private and personal domains. Ramadan (2004) also mentions those Muslims for whom Islam "does not play a particular role in their reflections and actions" as cultural Muslims, thus in effect adding a new category. However he formally considers six 'tendencies': scholastic traditionalism, Salafi literalism, Salafi reformism, political literalist Salafism, liberal / rationalist reformism and Sufism. In this scheme Ramadan places Sufism

outside of traditionalism as a distinct and complex phenomenon that can have a cross cutting influence with other tendencies. Liberal reformism is differentiated from Salafi reformism, as the former give priority to reason, while the latter to the text of revealed sources. Political literalist Salafism would include Hizbut Tahrir and Jihad movements, while Salafi literalism would include the conventional and conservative Salafi / Wahhabi movements. The first category, scholastic traditionalism, is probably the broadest tendency here incorporating Deobandis, Brelwis, Tablighi Jamat and individuals that follow the legal schools of jurisprudence strictly or exclusively.

Shepard (1987 and 2004) has probably looked in most detail at contemporary typologies of Muslim trends and observes (1987) that

> …such labels have undoubtedly often functioned as obstacles to understanding the actual people and tendencies involved…on the other hand, we cannot avoid labels if we are to talk of things, and we certainly cannot begin to make sense of an area as vast and complex as the modern Muslim world unless we can analyze its manifold phenomena into a manageable number of categories with suitable designations. It is not a question of whether we use labels, but how we use them.

In order to mitigate against this potential weakness of the use of labels, Shepard suggests we should think of them as "analytical constructs which may or may not correspond in detail to actual cases but which help us to analyze and compare a large number of cases" (1987). To take this one step further, he prefers that these labels are not used as boxes or pigeon-holes, but as points along a two-dimensional spectrum, one axis being "Islamic totalism", which views Islam as a total way of life and emphasises building an 'Islamic State'; and the other axis as "modernity". He describes five 'ideological orientations' (with possible subtypes): secularism, Islamic modernism, radical Islamism, traditionalism and neo-traditionalism. Shepard identifies many different shades of secularism, from anti-clerical to moderate to accommodative secularism. Likewise the other categories are also broad, with Islamic modernism being differentiated from Islamism by the emphasis of the latter on applying the Shariah and creating Islamic states. Modernists are also more radical in their desire to re-interpret and re-read the Islamic texts. Some emphasise the historical context of the Qur'an, particularly on subjects such as warfare, polygamy, punishments for theft and adultery and treatment of non-believers (Shepard, 1987). However Shepard, as others, contends that Islamism does share important modernist credentials, as seen even in nomenclature for example, the Islamic *Republic* of Iran, as

well as the emphasis on economic development, democracy, nationhood, etc. In comparison with the aforementioned labels, Shepard brings in the 'neo-traditionalist' label to differentiate between engagement with Western ideologies and acceptance of modern technology, also sub-dividing both 'traditionalism' and 'neo-traditionalism' into 'rejectionist' and 'adaptationist' extremes. Neo-traditionalism, for Shepard, falls between traditionalism and modernism. Shepard emphasises that individuals may move along the spectrum over the life and so the categories need to be viewed as fluid labels.

Terms such as Islamism are also now seen to be controversial given our growing understanding of the complexity of the issue[2]. Such complexities are highlighted by the recently updated UK Counter Terrorism Strategy: "research indicated how easy it is to create misunderstandings and confusion. Terms like Islamist and jihad are not always understood and need to be used and explained with care." (Home Office, 2009, p. 154). Furthermore, a footnote goes on to say that

> The term 'Militant Islamism' is used here to specify an ideology which argues for the use of violence to achieve this objective. There are no commonly agreed definitions of 'Islamism' and 'Islamist'. They do not refer to a single unified movement; and individuals and groups that define themselves using these terms or may be described by others using the terms can hold widely differing views. Most Islamists do not condone the use of violence to achieve their aims. (Home Office, 2009, p. 166, ff. 12).

Given the context of this piece of work it is important to look at perhaps one more recent postulation by Asef Bayat (1996 and 2007) that there is a *post-Islamist turn* occurring. Though Bayat's work focuses predominantly on Iran and Egypt, the phenomena being addressed could have a strong bearing on the situation in Europe and the West. Bayat (2007) described the "metamorphosis of Islamism (in ideas, approaches, and practices) from within and without." He goes on to describe the phenomenon as:

[2] Hazel Blears (then Minister for Communities) remarked in a speech to the London School of Economics in February 2009: "Some seek to define this mosaic of organisations and philosophies as 'Islamism' or sometimes 'Political Islam'. But here we run into real dangers. There is the obvious danger that we say 'Islamism' but people hear 'Islam' or 'Islamic'…There are plenty of people, for example the far right in this country…who would wish to conflate the two in order to stir up race hate". (Blears, 2009). This is an important and perceptive point as there is no Christian equivalent of 'Christianism', it leaves the public with confusion as to exactly what the term means, and something they may have significant difficulty in relating to. The speech goes on to mention that: "A second trap is that to talk of 'Islamism' suggests there is a unified, single movement. But there is no more a unified Islamism than there is a single socialism, or a single conservatism, or a single liberalism…A third trap is to assume that all Islamists are terrorists…To lump Hizb ut-Tahrir in with Al-Qaeda is to fail to understand the differences between the two…"

> Not only a condition, post-Islamism is also a project, a conscious attempt to conceptualize and strategize the rationale and modalities of transcending Islamism in social, political, and intellectual domains. Yet Post-Islamism is neither anti-Islamic nor un-Islamic nor secular. Rather it represents an endeavor to fuse religiosity and rights, faith and freedom, Islam and liberty. It is an attempt to turn the underlying principles of Islamism on its head by emphasizing rights instead of duties, plurality in place of singular authoritative voice, historicity rather than fixed scripture, and the future instead of the past…In short, whereas Islamism is defined by the fusion of religion and responsibility, post-Islamism emphasizes religiosity and rights.

On a global level these shifts can be seen as nascent developments with the reform movements in Iran, the break of the AKP from the Fazilat Party in Turkey and the Wasat Party[3] from the Muslim Brotherhood. However, given the minority context of Muslims in the West, arguably even more marked changes may become visible. Such a shift can be seen within the leadership of the Muslim Parliament in the UK, which in the 1980s was seen to be a close defender of the Iranian Revolution (Lewis, 2007) and known for its vociferous position on the Satanic Verses affair. Recently the head of the Muslim Parliament became a Trustee of the network British Muslims for Secular Democracy, a liberal group that argued against the implementation of Shariah. Mandaville (2001) and McLoughlin (2005) have also observed a more general phenomenon of gradual shift from inherited positions to more indigenised, self-critical postures, arguing for "the need for a re-imagining of 'political Islam' by Western scholars and policy-makers." (McLoughlin, 2005). A number of others such as Cesari (2006), Hewer (2006) and Nielsen (2003) have described the adaptations and evolutions taking place among some European Muslim groups which could broadly be placed in a framework of a gradual shift towards post-Islamism.

Given the sensitivity surrounding the term 'Islamism' and the post-Islamist turn identified above, the latter category deserves some attention to investigate its validity and possible usage. It could also be an important bridge-building tool in allowing more nuanced conversation to take place between policy-makers and community organizations.

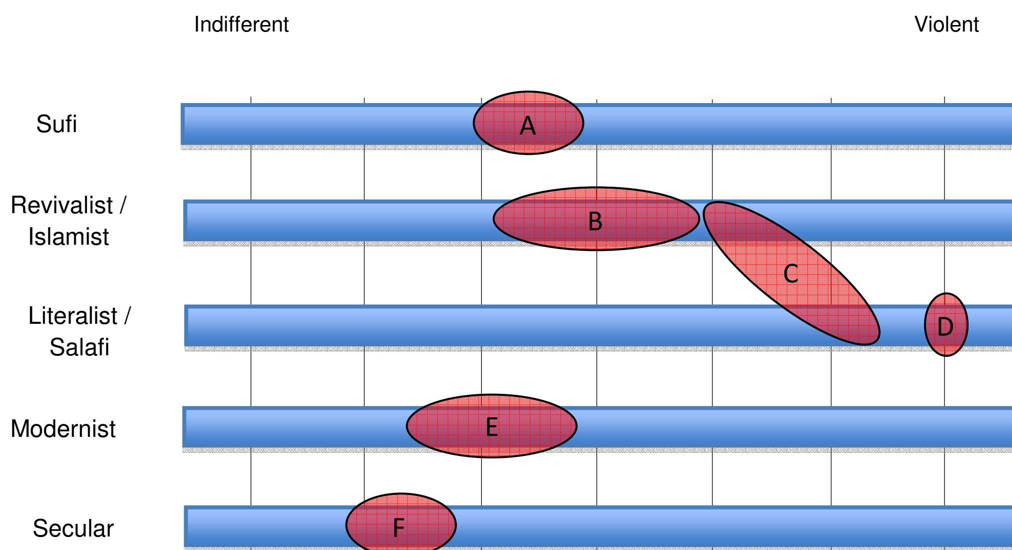
[3] Al-Wasat (the Center) Party was founded in 1996, when the group split from the Muslim Brotherhood. Wasat argues for democratic reforms, human rights, gender equality and the inclusion of Christians in its party.

6. Alternative Models:

6.1 Mapping groups by trend

As engagement strategies have unfolded, it has become clear that existing typology has important limitations (for a review of existing typologies, please see Annex One). As settling communities going through a process of integration, adaptation and change, building new institutions, evolving new forms of religious authority, etc., Muslim communities are experiencing important changes. Given the complexity of this subject how does one begin to talk of a new typology that may be more suitable for analysis and also ensure that policy making and engagement strategies are more future-proof? Mohamed Aziz, a Muslim Advisor at the UK's Communities and Local Government Department has suggested a useful way of looking at a spectrum of views within different Muslim traditions and trends:

Fig 3: Mapping groups by trend:



Here the trends are plotted across a spectrum of views (blue) ranging from indifferent (people who relate to general Islamic culture, but do not consider themselves to be religious) to the more extreme end where justification for violence may be exhibited. Specific organisations or movements are marked in red. This implies that *within* each trend, one can find conservative, moderate and liberal groups and that not all the groups thus found in each trend are necessarily 'problematic'. Some groups may occupy a small part of the spectrum, e.g. group D, while others can span a wider section of the spectrum, e.g. group B. There are cross-links as well, for example

group C – a movement that can contain both Salafi and Revivalist tendencies. Compared to the earlier figures, such a model would allow for a new level of analysis of complex issues that currently get lost within the fixed boundaries attributed to groups.

This is, of course, still a simplified picture as there are a number of different trends and groups that can slide along the spectrum and move in complex inter-related ways as in any human community. For example – one group within the Revivalist trend may be politically radical but be progressive on the issue of empowerment of women and their involvement in public life. A group within the Sufi trend may be politically liberal, but conservative when it comes to gender debates. Thus, this model represents a much more nuanced approach to understanding the complexity, but it does have some limitations. It still looks at specific trends and it is hard to identify the cross-links, e.g. when a Sufi is also a Revivalist, etc. It also does not show how the trends are evolving into new identities.

6.2 Underlying and shared values

How should the assessment of whether a group is conservative, moderate or liberal be made in an objective manner? It is suggested that a series of considerations broadly inspired by a Human Rights paradigm and notions of shared values will help to create a framework for assessment that, while involving some value judgment, is not entirely arbitrary. It also has some consistent basis to build upon that can be subjected to testing with other communities that are not Muslim. At the heart of such an assessment is the idea of the 'social contract' and an initial starting point for the assessment of Muslim organisations could consist of the following:

a) An acceptance of procedural secularism as the appropriate political philosophy. Here procedural secularism is to be distinguished from ideological secularism – it is not about expunging different religions and beliefs from public life but allowing all religions to share the public space and establish religious neutrality, ie, about an accommodative/inclusive approach rather than an aggressive/exclusivist approach. *This strand of the assessment will also reveal the organisations commitment to Islam as a hegemonic ideology.*

b) An acceptance of democracy and the rule of law as the appropriate means of organising and sustaining our political community/life and law and order in society. *This aspect of the*

assessment will also reveal the organisations commitment to participative citizenship, understanding of Islam as final authority and position on ultimately seeking the imposition of 'Shariah law'.

c) An acceptance of pluralism as the social reality and a social good that enriches our liberal society as a whole. This entails the ability to assert ones own religion, belief or lifestyle but also the acceptance of people of different religions, beliefs and lifestyles as equal neighbours. *This will also reveal the organisations attitudes to other religions and lifestyles, including sexuality and sexual behaviour.*

d) The acceptance of human rights standards as providing the floor levels for civic values, ethics and morality in our society. Secularism, democracy and pluralism may flourish above these floor level standards but may not fall below them. *This part of the assessment will also reveal the organisations attitudes to gender equality, free speech and freedom of religion.* An important idea to explore here is the idea of where the law should end and concepts of taste and decency should take over as a means of regulating the unacceptable.

e) Whatever one's beliefs, affiliations and concerns/grievances, these should be decoupled from an interest in national security/stability and the common good of all citizens as paramount. *This will also address the issues of loyalty, and understanding of religious doctrines around ummah, dar al-Islam v dar al-harb and qital / jihad.*

Clearly, some attention needs to be paid that such criteria are not setting 'tests' for Muslim community organisations that are more arduous than may be the case for other communities. The purpose is to develop an assessment that could be used generically across communities (ie, the underlined concepts above), but is in this instance tailored to Muslim community specifics (eg, the italics above). The long-term viability of such an exercise will only be maintained as long as it is transparent, robust and open to criticism and interrogation and crucially, applicable across the board as a representation of a liberal European consensus.

The following table may assist in summarising and presenting some of the current potential conflicts specific to Muslim movements:

Generic shared values	**Potential Muslim theological, doctrinal, scriptural and cultural conflicts**

procedural secularism	e.g. some understandings of the doctrine of *hakimiyah* – ultimate sovereignty lies with God, and the particular deduction from this that there is no distinction between *din* (religion) and *dawlah* (state)
democracy and the rule of law	e.g. the doctrines of *wilayat-e-faqih* (guardianship of the jurists, as practised in Iran) or the supremacy of the Shariah
pluralism – including tolerance and the respect agenda	e.g. Islamic teachings on homosexuality, or opinions expressing intolerance towards other faiths
human rights	e.g. laws on apostasy or religious and cultural practices pertaining to gender, including polygamy
national security/stability and the common good	e.g. the perceived clash of civilisations, the place of Muslims vis-à-vis the *ummah* (global Muslim community) and the role of concepts such as *jihad* (struggle) and *qital* (warfare)

For a review of the emerging Muslim discourses around the social contract, citizenship and shared values, please see Annex Two.

6.3 Case Study

If we take the example of one Europe-wide organisation, the Tablighi Jamat, we can see how this may work on the above model and also some of the limitations:

6.3.1 Background:

The Tablighi Jamat (the Preaching Group) was established in the 1920s by Maulana Muhammad Ilyas (d. 1944) one of the graduates of the Deoband School. Because of its largely apolitical and simple agenda of preaching and spiritual teachings, it has widespread access and is present in most countries. With the simplicity of its message and its groups of roving preachers, this organisation has grown to become probably the largest Islamic movement in the world; largely composed of men, it targets Muslims to better their practise of Islam. It is closely related to the Deobandi movement, which often serves as the educational and intellectual foundations of the

Tablighi Jamat. The Deobandi School is important in the context of the South Asian Muslim presence as it was founded in India.

At least two factors led to the foundation of the Deobandi movement, named after the city in which the activities started. Firstly, the founders (themselves Sufi) considered some of the prevailing Sufi practices such as visiting the shrines of saints to be outside the bounds of orthodoxy (hence this is a more conservative reform movement) and secondly, the Indian Mutiny of 1857 and the subsequent quelling led many Muslims to think of alternative approaches to tackle colonisation. The Deobandi movement, founded in 1867 by Maulana Muhammad Qasim Nanautvi (d. 1879) and Rashid Ahmad Gangohi (d. 1908), follows the Hanafi school and emphasised education. It quickly set up a network of Madrasahs and Dar ul-Ulums (schools and colleges) and grew to become an important force, especially among the urban masses. Given that it developed in an anti-colonial context, it initially shunned the learning of English language and adoption of western culture. This conservative position is also seen in gender roles within the movement, for example many Deobandi mosques will not provide places for women to pray, as they would consider the home the most appropriate place for womens' prayer.

6.3.2 Mapping:

This very brief background instantly throws up a number of issues, including the fact that the Tablighi Jamat tends to fall on the literalist scale, but is definitely not a Salafi movement. In fact it can often have some Sufi influence within it. This means that it would either need a trend label of its own, or would have to be shown as a group that straddles at least two trends.

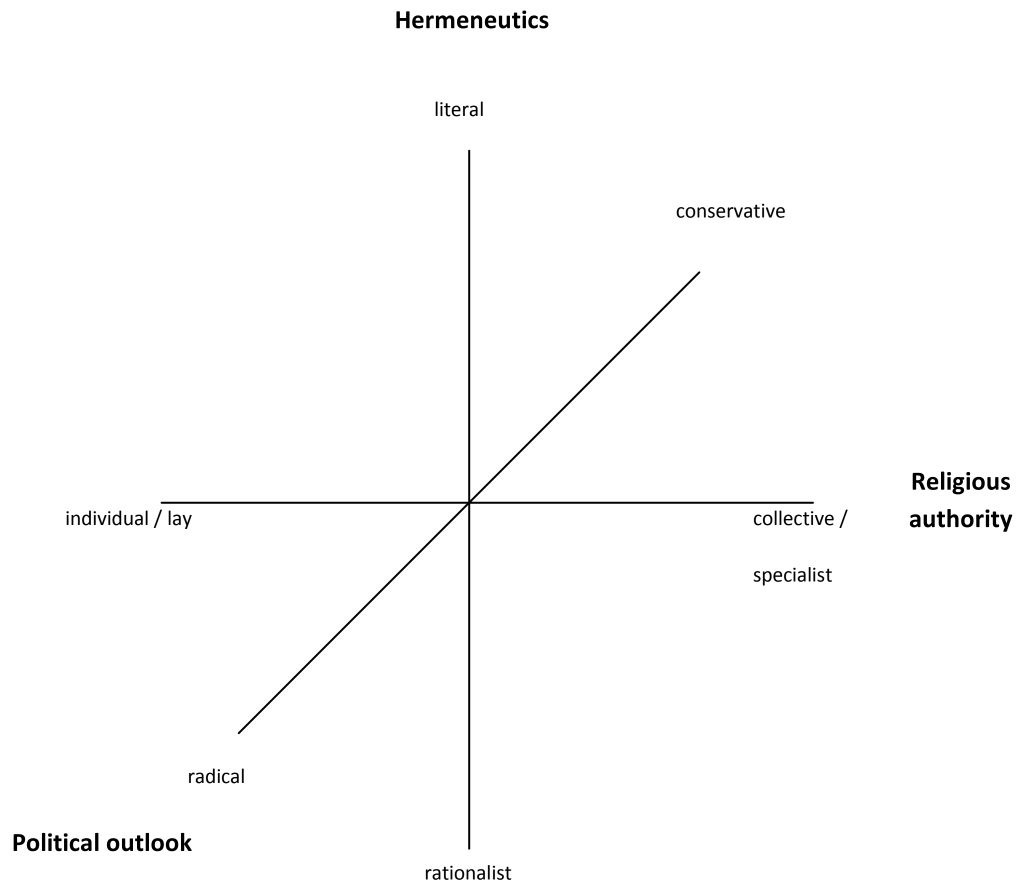
Of the five questions identified above - It would probably have very conservative positions on issues of apostasy and gender equality. It is unlikely that it would have any clear position on democracy or use of violence, as it is a pietistic movement and would not usually express political views, though those under its influence would often accept the reality of a secular democratic system of governance, and most may be politically inactive. Because of its cosmopolitan membership, it is unlikely to exhibit discrimination on the basis of race or colour. This would place it on the more conservative end of the spectrum - with the caveat that as it is a global movement, there may also be slightly different variants of the group in each geographical setting.

6.4 Mapping by characteristics

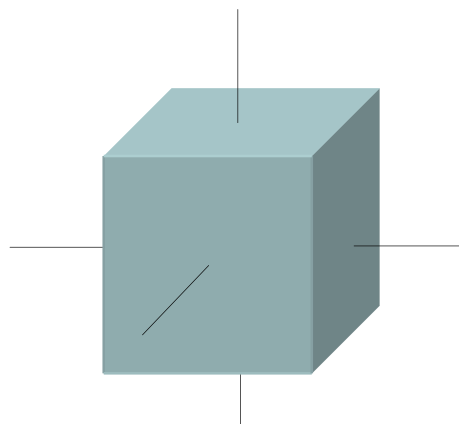
Perhaps another way of looking at the trends (albeit more complex) may be to move away from hard boundaries attributed to trends and instead portray the key influences and characteristics that define contemporary Muslims in terms of shifting and dynamic forces. This could be presented as axes on a three-dimensional graph.

One such axis (x - horizontal) could be the notion of religious authority and how it is exercised – how individual or collective is this process? Is religious (textual) authority exercised by lay persons or is this only accorded to specialists? Another axis (y - vertical) could be hermeneutics – how literalist or rationalist (contextual) are interpretations of texts? And the third axis (z - diagonal) could be the political outlook (using the term 'political' in its broadest sense) – how conservative or radical? Emphasising that 'radical' need not mean violent in this context, for example radical Christianity, radical feminism, etc.

Fig 4: Mapping groups by characteristics:



The model below emphasises the three dimensional nature of the model, though no doubt this graphical representation could be much improved.



This lays no claims to being a perfect model either and is postulated so that it can be tested. Nor is such an approach designed to replace the existing mode of nomenclature, but is presented as an additional tool for analysis that may help to go beyond the limitations of existing labels. This also emphasises that an individual is not boxed into a fixed position, but is actually subject to a fluid and dynamic set of influences that have a complex inter-relationship. This model too has its limitations – it is difficult to visualise and may be seen as too amorphous and complex a way of mapping trends, thus rendering it inapplicable for policy makers.

7. Going Forward:

The next step is going to be to refine and develop this and develop a user-friendly guide of the proposed models and maybe to apply the models to further case studies.

In the process of the assessment there will be a need to differentiate between the discourse of a group and its actual position on issues, i.e., in assessing the responses to some of the questions above, does one rely on the manifesto of an organisation, or its reality. For example, if a group claims to champion gender equality, and yet has no female presence in its leadership. This will require some further thought as to how such differences are plotted onto an emerging map of trends. It may also be useful to look at the size, impact and reach of groups as part of the assessment exercise.

If such an assessment exercise is to be used to inform the engagement strategies of governments, it will be necessary to think further about this, including the implication of certain types of engagement and whether engagement can be led without an assumption of endorsement. Sadiq Khan (2008), a UK government Minister, emphasized the need to consider the rationale for engagement:

> "…I believe we need to take a step back and stop repeatedly asking *who* we should engage with. We need to focus first on *why* we are engaging and on what issues….Given the ongoing threat to our national security, it is entirely understandable that the engagement that gets the most profile is when we are working to tackle violent extremism. The Government must, however, avoid viewing all engagement through this prism. While integration and tackling extremism are issues that have a symbiotic relationship, they cannot and must not be conflated into one issue." (Khan, 2008).

Annex One: Emerging Muslim discourses around the social contract, citizenship and shared values

In recent times Muslims have approached the issue of secularism from a distinct historical encounter. They have often – but not always – taken their point of departure from anti-colonial movements that have sought to, or placed a high value upon, restoring the Caliphate as a symbol of Muslim unity, that looked back to Muslim history for inspiration and that created nostalgic and romanticised associations between state and religious authority. It has often been argued that Islam does not recognise a division between the temporal and transcendental. However a more discerning and critical look at Muslim history could identify clear challenges to this view.

For instance, Muhammad Abduh in Egypt in the 1920s argued that Islam did uphold a clear distinction between the 'religious' and 'worldly'. After all, there has always been a distinction between *din* (religion) and *dawlah* (state), or in *fiqh* (jurisprudence), between *ibadat* (worship) and *muamalat* (human interaction), as well as between *hukkam* (rulers) and *ulama* (scholars).

One of the key arguments made against this distinction between religion and politics has been the notion of God's sovereignty (*hakimiyah*) over His creation. The argument being that if God is the ultimate Sovereign, there can be no real distinction between the affairs of religion and the affairs of the world. This view has partly come about as a result of the early experiences of Islam and more recently can be found most prominently in the ideas of intellectuals such as Maududi (d. 1979) in the Indian sub-continent and Qutb (d. 1966) in Egypt. Unlike Christianity, which had evolved for some three centuries as the religion of a powerless minority before Constantine and the Nicene era, Islam very quickly acquired state authority and in its formative era came under the protection of the state. As Ernest Gellner (1976) observed, Islam had an "absence of accommodation with the temporal power. Being itself Caesar, it had no need to give unto Caesar." However some contemporary Muslim thinkers have argued that the metaphysical notion of God's sovereignty does not entail the direct "rule of God" in the world through some perfect political system. This has been argued even, and indeed mainly, by some intellectuals and political leaders from a liberal Islamist background such as Turabi (Sudan) and Ghannouchi (from Tunisia) (1993). The sovereignty of God is thus seen to be rooted in values and objectives and they are fulfilled in the pursuit of a more generic conception of justice that is richly

enshrined in most democratic traditions[4]. Furthermore, as God's will and intent cannot be definitively known, it can only be sought through an open-ended process of human interpretation, and, therefore, the state cannot embody God's will but may only seek to establish justice. This also indirectly raises the controversial point of the utility, or lack, of "Shariah principles" and laws in our modern European context. For example the recent the Cambridge report (Suleiman, 2009) affirms support for secularism: "Secular law in Britain provides for religious freedom and protection against discrimination. History shows that in religious states, the power of religious authority becomes hegemonic." (p. 28) This is twinned in the report with a strong appreciation of British society and the "existence of justice, security and the freedom to practice one's religion. Britain ranks very favourably against these criteria, certainly more so than many Muslim-majority countries." (p. 36) Some of Ramadan's ideas around the relationship of Muslims to European identity are also important in this context. According to Ramadan, Europe embodies important Islamic teachings.

In addition to this theological debate, the lived Muslim experience of the interaction between religion and politics over the last century has often been far from pleasant. Olivier Roy's thesis of the "failure of political Islam" seems to have wind in its sails if we are to consider the situation of despotism and authoritarianism in the Muslim world, not exclusive to, but including, the various states that were created and fashioned in the name of Islam. All of this has meant that while some have strongly advocated a closer and stronger relationship between religion and politics, the Muslim journey for others has been a search for how to limit the power and influence of authoritarian religion. In this context Human Rights has become an important and controversial debate in the Muslim world.

Some Muslim critiques of the Human Rights discourse have asserted that the Universal Declaration of Human Rights does not adequately reflect the cultural and religious needs of Muslims and Muslim states. A range of approaches can be found from strong criticism, particularly from countries such as Saudi Arabia, Iran and Sudan, to those such as Maududi (1976) that have argued for a theoretical compatibility of Islam and Universal Human Rights (though Maududi is criticised for having adopting narrow conception of equality and rights in his understanding of the Human Rights discourse), to more modern intellectuals such as Naim

[4] See for example the proceedings of a recent seminar on British Muslims and the Secular State, Policy Research Centre: http://www.policyresearch.org.uk/events/bmsecularstate.php

(1996) in USA, Baderin (2005) in the UK and Abdolkarim Soroush (an Iranian intellectual), who have argued for the UDHR to be adopted and embraced by Muslims more fully, in light of attempts at 'Islamic Declarations' of Human Rights. The key obstacles in terms of application to Muslim nations seem to arise from a mixture of philosophical and practical / cultural positions. Related to the notion of *hakimiyah* (as mentioned before), some Muslims have argued that rights are conferred upon human beings by God and that there are no *a priori* rights unless granted by God. This vision obviously sees the world through a religious and Islamic lens and this ultimately could undermine the very shared, common and human approach necessary to create a *Universal* declaration of rights. Some of the practical issues include controversies around freedom of religion and apostasy and the rights of women as equals. Baderin has argued that Islamic law can be interpreted in ways that are compatible with the UDHR, while Naim has controversially argued for a radical hermeneutics of the Quran - based on earlier Qur'anic passages taking precedence over later ones. Soroush has emphasised collective human wisdom and need for people to live together in a globalised world and that therefore the common interests of humanity need to be recognised by Muslims.

Some critics of practices in Muslim states, including Human Rights activists have viewed the 'Islamic' objections presented as actually political objections that are presented to mask authoritarian practices in different parts of the developing world. In fact much of the Human Rights debate in the Muslim world, and its spill over here into the West is reflective of the way in which Muslim notions of the world, the role of the state, the rights of minorities and the issue of pluralism more generally have changed over the last century. As notions of a dichotomous world, divided between *dar al-Islam* and *dar al-harb,* have gradually given way to a more globalised vision of a plural world (in fact these categories were originally challenged by revivalist scholars such as Qaradawi and Mawlawi (Lebanese), who argued for a more nuanced understanding of the West in a global era) Muslim thought has been playing catch-up. Intellectuals such as Mahmud Ayoub (1997) and Fatih Osman (1996; see also Affendi, 2001) (both based in the US) and Soroush and have asserted that the sources of Islam can be re-read in more pluralistic terms to accommodate better the rights of minorities and freedom of conscience, religion and belief in a modern setting, both in legal and philosophical terms (including debates around the existence of relative and multiple truths and salvation of non-Muslims). If one looks at the intellectual trend of the debates presented above, the direction of travel for much of this thought is to slowly evolve a

more liberal and humanist reading of Islam that can be more at ease with its European and Western cultural milieu. Already debates such as the need to adopt more progressive positions on the rights of people with alternative sexual orientations have begun, as demonstrated in the Cambridge report, which also contains a very clear and robust line affirming freedom of religion: "It is important to say quite simply that people have the freedom to enter the Islamic faith and the freedom to leave it." (p. 75). Another important arena of thought is the burgeoning debate around what could be described as an Islamic feminist critique of patriarchy in Muslim history. Scholars such as Asma Barlas (2002) and Amina Wadud (1999) (both in the US) have argued for a re-reading of Islamic sources to create a more equal understanding of Islam. The above-mentioned Cambridge report also asserts that:

> "Islam forbids abuses and crimes *such* as forced marriages of men and women, domestic violence, female genital mutilation and so-called "honour killings", and teaches the equality of all human beings regardless of gender. Islam puts no limitations on the roles that women should be able to play in any particular field of employment, for example as government Ministers or in any other arena of leadership." *(p. 75)*

Debates around loyalty have also been at the cutting edge of contemporary Muslim thought. Ramadan (1999) was one of the first to argue for and articulate a legal/theological framework for a strongly rooted European Muslim identity. Hussain (2005) and others have also addressed a number of socio-political issues central to citizenship in a minority British context including how Muslims could deal with disagreements with the state, how they conceptualise the territory they live in and should relate to the people around them with a stronger sense of fraternity, as *their* people. A number of questions around citizenship and the role of Muslims in Europe have also been considered by legal bodies such as the European Council for Fatwa and Research[5] and in light of important questions that have been raised post-9/11. According to the European Council for Fatwa and Research: "Muslims living in non-Muslim countries are to respect the symbols of those countries such as the national anthem, national flag, etc." (Date of *fatwa*: October 2002). When asked about British Muslims who wanted to go to Afghanistan to fight against British troops, the Leeds based scholar, Abdullah Judai emphasised that the social contract of citizenship was to be considered a legally binding treaty under Islamic law and that:

> "…Muslims are not allowed to take up arms against a party that they are in a treaty with, even when this is to go to the defence of other Muslims, as abiding by agreements and treaties is one of the most crucial aspects and features of Islam. Following this, it is not

[5] Established in 1997, the Council is based in Dublin and chaired by Dr Yusuf al-Qaradawi.

> allowed for British Muslims to go to another country to fight in such a way that British forces would be attacked by Muslims." (Date of *fatwa*: November 2001).

However, it is probably fair to say that these emerging ideas represent debates and thoughts at an academic level that are yet to permeate to grassroots Muslim constituencies. At the grassroots level the debates raised by more radical actors tend to create confusion in the minds of lay Muslims who may know through their lived reality that democracy and Islam are compatible or that pluralism, equality and freedom are a force for good – but may also then find it difficult to articulate well grounded arguments against the rejectionist viewpoints. There is therefore an important role in disseminating scholarly debates more widely and in more accessible form, particularly by using actors that grassroots constituencies can relate to and trust.

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