Mapping the Muslim Atlantic

#MeToo

US and UK Muslim Debates on Race, Gender, and Securitization

Daniel Nilsson DeHanas
Peter Mandaville

KING'S College LONDON   BRITISH COUNCIL   GEORGE MASON UNIVERSITY

Table of Contents

Executive Summary

For the past several decades, American and British Muslims have been forging and strengthening bonds with each other. In part, they have grown more connected in order to face common challenges, such as the rise of populist politics and increasingly negative public attitudes on Islam. In part, Muslims have made connections as they moved or travelled across the Atlantic, or have reckoned with their religious tradition in a diverse and globalized world, finding themselves drawn into transatlantic debates.

In this report we explore the connections developing between American and British Muslims. We ask if these connections amount to the formation of a "Muslim Atlantic" space. We build from the ideas of social theorist Paul Gilroy, who has written seminal work on the "Black Atlantic" as a cultural space forged out of a collective memory of the transatlantic slave trade. The "Muslim Atlantic" is an analogous idea explored in this report and our wider project. It is not separate from issues of race, but is part of a broader set of conversations in which race, gender, immigration, belonging, identity, religion, and security are all woven together.

This "Mapping the Muslim Atlantic" report provides an overview of key links formed between U.S. and U.K. Muslims. Such links include the networks of various Islamic traditions first built in the 1950s and 60s as well as networks of mutual learning and solidarity on themes such as Islamic feminism. We have identified four types of network that have served as channels of connectivity. **Movement Islam** organizations initially relating to the Muslim Brotherhood or Jama'at-i Islami were pioneers in forming networks in the mid twentieth century, especially in higher education institutions. Another major grouping has been **Neotraditional Sufism** in which the followers of a particular sheikh maintain a strong international network. The key figure of **Malcolm X** has himself been a basis for much transatlantic connection, particularly in relation to race and to struggles for liberation. More recently we have seen the emergence of **middle class Muslim professional networks** that identify talent and provide mutual support that spans the Atlantic.

We go on to identify three core themes animating contemporary transatlantic Muslim discourse, namely **gender**, **race**, and the **securitization** of Islam and Muslim communities. We consider how the terms of these discussions differ on both sides of the Atlantic and key points of convergence and divergence in such dialogue, summing up key findings in our conclusion.

Dr. Daniel Nilsson DeHanas is Senior Lecturer of Political Science and Religion at King's College London. His wide-ranging research on religion and politics includes work on religious identity, political participation, and London as a global city of migration. His book *London Youth, Religion, and Politics* (Oxford University Press 2016) brings these interests together in a comparative study of young Muslims and Christians. He is co-founder of the website *Public Spirit* and serves as Editor of the journal *Religion, State & Society* (T&F Routledge). With his Co-Editor Marat Shterin he has recently published a journal special issue on "Religion and the Rise of Populism" (2018) including a global range of case studies of religious influences on populism in Britain, the US, Switzerland, Turkey, and elsewhere, which will be republished as a book with Routledge in 2019. After spending a significant portion of his life in the Middle East, the United States, and Finland, Dan has lived in London since 2007. His research with Muslims in the UK includes extensive work with Bengali Muslims in London's East End as well as national-level research on Muslims and the place of faith in British public policy.

Dr. Peter Mandaville is Professor of International Affairs in the Schar School of Policy and Government at George Mason University. He is also a Senior Research Fellow at Georgetown University's Berkley Center for Religion, Peace & World Affairs and a Nonresident Senior Fellow at the Brookings Institution. He was previously Director of the Ali Vural Ak Center for Global Islamic Studies and Founding Director of the Center for Global Studies (both at George Mason University) and his previous visiting affiliations have included American University and the Pew Research Center. Born and raised in the Middle East—the third generation of his family to live in the region—his recent research has taken him to a wide range of Muslim settings such as Pakistan, Indonesia, Malaysia, and West Africa. He is most recently the author of *Islam and Politics* (2nd edition, 2014). Other books include *Transnational Muslim Politics: Reimagining the Umma* (2001) as well as several volumes of edited essays in the fields of international relations and Islamic Studies, including *Politics from Afar: Transnational Diasporas & Networks* (Columbia University Press, 2012). He has authored numerous book chapters and journal articles, and contributed to a variety of online publications. His current research interests include the role of religion in world affairs, social movements in the Muslim world, and the question of post-Western global orders. His research has been supported by the Carnegie Corporation, the Henry Luce Foundation, the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, the National Endowment for the Humanities, the British Council and the Social Science Research Council.

Introduction

With deep social and political polarization in both the United States and Europe—and against a backdrop of rising anti-Muslim sentiment, heightened politics around race, and the #MeToo movement—how are Muslim communities in the United Kingdom and the United States making sense of and responding to renewed debates on gender, race, and securitization? With much that unites them, but also significant differences in their respective experiences, what are the key points of convergence and divergence in how Muslims in the U.S. and the U.K. are thinking about the present moment? To what extent is it relevant to think of an emerging space of intellectual, cultural, and political exchange—a "Muslim Atlantic"—that encompasses these dialogues and debates?

The idea of the "Muslim Atlantic" at the core of this report is inspired by the work of British intellectual Paul Gilroy. Over 25 years ago, Gilroy published his seminal work *The Black Atlantic*. It provided a way of understanding how African and Black culture, politics, economics, and ideas were shaped through an interplay between Black diasporas in Britain, North America, the Caribbean, and a broader Atlantic region. In this report, and the broader project of which it is a part, we explore the currency of Gilroy's paradigm for understanding an analogous "Muslim Atlantic" in which ideas, politics, culture, economics, and spiritualities emerge and speak to each other between the geographies that comprise this space of exchange.

To make the "Muslim Atlantic" idea more tangible, we can look at two brief examples.

Let's begin with Sheikh Hamza Yusuf Hanson, a white American convert, who trained in the premier Islamic institutions of the Middle East and established Zaytuna College in California. The "Californian Sheikh" travelled to Britain many times, particularly in the 1990s when he gave regular talks to younger Muslim audiences. Hamza Yusuf's telegenic style and accessible spirituality had a deep influence on British Muslim discussions in that period and continues to resonate today. He also entered policy circles in the U.S. and the U.K., for example being brought in as an external

Hamza Yusuf Hanson has been perhaps the single most influential public figure for bringing Muslims across the Atlantic into a common conversation.

consultant for the U.K. counter-terrorism Prevent strategy in 2005. While Hamza Yusuf Hanson has been perhaps the single most influential public figure for bringing Muslims across the Atlantic into a common conversation, he has also drawn criticism. There are many in Britain and America today who may respect Hanson's spiritual depth but have questioned his closeness to state power, or object to what they perceive as political tone-deafness on contemporary issues such as the #BlackLivesMatter and #MeToo movements. The fact that so many British and American Muslims discuss their concerns about Hamza Yusuf's political stances is itself evidence of the critical "Muslim Atlantic" cultural space that he has helped to generate.

Another exemplar of the "Muslim Atlantic" is the Black Muslim hip hop duo, Poetic Pilgrimage. Muneera Rashida and Sukina Abdul Noor were born to Jamaican parents and grew

up in Bristol, England. Since the mid-2000s they have toured together as spoken word artists at festivals and performances across Britain, America, and Europe. Poetic Pilgrimage has become well known for their hard-hitting lyrics on political topics such as the securitization of Muslims, developing a substantial following in the U.S. and U.K. Poetic Pilgrimage therefore, also embody transatlantic exchange, though in quite a different way from Hamza Yusuf. Exemplars like these have been highly influential and serve as good illustrations of this transatlantic phenomenon. In our research, however, we are also looking beyond such public figures to how ordinary Muslims become involved in debating and shaping "Muslim Atlantic" ideas.

The hip hop duo Poetic Pilgrimage (photo from Badilisha, creative commons license CC BY-NC 2.0).

In this report we provide the findings of the first phase of a research project on the "Muslim Atlantic," funded by the British Council as part of the Bridging Voices program. Our project is tracing the transnational connections, exchanges, and intellectual cross-fertilization between Muslims in the U.S. and the U.K. This first report is designed to be a descriptive "map" of the main contours of transatlantic connection between Muslims in

terms of recent history, key networks, and the central themes of race, gender, and securitization. The Bridging Voices program continues until mid-2020 when we will release our final project report that builds upon the ideas explored here with further analysis from our research and public engagement. Although the focus on this report is on connections between Muslims in the U.S. and the U.K., their relationships should be understood in a broader transatlantic context that includes links with Africa, Europe, the Caribbean, and Latin America.

Channels of Connectivity

Contexts of British & American Muslims

While the research that informs this report explores, first and foremost, lines of connectivity and exchange between British and American Muslims, these need to be understood in the context of important contrasts between the two communities. It may seem intuitive to assume that as followers of a little understood minority religion,

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immigrant Muslims in the relatively similar settings of the U.K. and U.S. would share many similarities—particularly since their heritage often traces to the same world regions (e.g. South Asia, the Middle East, Africa). In fact, the experiences of Muslim communities on the two sides of the Atlantic look starkly different in many important respects. These differences can be explained by looking at socioeconomic and demographic factors, but also by exploring norms surrounding religion in social and public life in the two contexts.

With respect to socioeconomic factors, it is important to pay attention to the stark differences surrounding the circumstances that brought immigrant Muslims to the U.S. and the U.K. from regions such as South Asia and the Middle East from the 1950s and 60s. In the case of the U.K., the emergence of Muslim populations in this period was largely a function of postcolonial immigration from the Indian subcontinent, whose newly independent nations India and Pakistan (and

later Bangladesh) remained linked to the U.K. through the Commonwealth. Muslim immigrants of South Asian background tended to possess very little in the way of formal education and came to Britain to take low-skilled jobs in the country's declining textile industry, concentrated in northern cities such as Bradford, Leeds, and Manchester. Avenues for social mobility were limited, giving rise in that first generation to a Muslim underclass of small shopkeepers and factory workers. In the United States, conversely, Muslims arriving during this same period were mainly students seeking higher education and various professional credentials. Put another way, the circumstances surrounding Muslim arrival in America—in sharp contrast to their co-religionists in the U.K.—were geared towards social mobility and economic success. Many who graduated from university settled in the United States and started lucrative careers as engineers, doctors, and lawyers. The stark difference in socioeconomic status between Muslim communities in the U.S. and U.K. can be summed up in one data point: the average household income of immigrant Muslim families in the United States is just about at or even slightly above the US national average (leading the Pew Research Center in 2007 to describe American Islam as a middle class phenomenon), whereas immigrant Muslim families in much of Europe (including the U.K.) continue to earn in the lowest quartile.[1]

Demographics have also played a role. The circumstances of Muslim immigration to the U.K., in which large numbers of migrants arrived seeking work in specific industries

located in particular urban areas, generated concentrated population pockets. Muslims lived side-by-side in the suburbs of increasingly post-industrial cities, and these neighborhoods arguably became more insular over time. In the United States, by contrast, a numerically smaller Muslim population spread itself across a much wider range of locales (particularly university towns) spanning the whole United States. While several population concentrations did develop in the U.S.—such as Dearborn, Michigan and the Los Angeles area—settlement patterns in America tended toward diffusion. It was not uncommon during this period for a Muslim family to be the only Muslim family in town. Coupled with aspirations and opportunities for social mobility, this created an incentive for Muslim immigrants in the United States to connect with and begin to build relationships and social capital within their wider communities.

Finally, it is worth giving some consideration to how differing norms in the U.S. and the U.K. with respect to the role of religion in society may help to account for differences in the experiences of British and American Muslims. While in the U.K., early South Asian immigrants who happened to be Muslim were perceived primarily in relation to race, their religious identities became more prominent from the 1980s in the wake of events such as the Salman Rushdie affair. Against the backdrop of an increasingly secular British society, a group claiming particular rights in public space based on religion seemed to be that much more at odds with prevailing norms. In the United States however, where religion tends to be more prominent in public life—underpinned by the historical resonance of claims to religious freedom—American Muslims *qua* Muslims did not seem so out of place (at least prior to 2001). In summary, despite many surface similarities—religious minorities living in two predominantly anglophone "Western" countries—Muslims in the U.K. and the U.S.

have until relatively recently had very different experiences in important respects due to major differences in their levels of socioeconomic attainment; differing demographic and population patterns; and varying national norms regarding the role of religion in public life.

There are two important Muslim communities present in the U.S. and the U.K. whose experiences are not captured by the aforementioned account of transatlantic variations in "immigrant Islam." The first of these is the large community of African-American Muslims in the United States—representing some 20% of the overall American Muslim population—some of whom trace their heritage back to Muslim slaves brought to North American colonies from West Africa starting in the 17th century (see the section on race below).[2] Black Islam in America has possessed its own distinct formations and practices since the 19th century, embodied by groups such as the Moorish Science Temple and the Nation of Islam.[3] However, the prevailing tendency among immigrant Muslims from the 1960s has been to look down on black American Muslims and to regard their religious practices as, at best, incorrect and unauthentic, or even heretical. African-American Muslims have long been subjected to the same systemic and pervasive racism and structural discrimination suffered by the broader black community in the United States. Indeed racism has been a consistent problem within the American Muslim community itself. Black American Muslims are often eclipsed by a dominant narrative that views Islam as inherently foreign to the United States, whereas these communities view themselves as the keepers of an authentic indigenous tradition of American Islam. Of further relevance to the theme of transatlantic connections between Muslims is the fact that socioeconomic and structural similarities between African-American Muslims and

Muslims of South Asian background in the U.K. means that for many immigrant Muslims in the U.K., the black American Muslim experience represents a more relevant reference point than the U.S. immigrant Muslim community. This point helps to explain the resonance that Malcolm X and related figures have for South Asian Muslims in the U.K. (see below).

What are the various mechanisms and conduits through which U.K. and U.S. Muslims have become aware of and connected with each other over the past half century? While the pervasiveness of social media and proliferation of news and other information sources today mean that Muslims on either side of the Atlantic have a more consistent "ambient" awareness of each other than in the past, it is possible to point in recent history to several more specific channels of interaction that have played an important role in enabling cross-fertilization and engagement between British and American Muslims.

Key Transatlantic Networks

Movement Islam – many of the students who came to the United Kingdom and the United States (sometimes both) for higher education from the late 1950s onwards were connected to circles affiliated with modern Islamic social and political movements such as the Middle East-based Muslim Brotherhood (founded in Egypt in 1928) or its South Asian cognate, the Jama'at-i Islami. This broad trend came to be known as "movement Islam," and its exponents in the U.K. and U.S. played a key role in creating some of the earliest Muslim organizations in both settings. For example, young Iraqi students such as Ahmad Totonji, Jamal Barzinji, and Hisham al-Talib were instrumental in establishing the Federation of Student Islamic Societies (FOSIS, est. 1963) in

the U.K. and those same figures—who moved on to the U.S. to undertake postgraduate studies—also played a key role in founding the Muslim Students Association (MSA) in the United States around the same time. The inherently transnational nature of the modern Islamic movement meant that it also thrived in transatlantic space. While organizations such as FOSIS and the MSA had characteristics that

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reflected the specificity of their respective contexts, they also at another level served very similar broad functions in the sense of reinforcing Muslim identity among students and reminding them of the broader global and geopolitical context of Islam. There was frequent contact and circulation of personnel and ideas between the movement-linked organizations on both sides of the Atlantic. The figures who founded the MSA were also instrumental in establishing the largest Muslim organization on the western side of the Atlantic, the Islamic Society of North America (ISNA)—although by the early 1990s, as North American Muslim communities grew and diversified, it became increasingly difficult to identify ISNA with its "movement" roots. The MSA and ISNA founders went on to establish other institutions, such as the International Institute for Islamic Thought (IIIT), with headquarters in the Washington DC suburbs and branches in the United Kingdom as well as a number of other prominent cities in Muslim majority countries.

Malcolm X – the figure of Malcolm X has played a prominent role in transatlantic Muslim discourse from the 1960s through to the present day, his popularity and relevance seemingly waxing and waning depending on the varying climate surrounding questions of race, religion, and national security in the U.S. and U.K. Malcolm famously visited the United Kingdom in 1964, just a few weeks before he was killed. In addition to speaking at the Oxford Union he also paid a visit to the Birmingham mosque. To the British Muslim students who invited him and helped to

Mosque of Islamic Brotherhood in Harlem, New York (photo from Paul Lowry, Flickr, creative commons license CC BY-NC 2.0).

organize his visit, Malcolm represented not only a Muslim icon in the struggle against racism and oppression—highly relevant to their own experience in and of itself—but also someone who emphasized the importance of a common struggle for liberation amongst oppressed peoples around the world. In the aftermath of 9/11, Malcolm has taken on renewed transatlantic currency, particularly in Europe where Muslims perceive themselves to be subject to a highly securitized form of racism not unlike what the Nation of Islam had faced in the United States a half century earlier. Imam Talib Abdur-Rashid of the Mosque of Islamic Brotherhood in the Harlem neighborhood of New York City (founded by Malcolm shortly before his death) reports that in recent years the mosque has seen a marked

increase in the numbers of European Muslims—and especially from the U.K.—coming to visit the mosque in the hope of connecting with the legacy of Malcolm X. In the English city of Bristol, for example, there is today a Malcolm X Community Centre.

Neotraditional Sufism – while we have already mentioned above the transatlantic prominence of neotraditionalist Sufi leaders such as Sheikh Hamza Yusuf, it is important to note that some of his earliest experiences in Islam following conversion are rooted in a previous transatlantic Sufi expression. The Murabitun World Movement is a religious group founded by a Scottish convert Abdalqadir as-Sufi (born Ian Dallas) and based in the Darqawi (Shadili) tariqa.[4] Originally from Ayr, Scotland, Dallas studied in Morocco with prominent Sufi scholars in the late 1960s and subsequently established religious centers in England and California. The highly transnational character of Sufi tariqas have allowed them to serve as an important conduit of connectivity between Muslims in North America and Europe. The sheikhs of all the major Sufi orders have representatives in the U.S. and U.K. and frequently move between both countries, regarding them as an important source of fundraising and as a means of broadening the scope and demographics of their spiritual world geography. For example, the late Sheikh Nazim Al-Haqqani—who spent every Ramadan in the U.K.—sent his representative Hisham Kabbani to the United States in the 1990s to build out the Naqshbandi order's infrastructure in North America.

Middle Class Muslim Professionals – Social class can also be a conduit of transatlantic Muslim connectivity. In recent years, as Muslims have figured more prominently in national discourse in both the United States and the United Kingdom, it has become increasingly common for educated and

professionally-accomplished Muslims to find and link up with each other. While stark socioeconomic differences may have served as a barrier to transatlantic Muslim engagement in the first and to some extent the second generation of immigrants, there is now a critical mass of firmly middle class and professionally successful Muslims on both sides of the Atlantic. They see in each other not just shared experiences and professional orientations but also a sense of being part of a common cadre of "new Muslim elites" who, by virtue of their prominence and accomplishments, are at the forefront of addressing the various issues surrounding Islam and Muslims in public discourse in the U.S. and the U.K. For example, the City Circle (founded 1999) in London is a weekly discussion forum and volunteering platform geared towards Muslim professionals that has included many American speakers over the years. Another organizational expression of this trend can be found in the Concordia Forum, an annual meeting of younger Muslim professionals and leaders from North America and Europe. Since 2009, Concordia has been alternating its meeting sites between the two sides of the Atlantic, and serving as a key conduit for Muslim elite networking and the production of social capital, business collaboration, and cultural exchange.

Transatlantic Themes

Race

Race is a crucial theme in Muslim connections in Britain and America, although it is experienced in each of these two contexts in quite different ways. In America, Blackness has long been central to Muslim experiences, whether or not this is fully acknowledged. As many as one third of the Africans who were trafficked as enslaved people to the American colonies came from areas of West Africa where Islam was the predominant religion including present-day Ghana, the Gambia, Mali, and Senegal. Black slaves continued to practice Islam in America, often in clandestine meetings, but the religion never became institutionalized. The Blues retains the memory of West African devotional music in some of its chord changes and melodies. Islam, then, while central to Black American experiences, was to a substantial extent forgotten. In the early twentieth century, Jamaican-born Marcus Garvey and other Black thinkers began to argue that Islam was a more authentic religious form for African Americans to free themselves from the racial subjugation that whites had imposed through Christianity. Black Muslims in America today can trace their origins to a uniquely longstanding Black religion on the continent. Even so, Arab American Muslims and others tend to have a limited understanding of the Nation of Islam and Black Sunni Islam, meaning that Black Muslims are often misrecognized or unacknowledged.

In Britain, race is important to Islam in different ways that arise out of colonial experience. The British were the central actors in the "triangle trade" of the forced passage of Blacks, including Muslims, across the Atlantic to the Caribbean and the American colonies. The British Abolition of slavery did not happen overnight. Power relationships and laws remained exploitative. In Jamaica, for example, only a minority of the Black population survived the harsh conditions of slavery and the following years of limited "freedom," embedding deep trauma. This is only beginning to be acknowledged widely due to works such as Andrea Levy's novel *The Long Song*.[5] Britain's role as an imperial power involved retaining the loyalty of subjects across a vast expanse of territories that it shaped with the English language and its civilizing mission. In the two World Wars, Muslims from across the empire fought bravely for Britain. As British colonies took on their independence to become nations, strong links remained. Many Muslims immigrated to Britain from Pakistan, Bangladesh, India, and parts of Africa where South Asians had served the British as administrators. In Britain, Muslims are predominantly of South Asian origin and their treatment in society continues to be shaped by postcolonial dimensions.[6] Muslims are subject to "cultural racism" where being visibly Muslim due to features or clothing takes on a race-like stigmatizing form. Race also matters in intra-Muslim conversations, as Black British Muslims are often misrecognized or assumed to be new converts despite many having long family histories in Islam.

British and American Muslims experience issues of race in quite different contexts that arise out of their respective histories of enslavement or colonization. Yet both are affected by the need to perform before the constant gaze of whiteness. At a deep level, both have been shaped by histories of trauma

and struggle. It is important to underline that these two histories should not be equated, but they nonetheless provide some basis for solidarity. The radical tradition of Malcolm X as a Black civil rights leader and a Sunni Muslim is much discussed in the U.S. and the U.K. Whether they draw upon Malcolm X or not, for both American and British Muslims Islam can provide a kind of liberation theology to meaningfully intervene into the underlying issues of centuries of race-based subjugation.

Gender

Muslim women on both sides of the Atlantic confront a range of issues related to roles and expectations of gender. In the past few decades Islamic feminism has grown and matured in the writings and actions of some of its key exponents, many of whom live in the United States such as Amina Wadud, Kecia Ali, and Asma Barlas. Despite the growing prominence of such feminist work, the structure of almost all Islamic institutions and systems of authority worldwide remains resolutely patriarchal.

Patriarchal culture can become a kind of "political scarecrow" that distracts from the fundamental issues of anti-Muslim prejudice and structural inequality.

The #MeToo movement might seem to provide a means for challenging some aspects of Muslim male dominance. #MeToo grew in prominence during the Harvey Weinstein scandal in October 2017 as a broad-based movement for calling out sexual harassment on social media. Two very prominent Muslim male leaders—the Swiss intellectual Tariq Ramadan of Oxford University and Nouman Ali Khan, founder of the Bayyinah Institute for Arabic in New York—were each separately accused of using spiritual influence in sexual

misconduct in the months before the rise of #MeToo. Discussions of these and other Muslim male leaders with alleged improprieties would seem to naturally connect into the #MeToo movement. However, when discussing this issue with a roundtable of mostly female Muslims at the recent New Horizons in British Islam conference, participants expressed concern that such cases were treated as an internal community issue, with Muslim women essentially being told "don't wash your dirty linen in public." Such internal policing among Muslims may be understandable in times when state surveillance continues and when public perceptions of Islam remain negative. However our roundtable participants voiced concerns that it amounted to not trusting women and shutting down their voices.

For many Muslims in both contexts, though more so in the U.K., traditional cultural norms of marriage, family, and community life exert a strong expectation of male dominance. There has also been an emergence of a younger Muslim "bro culture" that informally perpetuates the assumed primacy of men. At the same time, it should be noted that many outside commentators on Muslims are drawn to narratives on patriarchy—such as the "exotic" stories of honor killings or arranged marriages—precisely because this sets Muslims apart as distinctly other. Patriarchal culture can become a kind of "political scarecrow" that distracts from the fundamental issues of anti-Muslim prejudice and structural inequality.[7]

One unifying aspect of being a Muslim woman in the U.S. and the U.K. is that it involves various role performances that can become exhausting. Arlie Hochschild has written about women in the workplace and the home as needing to manage their feelings and those of

others through a kind of emotional labor that typically goes unrewarded.[8] The expectations of being a Muslim when overlaid with those of being a woman, and perhaps of also being an ethnic minority, involve emotional labor and place women into complex situations of intersectionality. Muslim women experience what Paul Gilroy (drawing on W.E.B. Du Bois) calls double consciousness, as they constantly need to consider not only their lives but also how their lives are viewed through the eyes of others.[9]

In recent years, Muslim women in Britain, America, and elsewhere have been proactively developing alternative spaces, theologies, and practices. Amina Wadud's tawhidic[10] paradigm has been an important development with its emphasis on the oneness with which God created humanity, leading to ethical implications for women's status equal to men. Wadud's politics of gender justice, including her controversial leadership of men and women together in prayer in a much-publicized event in New York in 2005, have made her an inspirational figure for many. The Women's Mosque of America in Los Angeles, the Inclusive Mosque Initiative in London, and a planned women-led mosque in Bradford, U.K., are each in their own way pioneering as female-led spaces. The various female leaders from these initiatives have forged transatlantic connections with each other and with leaders of comparable organizations in places such as Copenhagen and Hamburg, in order to share advice and build international support.

Securitization

The two decades following September 11, 2001, have been characterized by a vast increase in security-related measures targeted towards Muslims in Britain and America. The community-oriented counter-terrorism strategies in each context—Preventing Violent

Extremism (PVE) in the U.K. and Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) in the U.S.—have been particularly controversial and will receive the bulk of the attention of this section. These strategies, however, should be understood in the context of a much broader trend towards "securitization" which also includes tightening border security, attempts to limit migration, tough rhetoric from politicians on public safety threats, and involvement in international conflicts (e.g. through direct military intervention or drone strikes) that are connected with terrorism or other security risks.

Surveillance by CCTV cameras (photo from Hustvedt, Wikimedia commons, creative commons license CC BY-NC 2.0).

Britain's domestic counter-terrorism strategy, known as CONTEST, was initiated in 2003. CONTEST includes various facets for dealing with threats of terrorism, but the component with most direct bearing on British Muslims is Prevent or PVE. Prevent was originally made public in 2006 in the aftermath of the 7/7 2005 bombings on London public transport which were committed by "homegrown" British citizens. It was designed to "win the hearts and minds" of British Muslims, dissuading them from walking the path towards terrorist violence. The strategy has been criticized on various counts including for the covert role of

"spying", the ways in which it polices free speech, and the fact that it has tended to single out Muslims as a threat, while under-emphasizing radical groups such are right-wing extremists. Despite being viewed by many international observers as a model of community partnership counter-terrorism work, Prevent remains deeply unpopular among Muslims in Britain.

Seen in Muslim Atlantic perspective, the securitization of politics in the U.S. and the U.K. has had a similar "chilling" effect on Muslim civil society.

The American Countering Violent Extremism strategy, or CVE, was unveiled by the Obama administration in 2011. CVE builds on various international models, taking particular inspiration from PVE in Britain. Indeed, various U.K. counter-terrorism experts, including some British Muslims, were actively involved in consulting on the CVE strategy. The CVE strategy was designed with the three aims of promoting engagement with communities, building expertise in CVE, and responding to extremist propaganda. There are some challenges that come with government engagement in CVE in the U.S. context due to the strict separation of church and state which, at least in principle, forbids state funding of any religious organization as a partner. The CVE program is built on a recognition that Muslims are more dispersed across the U.S. and that the risk of terrorists acting in the name of Islam is far lower. Nonetheless, as in the U.K., Muslims who are aware of CVE policy have for the most part reacted negatively. Some particularly controversial issues in the U.S. CVE context include a major scandal involving undercover NYPD operatives spying on Muslims in various universities in the U.S. northeast and the method of "create and capture" in which vulnerable individuals have

been given the supposed means to engage in a terrorist attack as a way of establishing their culpability for arrest and trial.[11]

Seen in Muslim Atlantic perspective, the securitization of politics in the U.S. and the U.K. has had a similar "chilling" effect on Muslim civil society. British academic Shuruq Naguib has traced how Muslim political practices in Britain have changed over time, which also has relevance to the U.S. situation.[12] In the 1990s, British Muslims were deeply political, even radical, on university campuses and in public life more broadly. Throughout the 2000s there was a gradual shift, seen more clearly from around 2010 onwards, among Muslims to take on a more "civic" and perhaps even apolitical stance that is more coherent with neoliberalism. Underlying this shift has been a deliberate distancing from terrorism. Eboo Patel in the U.S. writes about the rise of "social Muslims" who are media savvy and seek to engage Islam with broader cultural trends, often on the progressive end of the spectrum.[13] The more radical political critiques from Muslims in the U.S. and the U.K. have usually been made in arenas of cultural production, such as in performances like the Axis of Evil Comedy Tour or music from hip hop artists like Poetic Pilgrimage and Brother Ali.

Conclusion

As we have described in this report, Muslims in Britain and America are substantially different from each other in several ways. They differ in terms of proportion of the population, geographical dispersion, average socio-economic status, and the importance of race as compared to postcolonial heritage. Britain and America have distinct histories and they are different in the relationship of religion to public life, with the presence of an established church in the former and while in the latter there is a strict separation of church and state and yet a stronger accepted civic role for religion.[14]

These differences notwithstanding, this report has revealed two key points which put them in perspective. A first point is that the internal variation *within* Muslim communities in the U.S. and the U.K. is itself immense, and this should not be flattened by expecting American Muslims to do things one way and British Muslims another. For example, as we have explained here, many Black Muslims in both countries feel misrecognized by Muslim peers and may in fact be better able to relate to each other on these issues than to non-Black Muslims within their own national context.

A second point central to this report is that Muslims in the U.S. and the U.K. have developed strong interlocking relationships over the years. This may be because of their political or theological affinities, their interest in bridging difference, or simply their personal life trajectories involving travel or living in both places. In some cases, movements between the U.S. and U.K. have held the strategic purpose of building Islamic networks transnationally. In others, the movements may

have come from other circumstances, but have serendipitously resulted in new channels of connectivity. The stories of the various Muslim figures involved in Movement Islam, Sufi orders, middle-class networks, and of the key role of Malcolm X, which are told briefly here, all contain a mixture of strategy and serendipity.

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In this report we have laid the groundwork for a broader discussion of the Muslim Atlantic by reviewing the evolution of transatlantic ties between British and American Muslims over the past half century, and by identifying key channels and conduits for fostering and sustaining this connectivity. We then went on to describe three major themes within current U.K. and U.S. Muslim discourse—gender, race, and securitization—in order to begin identifying key points of convergence and divergence in the British and American contexts around those issues.

In the project's second report we will examine how the concept of the Muslim Atlantic—with its emphasis on diffusion, exchange, and double consciousness—problematizes the intellectual project of creating something like a nationally-oriented "French", "British", or "American" Islam. At the same time, we will explore the limitations of the Muslim Atlantic as a single, coherent space of Muslim lived experience by looking in greater detail at where and how British and American Muslim contexts fail to translate in transatlantic terms.

As the project progresses, we will remain attentive to its generative nature—the fact that our work serves to build spaces of transatlantic dialogue between Muslim communities just as much as it studies pre-existing networks and conduits of exchange. While it incorporates many of the hallmark activities associated with academic research—interviews, workshops, publications—a significant measure of the project's broader public impact will continue to arise from the ways in which it enables comparative discussion and debate about contemporary British and American Muslim experiences.

Notes

[1] Paul Gilroy, The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness, London: Verso, 1993.

[2] Pew Research Center, "Muslim Americans: Middle Class and Mostly Mainstream", May 22, 2007: https://www.pewresearch.org/2007/05/22/muslim-americans-middle-class-and-mostly-mainstream/.

[3] Besheer Mohamed & Jeff Diamant, "Black Muslims account for a fifth of all U.S. Muslims, and about half are converts to Islam", Pew Research Center, January 17, 2019: https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2019/01/17/black-muslims-account-for-a-fifth-of-all-u-s-muslims-and-about-half-are-converts-to-islam/.

[4] The Moorish Science Temple, founded in New Jersey in the second decade of the 20th century by Noble Drew Ali, emphasizes the North African ("Moorish") and Islamic heritage of African-Americans and was an important precursor of the Nation of Islam.

[5] A *tariqa* is a Sufi order or school with a particular approach to Islamic knowledge and experience.

[6] Andrea Levy, *The Long Song*, New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2010.

[7] It should be noted that Muslims in Britain, like Muslims in the United States, originate from a very wide range of countries across the world going beyond South Asia, the Middle East, Africa, and the Caribbean to also include, for example, Indonesia and Malaysia.

[8] Aina Khan, "We've got the degrees, so why do Muslim women struggle to get jobs?", *The Guardian*, December 14, 2018: https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2018/dec/14/degrees-muslim-women-jobs-austerity-racism-islamphobia.

[9] Arlie Hochschild, *The Managed Heart: The Commercialization of Human Feeling*, Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1983.

[10] Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness*, London: Verso, 1993.

[11] The Islamic theological term *tawhid*, from Arabic, refers to the absolute oneness of God.

[12] On the NYPD controversy and create and capture, and for a broader critique of work on "radicalisation" see Arun Kundnani, "The Myth of Radicalization", *The Muslims Are Coming!: Islamophobia, Extremism, and the Domestic War on Terror*, London: Verso, pp. 115-152, 2014.

[13] Shuruq Naguib, "God Change and Islam", in Linda Woodhead and Rebecca Catto (eds.), *Religion and Change in Modern Britain*, pp. 184-190, 2012.

[14] Eboo Patel, *Out of Many Faiths: Religious Diversity and the American Promise*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2018.

[15] For a summary of these contextual differences in religion-state relations and some of the ramifications for British and American Muslims, see Nasar Meer and Tariq Modood, "Religious Pluralism in the United States and Britain: Its Implications for Muslims and Nationhood", *Social Compass*, 62(4), pp. 526-540, 2015: https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/0037768615601968.