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NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

'ABDALLAH BIN BAYYAH has had a long and distinguished scholarly career. Having served as a judge (*qadi*) in the Ministry of Justice in Mauritania, he later moved on to become one of the vice-presidents of the first president of Mauritania. He was also the head of the sharia section in the court of appeals, moving later to become appointed to the position of High Authority for Religious Affairs for the Republic's highest office. In the years that followed, he served as the minister of National Guidance and as the Permanent Secretary of the People's Party of Mauritania. Presently, Shaykh 'Abdallah has emerged as one of the leading authorities of the science pertaining to the legal rulings that relate to Muslims living as minority communities among non-Muslims (*fiqh al-'aqaliyat*). He currently lives in Jeddah where he teaches juristic methodology, Qur'anic commentary, and Arabic as a professor at King Abdul Aziz University.

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GIBRIL F. HADDAD is a well-known Lebanese–American scholar and religious leader. Schooled in England, he took his PhD degree from Columbia University in New York, before embarking on an intensive study of hadith, Islamic law and doctrine under leading authorities of the Middle East.

H.A. HELLYER is Senior Research Fellow of the Centre for Research in Ethnic Relations at the University of Warwick (UK). He was Visiting Professor of Law at the American University in Cairo (Egypt) and Ford Fellow at the Brookings Institution in Washington, DC (USA). A prolific commentator and researcher of classical Islamic law, Dr. Hellyer is the author of the forthcoming “The ‘Other’ European: Multiculturalism and Muslims” to be published by Edinburgh University Press.

HAMZA YUSUF is considered as one of the foremost contemporary spokespersons for Islam. He has translated into English several classical Arabic texts. In addition, he has served as the principal lecturer at religious intensive seminars in America, England, Spain, and Morocco. Shaykh Hamza also founded The Zaytuna Institute and Academy which has established an international reputation for presenting a classical picture of Islam in the West and which is dedicated to the revival of traditional study methods and the sciences of Islam.

MUHAMMAD AFIFI AL-AKITI was born in Malaysia and was educated from a young age in the classical Islamic sciences at scholastic madrasas of East Java with a long tradition in Shafi'i jurisprudence. Among the best known authorities with whom he studied were the jurists, theologians and Sufis: Imam al-Fadani, Shaykh Ibn Mahfuz al-Hajini, and Habib 'Aydarus al-Habshi. He has travelled widely; and in addition to the specific licenses to teach (*ijazas*) from his systematic training, he has also received general

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licenses from teachers beyond his homeland, especially in Morocco and the Middle East. Shaykh Afifi is presently a Research Fellow in Islamic Theology at the Oxford Centre for Islamic Studies and teaches at Oxford University. His doctoral thesis investigates a newly discovered medieval manuscript of an advanced theological work by Islam's greatest theologian, Imam al-Ghazali.

SUHEIL LAHER was born and raised in Zimbabwe in a family of Indian descent, and has lived in America for the past 15 years. He works as a software engineer, and since 1997 has served as Muslim Chaplain at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in Cambridge, Massachusetts. His continual study of Islam has taken him to both traditional and academic settings. He has received several licenses to teach (*ijazas*), and is currently a graduate student in Religious Studies at Boston University.

TAHIR ABBAS is Reader (2006-) in Sociology and the founding Director of the Centre for the Study of Ethnicity and Culture (2003-) at the University of Birmingham. He has published four authored and (co-) edited books, and over eighty articles, chapters or book reviews in sociology, education, public policy and Islamic Studies. In 2006, he was sent to Indonesia and Singapore and in 2007, to Pakistan, as part of a British Muslim Delegation sponsored by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and the British Council to help improve understanding between Britain and the Muslim world. He is a regular contributor to the media and policy debates, and was elected to the Royal Society of Arts in 2006. In 2007, he was elected to the Muslim Power 100; a list of leading Muslim lights in Britain today. His most recent publications include *The Education of British South Asians* (2004); and as editor, *Islamic Political Radicalism* (2007) and *Muslim Britain* (2005); and as co-editor, *Immigration and Race Relations: Sociological Theory and John Rex* (2007). His forthcoming book, *British Islam*, explores how the policies and practices of multiculturalism and failed foreign policies have negatively impacted on Muslim minority experiences.

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INTRODUCTION TO THE SECOND EDITION

Islamic Political Radicalisation in Britain: Appraising an Emergent Phenomenon

TAHIR ABBAS

AT A TIME of ever-rapid globalisation, identity questions for Muslim minorities in Western European nation-states, and in particular in Britain since the events of 7/7 are at the forefront of debates in policy, government, media, civil society and academia. Debates have emerged on radicalisation, secularisation, modernisation, identity conflicts, inter-generational change, cultural relativism, and social and economic exclusion.¹ Islamic political radicalism is a phenomenon of particular interest in various governmental departments, political and societal organisations and communities. There is considerable concern that this problem, however one might define it, is especially acute and a cause for alarm. Those at the left of the political spectrum believe that the “war on terror” and structural inequalities are at the heart of the problem while those on the right feel that it is the essence of Islam that is regarded as alien, barbaric, or ill-adjusted to the expectations and aspirations of the West. There is a considerable grey area in between. The fact is that Islam has very little to do with this radicalisation. Rather the issue is more about political disenfranchisement, limited material opportunities for isolated British Muslims, psychological issues, and indeed, foreign policy.²

It has been over two years since the events of 7/7 and the picture that is now emerging is clearer than ever. Initially, emphasis was placed on

¹ Tahir Abbas, ed., *Muslim Britain: Communities under Pressure* (London and New York: Zed, 2005).

² Tahir Abbas, ed., *Islamic Political Radicalism: A European Perspective* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007).

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Muslim identity issues, the role of mosques and leadership. Now, greater empirical research and conjectural evidence suggests that these identity issues affect non-Muslim minorities in similar ways; confidence and trust in the nation-state that brings about effective engagement and participation is a key missing element. The role of mosques is important, not in how they have apparently radicalised young people but because they have systematically failed to recognise young Muslims *per se*, and thus these issues are more about professionalisation and capacity-building. The concerns in relation to leadership are ongoing, but one must remember that leaders do not emerge out of the ether; often they become members of the elite before engaging in the political, cultural, or intellectual worlds, and with many Muslims trapped in conditions of social and economic deprivation, producing true leaders is a slow process. In addition, one needs to remain aware of the role of false leaders or puppets that were created as part of the colonial experience in Muslim lands; some of that still exists today in the post-colonial experience of Muslim minorities in Western European nation-states.

While the burgeoning analytical, empirical, and conceptual developments to theory, policy, and practice continues, Muslims are looking *within* the British Muslim community to determine what might be at fault, at the same time examining the foreign policies of the Western nation-states that have created havoc in Muslim lands. The global theatre has played out the self-fulfilling prophecy of the “clash of civilisations” thesis originally formulated by neo-conservative ideologues, such as Bernard Lewis, Samuel Huntington and Francis Fukuyama. The stark realities of the 1990s and the early years of the twenty-first century have revealed the immeasurable suffering of Muslims around the world. From the first Gulf War (1990–1991) to Somalia (1993), Bosnia-Herzegovina (1993–1996), Chechnya (1999), the second Palestinian Intifada (2000–), the war on Afghanistan (2001–2002) and the war on Iraq (2003–), Muslims have been on the receiving end of the political and economic interests of Western hegemony. Twenty million Muslims in Western Europe and six million in the United States have witnessed various reactions to this onslaught—some internally-derived others externally influenced.

From attacks on the Paris metro (1996), to the Moscow theatre attack (2002), the Madrid bombings (2004) that killed 192 people, and the

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assassination of Theo van Gogh (2004), we then had the first ever suicide-bombings by home-grown radicals in London in 2005. Some have argued that this is “Blair’s blowback”. This was not the first time British-born Muslim political radicals have come to the fore; the Yemen Seven (1999) included five British-born Muslims, the two failed shoe bombers Richard Reid and Saajid Badat, and the 2003 “Mike’s Place” bombers in Tel Aviv from Derby and Hounslow (Omar Khan Sharif and Asif Mohammed Hanif).

We can identify earlier periods of this so-called radicalisation of Islam, particularly in the twentieth century, in the writings of Muslim ideologues of the 1940s or 1950s, or the actions of the Palestinian Liberation Organisation and its wings of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine and Fateh in the 1960s and 1970s, or in the activities of the Libyans, Iraqis, Iranians or the Lebanese (through Hamas or Hezbollah) in the 1980s. There is a perceptible pattern in which Muslims in Islamic lands have reacted against the oppression of invading forces, the double standards of outside democratic regimes, and the dominant interests of powerful capitalistic nations vying for control over the remaining natural fossil fuels of the world. For the last three decades, from the Iranian Revolution of 1979 onwards, the Muslim world has been in turmoil while Muslim minorities in the West have been economically, socially, politically and culturally marginalised. It is these harsh experiences that characterise our sociological, anthropological, cultural and political interests in the study of Muslims, especially in Britain today.

The London terror outrage now known as 7/7 made it apparent that the threat from suicide bombers comes not only from foreigners who supposedly slip into the country under the radar of security and surveillance, but from people who have grown up and live amongst us. These are fellow citizens, willing to die so they can kill others. How and why British-born Muslims, of whatever ethnicity, class or cultural hue, would want to do this is difficult to understand, though understand it we must if we are to prevent these acts in the future. There are a number of factors which we can recognise, not just from the London bombings but from others elsewhere. It is a complex jigsaw puzzle, but we can at least place some of the pieces together.

First, there is the psychological and emotional brainwashing of individuals through the radicalising messages of those claiming Islamic knowledge.

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This brainwashing encourages the killing of innocent people for infinite rewards in paradise or as part of an act of war. The Jihadi-Salafi types, those whose literal interpretation of Islam is locked-tight, are the essential drivers in this radicalisation of Muslims, in both the West and elsewhere. Muslims, whether as minorities or majorities in countries throughout the world, feel a perceptible strain, because sharia law is frozen and Islam is closed off to the rest of humanity. It was not always like this, of course, but one would have to look back nine hundred years to Muslim Spain to find an open and inclusive Islam. The Islam that is practised today has been impoverished by five hundred years of imperialism and colonialism. We live in the “dark ages” of Islam and the methods used by fundamentalists, Islamists or radicals to seek redress are abysmally outmoded in a world that has moved on. It is important to emphasise nevertheless, that the actions of these terrorists are almost entirely political and not at all theological. These Muslims are driven to do what they do because they believe they will go to heaven, and in the process create political change by encouraging the world’s leaders to take action on Iraq specifically, but also in Palestine, Chechnya and Kashmir; all as part of the wider struggle to liberate Muslims from the daily oppression they currently experience.

Second, given the predicaments of exclusion, it is nevertheless apparent that there is a genuine failure of leadership at home, in the community, and at the local and national levels. Leadership in the Muslim population is determined by the pandering of UK politicians to elites who are often of a very different make-up and outlook than the many they seek to represent. Local community “elders” are propped up through artificial support mechanisms that facilitate the electoral process to the advantage of the main political parties but remove free choice from the hands of the people. Religious leadership has also been weak. The imams in mainstream mosques are not central, if relevant at all, to the leadership of Muslims, and are certainly not responsible for the radicalising of the young. They are most poorly-equipped to fulfil their role in the religious, cultural and intellectual edification of young people. This failing makes young people vulnerable to Islamists who have been able to fill the gap. The opportunity for imams to be the educators of the community, in the Qur’anic texts and as Muslims living in the West, has been missed and Muslim communities are poorer for it.

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Third, the role of the media is important. It is perfectly possible for an individual to grow up in an insulated environment, where the television, Internet, food, community and local enterprise are entirely Muslim. A young man can be radicalised by images of victims in Palestine or Chechnya from the comfort of his own home, through conversations within a circle of friends with similar perspectives on life or by reading the many pieces of imbalanced literature that are freely available. This is one of the consequences of globalisation: we are connected to every aspect of this planet through communication technology, but we have lost touch with our neighbours in the process. Where the media encloses Muslims at one level, at another it spreads Islamophobia—not least by focusing on preachers from the wilder fringes of Islam rather than the more recognised authorities. Few commentators are able to distinguish between the Islam that is practiced in general and the disturbed Islam that is practiced by the very few, yet these commentators remain the prominent critics of the religion. This conceals the fact that there is wide-ranging debate within Islam about modernity. The Western critique, relentless as it is ill-informed, hinders rather than facilitates this debate.

Fourth, at the national and international levels, the problem has been exacerbated by the “war on terror” launched after the 9/11 attacks on America. The coalition of the willing has taken it upon itself, with little or no support from the rest of the world, to weed out “Islamic” terror, bringing freedom (of markets) and democracy (of sorts) to ailing nations. Attacks first on Afghanistan and then on Iraq have made Muslims feel that they are soft targets, part of an unadulterated US-led assault. Late modernity’s cultural, economic and political hegemon needs a bogey to legitimise its laissez-faire machinations and after the end of the cold war Islam is that bogey. In the aftermath of 9/11, with increased policing powers, advanced electronic surveillance techniques, the elimination of habeas corpus and challenges to Muslim loyalty to the state, Muslims in Western nation-states have become victims of the aggressive state apparatus.

Muslims in the West are in a precarious position because of the combination of these internal and external dynamics, the juxtaposition of the local, national and international. They see the wider Islamic world in tatters and their own experiences affected by dominant negative domestic paradigms, but in reality “mainstream” Islam has no answers. What a few

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young Muslim people, mostly men, do is seek solutions to their frustrations in violence and destruction. Little do they realise that they help no one and only create further distress, disharmony and disillusionment. It is quite apparent that Islam in the West, and elsewhere, is in need of a new impetus. Given the anti-discrimination laws of this country and the general openness of British society, one must hope that it will remain a real possibility here. Certainly, the 7/7 attacks on London have added to direct and indirect forms of Islamophobia. There is considerable evidence of violence towards individuals, communities and mosques; there has been an impact on Muslims living in Britain, particularly those who are visible adherents of marginalised communities across the country, and this has further increased fear and distrust of the majority society. But it should also act as a demonstration to the groups who would execute terrorist acts in Britain, that however hard they try they will never succeed in disrupting Britain's relatively fair, just and tolerant society and that all they have done is further vilify the name of Islam. The British multiculturalism project is still under development, but further attacks or attempted efforts by Muslims will weaken any positive gains made over the last three decades.

Indeed, as a result of the 7/7 terror attacks in London, and the failed attacks almost two years later, once again in London and in Glasgow, there has been a genuine attempt on the part of the nation-state to try and engage with its British Muslim minority, particularly the young and disaffected. Reverberations from the complete shock of the events are still being felt as communities, neighbourhoods, politicians and the state come to terms with the enormity of the events and the potential implications they have for public and social policy. What increases this distress is the discovery that the acts were orchestrated by British-born Muslims, many of whom were seemingly well-integrated citizens. This had completely bamboozled the intelligence services, who were of the view that any would-be terrorist attacks would be organised by overseas groups infiltrating networks in Britain. That these young British men were without doubt self-radicalised has come as a genuine surprise to many and, as such, makes it even more pertinent to better understand the mechanisms and processes that drove them to their actions and, more importantly for the future, to determine how best to engage with alienated British Muslims, some of whom are prepared to carry out such atrocities in the name of religion

and politics. The need to understand and appreciate the depth of the dissatisfaction felt by young Muslims in Britain is more important than ever. However Muslims and non-Muslims move forward from here on, we all need to remain aware that these bombers and the increasing number who have been prosecuted or will be in court throughout the early part of 2008 facing criminal prosecutions are indeed “made in Britain”.

A chief concern with young people and the question of Islamic political radicalism is how it comes about in the first instance and then, how it can be alleviated. This is something that the nation-state seems to be making a genuine effort to understand. Perhaps it is too early to be sure of any particular steps to be taken, but the view from the communities and the professionals are that positive strides are being made. However it is also palpably clear that the questions of what drives radicalisation and how to engage with radicalised young people remain as difficult as ever to answer. The communities from which many radicals emanate are those that are generally removed from any engagement in the political process. Where there is suspicion of activity it tends to centre on the movements of shadowy figures who venture into homes late at night, presumably radicalising others. This is certainly possible given media developments in the Islamic world and the way in which the bleak truths of war can stir the imagination of young minds already susceptible to feelings of frustration, anger, hate, and ultimately capable of the will to carry out violence in its name.

In other instances, there is a perceptible view that higher education institutions are “hotbeds” of radical political Islamic activity, sometimes acting as launch pads to further radicalise young Muslims who are perhaps away from home for the first time, still somewhat naive but very much emotionally affected by the injustices of the world. Nonetheless, the question as to whether the Islamic societies of universities are actually places where Muslims are radicalised is not yet clear. Hizb ut-Tahrir (the Liberation Party) was banned from university campuses by the National Union of Students in the mid-1990s. Currently, there has been talk of banning it altogether, though the jury is still out as to whether this organisation openly propagates violent extremism. Certainly, Hizb ut-Tahrir is banned from many European countries. Today, it may well be carrying out its work covertly, infiltrating other university associations, namely Pakistani or Indian societies. But their success, overt or covert, is difficult to gauge