

Muslims in Britain: questioning Islamic and national identity

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Abstract

Islamic identity has been a central issue since the emergence of Islam in the seventh century. Muslims have been interacted with many symbols of religious identity since this early time of Islam. Every generation of Muslims has their own way to show their religious identity. Muslims in Britain are also still continuing to search for religious identity. They seek to re-evaluate their identity and construct a sense of what it means to be a Muslim in Britain today. This article would like to elaborate several discussions on Muslims' identities in Britain. There are two different opinions on this issue. The first opinion comes from Muslims who believe that a Muslim individual should choose to be either a Muslim or a British. They argue that national values differ from religious norms. The second, however, states that one Muslim can be both a Muslim and a British at the same time. For them, there is no contradiction between being a Muslim and being a British citizen. They argue that nationality and faith can be combined in Muslim individuals who live in Britain.

Identitas keIslaman telah menjadi isu utama sejak awal kemunculan Islam pada awal ketujuh Masehi. Sejak awal, Muslim sudah berinteraksi dengan berbagai symbol identitas keagamaan. Setiap generasi Muslim memiliki cara tersendiri untuk menunjukkan identitas keagamaan mereka. Begitu juga dengan generasi

Muslim saat ini di Inggris, mereka masih mencari identitas keagamaan mereka. Mereka berusaha mengevaluasi kembali dan mencari makna bagaimana menjadi Muslim di Inggris. Artikel ini ingin mengelaborasi beberapa diskusi mengenai identitas Muslim di Inggris. Terdapat dua perbedaan pandangan terkait hal ini. Pendapat pertama datang dari Muslim yang percaya bahwa seorang Muslim harus memilih menjadi Muslim atau seorang warga Inggris. Mereka berpendapat bahwa nilai-nilai nasional Inggris berbeda dari norma-norma agama. Namun yang kedua, menyatakan bahwa seorang Muslim bisa menjadi Muslim Inggris pada waktu bersamaan. Bagi mereka, tidak ada perbedaan untuk menjadi Muslim atau menjadi warga Negara Inggris. Mereka berpendapat bahwa keimanan dan nasionalisme bisa disatukan dalam diri seorang Muslim yang tinggal di Inggris.

Keywords: *Islamic identity; National Identity; British Muslims; Islam*

Introduction

Since the beginning of Islam, Muslims have their own theology, law, religious rituals, and so on that differ from other faiths such as Judaism and Christianity. Apart from this, every Muslim also has their own ways to show their religious identities through their opinion on contemporary religious issues and their daily attitudes and performances. The difference of beliefs and practices has been influenced by various understanding and attitudes toward the fundamental source of Islam. Muslims' understanding of the Quran and the *Hadith* will affect their approaches in responding variety of modern issues. There are many approaches and reactions of Muslims to modernity which try to address the specific place of their religion in modern life. The place of religion in public life is the core issue for today's Islam everywhere including in Britain. Many problems have emerged and should be faced in various social, political, economic and legal aspects of life. These aspects are very crucial for defining modernity and its compatibility with Muslims' lives.

The estimated number of Muslims in Britain in 2010 was 2.8 million. This Muslim population spread in many cities, mainly in major cities such as London, Birmingham, Leicester, Manchester, Bradford and Leeds. They seek to re-evaluate their identity and construct a sense of what it means to be Muslim in Britain today.¹ There are various discussions on Muslims' identity. The discussions revolve around two criteria: a Muslim and a British. Both identities of being a British and a Muslim sometimes create problems for Muslims due to dissimilarities between their religious and national values.

There are two different responses regarding this idea. The first response comes from the Salafist and Wahhabist Muslims who believe that the individual should choose to be either a Muslim or a British. They argue that national values differ from religious norms. The second response, however, states that one can be both Muslim and British. There is no contradiction between being a Muslim and being a British citizen. This position argues that nationality and faith can be combined in Muslim individuals who live in Britain. This response comes from what I called as modernist Muslims. This difference in outlook between the Salafist and modernist Muslims is influenced by their difference in approach and method of interpretation of the primary sources of Islam, namely the Quran and the Hadith.

This article is therefore to analyze the dynamic interpretation of Islamic identity according to Salafist or other Fundamentalist Muslims and modernist Muslims in Britain. The fundamentalist and modernist Muslims in Britain will be studied in terms of their ways and opinions in addressing the problems of being a Muslim and a British. This issue of Islamic identity is interesting since it is highly debated among European scholars.

¹See T. Choudhury, *The Role of Muslim Identity Politics in Radicalisation*, London: Department for Communities and Local Government, 2007.

Salafist and other fundamentalist Muslims in Britain

According to Geaves², the beliefs and practices which exist in Britain reflect the varieties of spirituality which survive in most countries of origin. Hamid insists that the existence of most ideological and theological trends in Britain emerged in the 1960s and 1970s with the arrival of South Asian settler communities.³ Yet, it is said that the Salafi ideas occurred in the late 1980s.⁴ Therefore, it is important to appreciate the diversity of the Islamic movement in the global context in order to understand the similar movements in Britain. The next elaboration will explain the representation of Salafist and Wahhabist in Britain and the religious-cultural contexts of their emergence. Also, we will explore how some Salafist and Wahhabist were portrayed as fundamentalist movements, while others were more flexible in accommodating the contemporary Muslim needs.

In Britain, there is an institution like JIMAS (*Jam'iyat Ihya Minhaj al-Sunnah*) which is concerned with promoting and spreading Salafism. They call their organization "the society for the revival of the prophetic way". Through their website, they actively disseminate and spread Salafism.⁵ The key figure of this organization is Manwar Ali, who is called the father of 'Salafi dakwah'. Salafism spread among young British Muslims as a result of his efforts in promoting Salafism in mosques, universities and community centre.⁶ Hamid and Birt state that there are several mosques and institutions that openly identify themselves

²Ron Geaves, *The Sufis of Britain*, Cardiff: Cardiff Academic Press, 2000.

³Sadek Hamid, "The Development of British Salafism", *ISIM Review*, Volume 21 (Spring 2008), 21.

⁴Yahya Birt, "Wahhabism in the United Kingdom: Manifestations and Reactions", in M. Al-Rasheed (ed.), *Transnational Connection and the Arab Gulf*, London and New York: Routledge, 2005.

⁵See <http://www.jimas.org>

⁶See Hamid, "The Development of British Salafism"..., 21.

as Salafi, such as the Green Lane Mosques in Birmingham, Salafi Institute in Birmingham, Ibn Taymiyyah Mosque in Brixton and the Islamic Centre of Luton.⁷

Besides being promoted institutionally, the main Salafi vision has continued to be promoted individually by new generations of ideologues who were Western converts, such as Bilal Philips and Daoud Birbank.⁸ Wahhabi as described above is a shared belief that Islam should be stripped of cultural accretions and innovations. The innovations are perceived as contrary to the Quranic teachings. In Britain, there are a number of reform movements that disseminate such beliefs. These movements had arrived with the migrants from the subcontinent.

Wahhabi in Britain may include some Deobandis, who have an agenda to safeguard Islam through correct religious education.⁹ Other Deobandis still practise Sufism. That is caused, perhaps, by the fact that there are two pathways for Deobandis: one which is much closer to fundamentalist Muslims and the other to modernist Muslims. The former are represented by Deoband reformers like Sayyid Ahmad Khan (d. 1898) who recommended learning from Western sciences and technology, while the latter advocated that Islam could be revitalized by a return to a pristine Islam based on a perceived ideal community of early Muslims (*Salaf al-Salih*). Other Muslim groups that are considered as Wahhabi are Jama'at-i Islami, Ahl Quran, Ahl Hadith and Tabligh-i Jama'at. These four Muslim groups identify themselves as non-political organizations concerned with promoting the correct Islamic doctrines to fellow Mus-

⁷See Hamid, "The Development of British Salafism"..., 21 and Birt, "Wahhabism in the United Kingdom"..., 177.

⁸Ron Geaves, "Learning the Lessons from the Neo-Revivalist and Wahabi Movement: the Counterattack of New Sufi Movements in the UK", in Malik and Hinnels (eds.), *Sufism in the West*, New York: Routledge, 2006, 146.

⁹See Ron Geaves, *The Sufis of Britain...*, 53.

lims. One characteristic of these Muslim organizations is their critical attitude to Sufism. Nevertheless, Geaves divided these groups into two factions. The first comprises the Wahhabi and Salafi movements who oppose Sufism in any form, while the second consists of Tabligh-i Jama'at and Deobandi who only oppose popular Sufism, represented in holy places of worship.¹⁰

The Deobandis have their roots in the reformist movement in India. Initially, they were the Deoband schools and colleges who were concerned only with Muslims' education. The aim of the founder was to help Muslims to save their faith from any impurity arising from contact with other religious beliefs and practices existing in India. The next development saw Deobandi become more than educational institutions.¹¹ They were established as independent schools of thought whose aim was to revive Islam through performed efforts to purify the faith. The Deobandi were concerned with ways of maintaining Islam as a living social force in a non-Muslim culture.

The Deobandis were growing rapidly in Britain. In 1967, they had founded Majlis Ulama UK, an organization for managing their religious activities and issuing the *fatawa*. The *fatawa* were issued as guidance for Muslims to practise a pure Islam. The Deobandis are concerned with providing an *imam* (religious leader) who is able to be a Muslim leader both inside and outside the mosques. The Deobandi were also responding to the needs of young Muslims by establishing a *Dār ul-'Ulūm* network to train young Muslims to be Imams, capable of helping Muslims face various problems in Britain. However, according to Geaves, the Deobandi's reform agendas in Britain have now developed into the radical programs of the twentieth century Islamic movement.¹² Their

¹⁰See for further explanation, Geaves, *The Sufis of Britain...*, 53.

¹¹See Geaves, "Learning the Lessons from the Neo-Revivalist and Wahabi Movement"..., 144.

¹²See Geaves, "Learning the Lessons from the Neo-Revivalist and Wahabi Movement"..., 146.

political agendas are going to revolutionize Islam. They have remained conservative on maintaining the traditions as established in India. For instance, the *Imams* from Deoband are focused on removing the rural customs of Indian Muslims, which they regard as *bid'a*.

The Deobandis in Britain are considered by Modood to be apolitical.¹³ However, the facts in Pakistan and Afghanistan show that they *are* political. They tried to be independent from the British state. This anti-Britishness influenced their choice in taking a non-cooperation stance against the British policies. The Deobandis have no notion of an Islamic state. Tabligh-i Jama'at is a worldwide organization which was built by the Deobandis. Their national headquarters is in West Yorkshire and they have an active presence in Birmingham. Ahl Hadith was considered to be a brand of fundamentalism which was inspired by the charismatic leadership of the late Maulana Mypurey and which has been quite influential in Birmingham.

Geaves states that the Salafi and Wahhabi reformers in Britain are "promoting a 'de-culturalized Islam' that apparently conforms to sacred text".¹⁴ They are effectively pointing out that the differences are caused by the variety of cultures in which Islam has installed itself. They call on young British Muslims to strive for unity based on the Quran and Sunna and to demolish the *bid'a* (innovation) of cultural accretions. Geaves insists that the Salafi and Wahhabi in Britain gained an advantage from the diaspora location which brings together communities of Muslims from diverse countries of origin.

The other ideological movement in Britain which was identified as Salafi is Hizbut Tahrir. The main objective of this organization is to

¹³See in T. Modood *et al* (eds.), *Multiculturalism, Muslims and Citizenship; A European Approach*, London and New York: Routledge, 2006.

¹⁴Ron Geaves, "Tradition, Innovation and Authentication: Replicating the 'Ahl Sunna wa Jama'at' in Britain", *Comparative Islamic Studies*, Volume 1, No 1 (2005).

establish an Islamic state as the platform for the correct interpretation of Islamic beliefs and practices. *Hizbut Tahrir* is considered by many scholars as the representation of the radical movement that was significantly influenced by Wahhabism. They strive to establish *sharia* and an Islamic caliphate. Moreover they assess that democracy is not compatible with Islamic doctrines. Furthermore they believe that God is the owner of sovereignty. The implementation of *sharia*, for them, is a logical consequence of God's sovereignty. Besides that, they have less appreciation of other religions. They are recognized as having intolerant attitudes towards other religious communities. Several pieces of research even reported that terror bombing is one of the intolerant actions conducted by them. In this context, they believe that the world is divided into two areas: the Islamic area (*dār al-Islām*) and *kufr* area (*dār al-kufr* or *dār al-ḥarb*). Also, people are divided into Muslim (friend) and *kafir* or infidel/enemy.¹⁵ According to their interpretation of the Quran and Hadith, God called upon Muslims to fight against infidels.

The modernist Muslims in Britain

In Britain, modernist Muslims, to some extent, are those who are supportive of core liberal values about the separation of religion and politics and individual choices of liberalism. They support some liberal values yet they also reject some liberal practices. This is a distinguishing factor of modernist Muslims from liberal or secular Muslims. They propagate a 'new' Islamic theology that adapts to the principles of a democratic society. They can also be identified by the same characteristics that I mentioned earlier. Generally, they seek to accommodate Islamic and Western values through moderation.

¹⁵See Philip Lewis, *Islamic Britain*, London and New York: I.B. Tauris, 1994.

Moderate strategies can be found in many Islamic institutions and organizations. They managed to transform Islamic teachings into Western and secular values or transform secular norms into Islamic values. Basically, they want to provide an Islam that can be received by both Muslims and Western societies. They hope that the substance of Islam is able to give good inspiration for both Muslims and Westerners. It is an insightful inspiration that helps Muslims to be better Muslims within the secular conditions and to help Westerners to respect Muslims and Islam as well.

Jama'at-i Islami (JI)-related organizations are some examples of the Islamic organizations in Britain that are recognized by their moderate activities. These organizations are commonly associated with JI in Pakistan, yet they, too, have a different character. These JI-related organizations are UK Islamic Mission, Young Muslims UK, The Islamic Society of Britain (ISB) and the Islamic Foundation. These organizations have adapted the ideological ideas of Mawdudi and the movement patterns of JI in Pakistan. Nevertheless, they have an awareness and willingness to promote Islam within the context of the wider British society. They do not take a position as an enemy of the West. By contrast, they want to make Islam exist successfully in the UK, and help Muslims to integrate within British society.¹⁶ It shows that the organizations do not reject the British economic and political system. Moreover they tend to be open-minded to Western culture and they take advantage of the progress of Western civilizations and achievements.

In general, the JI-related organizations are trying to accommodate modernity within their organizational movements. They attempt to play a part in social and political activities as British Muslims. They consider

¹⁶See Geaves, "Learning the Lessons from the Neo-Revivalist and Wahabi Movement"..., 29.

these activities as ways to avoid isolation among the wider British society and at the same time to gain public recognition from the state. Besides Islamic institutions and organizations, there are also Muslim figures like Tariq Ramadan who promotes what is called a progressive inclusive Islam. He promotes moderate Islam through peaceful ways. This scholar widely influences the attitudes and thoughts of British Muslims. His appearance at public lectures or seminars is keenly expected by many Muslims, particularly the younger generations.

Interestingly, there is a phenomenon among young Deobandis and Barelwis in terms of their accommodation with modern and national issues. These youngsters of Deobandi and Barelwi have different concerns and tendencies from their elders in responding to social issues in Britain. They, in contrast to their parents, actively engage in the discussions and movements in various political, social and cultural issues. They are also very active in publishing Islamic books, magazines and websites which try to attract the attention of young and middle-class Muslims in Britain. These younger generations of Deobandi and Barelwi and other young Muslims are sometimes considered to be modernist Muslims.

Identity and the British Muslims

Many thinkers on identity, such as Goffman, Sandstrom and Bhabha state that individual identities emerge, develop and are constructed through social interaction.¹⁷ Identity is not automatically given when someone is born. It is also not a biological consequence of the person. An individual should learn who he or she is by interacting with other

¹⁷E. Goffman, *The Presentation of Every Day Life*, New York and Company, 1959; H. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, London: Routledge, 1994; A. Sandstrom, *Corn is Our Blood: Culture and Ethnic Identity in a Contemporary Azten Indian Village*, Oklahoma: Oklahoma University Press, 2001.

people. By his or her interaction with others, they will identify themselves.

Goffman, for instance, states that there is no real self-identity. In addition he argues that self-identity is only a mask and is used in theatrical situations. Goffman assumes that daily interactions can be understood as the space where actors manipulate and dominate an individual's self-identity. Sandstrom says that the individual's self-identity is based on what others construct about him. An individual will care about what people think about him.

Bhabha stated that there is no valid reference on personal identity. So far, a person knows his personal identity as a social construction. Identity is constructed, for instance, by certain socio-political institutions, religious institutions, and ethnicity. People are identified by their religion, language, race, ethnicity, culture, social class, and nation. As a consequence, identity is considered by some people as capable of providing a sense of security for individuals or social groups. Identity also gives a view of life, social status, ways of thinking, and ethics. Moreover, Brennan asserts that such a social construction is possibly contradictive, so that in this situation people often feel ambiguous.¹⁸ Lewis also confirms that there is a complexity and variety of different identities which can be held by an individual or group at the same time.¹⁹

That is why identity in Muslim societies is still defined from several perspectives.²⁰ Muslims in general saw and determined their identity by traditional criteria such as family, religious community and neighbor-

¹⁸T. Brennan, *At Home in the World; Cosmopolitan Now*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1994.

¹⁹See Phillip Lewis, *Islamic Britain*, London and New York: I.B. Tauris, 1994.

²⁰K. Mas'ud, "Religious Identity and Mass Education" in Johan Meuleman, *Islam in the Era of Globalization; Muslim Attitudes towards Modernity and Identity*. London and USA: Routledge, 2002, 233.

hood. Besides that, place of origin, family, etc, are the markers of identity, yet religion is still the most common denominator. It is generally believed that religion makes a contribution in constructing the identity of a particular social group. As a religious identity, Islam can be identified through its belief system and culture.

The identity of Muslims is not a given. Identification with various cultural symbols or behaviors is socially constructed. To simplify, clothes, religious symbols, language, and behaviors can be categorized as elements of identity. That is why people identify Muslims with these kinds of elements. In the beginning of Islam's development, the Prophet of Muhammad neither obliged Muslims to wear certain symbols nor commanded them to conform completely to certain behavior. Islamic identity was created culturally over the years. In addition, Muslims' attempt to express and realize Islamic teaching is one of the factors leading them to create a certain identity. During several centuries, Muslims constructed their identity based on different social, political, and cultural contexts. It is not surprising if some Muslims' identity differs in each period and country. Muslims in the Middle East, for instance, can wear different clothes from Muslims in Asia.

The explanations above indicate that Muslim religious identity has been defined on more than one basis. Muslim religious identity is shaped by sociological, theological and other factors. Muslims, in many cases, are also identified by their adherence to different Islamic schools of law or Sufi groups. Mas'ud, however, explains that the conception of Islamic identity based on a theological view differed significantly from Sufism and Islamic laws.²¹ Moreover, Sufism and Islamic law encouraged and honored the difference of views while theology does not allow

²¹See Mas'ud, "Religious Identity and Mass Education"..., 235.

diversity in religious identity. He gives the example that a Muslim can be an Ash'arite in theology, a Malikite in Islamic law and a Qadirite in Sufism.

That is why there are debates among scholars about Muslims' identity, particularly in this contemporary context. They discuss the boundaries of identity. The extent to which Muslims recognize or neglect their identity is an important question in the debate. Generally, there is a problem that appears in those Muslim societies which exist within Western communities. They realize that there are other identities which are different from their own identity. In such a condition they might have two options: place them within a boundary or live with many identities.

In a multi-identity situation, to a certain extent, fundamentalists tend to create imaginary boundaries to protect their communal identity. These imaginary boundaries, such as wearing a long veil (*hijāb*) for women, or beards for men, have an impact on their psychological relationship with Muslim society. Meanwhile, modernist Muslims attempt to negotiate Western culture with their Islamic identity. For them, to be a British Muslim is much easier than contradicting Western traditions with Islamic identity. They believe that both traditions have many similarities in values, norms and cultures.

In British and European contexts, Ramadan insists that defining Muslim identity is difficult because many factors relate to this analysis.²² Ramadan questions further; is there a Muslim identity? If so, is it of a religious or cultural nature? Many researchers such as Ramadan, Rippin, Joly and Imtiaz have conducted studies about Muslim identity in Britain in its various aspects.

²²Tareq Ramadan, *To Be a European Muslim*, the United Kingdom: the Islamic Foundation, 2002,153.

Identity is divided into two levels, individual and institutional. An individual's identity is a personal one that is associated by many scholars such as Ramadan and Rippin²³ with a distinctive Islamic ritual practice such as *shahada* (witness of faith), *salat* (prayer), *siyam* (fasting), *zakat* (charity) and *hajj* (pilgrimage). These five pillars of Islam are ritual practices that are considered by Muslims to be their core self-identity. Moreover, the Islamic identity is not only limited to these rituals but also covers social aspects. This is what is called institutional identity. It is necessary for Muslims to be concerned with both their personal rituals and their social activities. Yet, there are differences among Muslims on how to conceptualize Islam in a modern era at both the individual and institutional levels.

A study done by Joly and Imtiaz focuses on identity in terms of the relationship between being Muslim and being a citizen in Britain. According to Joly and Imtiaz, research on British Muslim identity needs to combine the subjective aspects of what it means to be a British Muslim citizen as measured by attitudes, and the subjective aspects of identity as measured by participation in citizenship. Joly and Imtiaz see that, at all levels of society, there is a common acceptance that one can be Muslim and a British citizen.²⁴

Therefore, identity is considered as an important feature of the Muslim individual. There are certain characteristics that distinguish Muslims from other religious communities such as rite, dress code and gender role. Some scholars, like Hall, state that identity is integrated, stable and independent.²⁵ Others believe that identities are much more a process of change and continuity rather than a static attribute. Identi-

²³See Ramadan, *To Be a European Muslim...*, 153

²⁴Joly and Imtiaz, *Muslims and Citizenship in the United Kingdom*, Aldershot, 2002.

²⁵See Hall, *Cultural Identity and Diaspora*, 1993.

ties are replaced by social and dialectical notions. Identities are constructed by the interactions of history, cultures and societies and the dynamic processes of change.²⁶

It is said by Afshar that self-identifications are shaped contextually by many factors. Muslims in Britain could have many identification positions, such as identities based on religion, culture, class, gender or race.²⁷ McLoughlin considered that the representations of identity and belonging that Muslims make are always contingent and dependent. The religious identity is also an unstable identity that changes according to its social condition. Lewis insists that identity experiences an evolution of the ways in which Muslims perceive themselves.²⁸ Ed Husain describes in his book, "The Islamist", the transformation of his religious identity from Sufi, a member of a radical Muslim organization, to modernist Muslim.²⁹

As Lewis believes that Muslims, as immigrants, naturally bring their own concepts and perceptions of identity, I need to understand their own identity which is considered to be significantly different from that of Europe. Hence, in the next subchapter I want to elaborate further about the concept of identity according to fundamentalist and modernist Muslims. Moreover, I want to examine whether or not the concept of identity changes because of the simultaneous interaction between their own identity and European identity.

²⁶See Afshar, H et al, 273.

²⁷Sean McLoughlin, 'In the Name of Umma: Globalization, 'Race' Relations and Muslim Identity Politics in Bradford', in Shadid, W.A.R and P.S. Van Koningsveld (eds.), *Political Participation and Identities of Muslims in Non-Muslim States*, The Netherlands: Kok Pharos, 1996, 206-228.

²⁸See Philip Lewis, *Young, British and Muslim*, London and New York: Continuum, 2007, 3.

²⁹See Ed Husain, *The Islamist: Why I joined Radical Islam in Britain, What I saw Inside and Why I left*, 2008.

The British fundamentalist Muslim's view on Islamic identity

In general, the previous elaborations on Salafi and Wahabi in Britain show that Salafis Muslims in Britain are influenced by Muslim thinkers and organizations that established in the Islamic world. This Salafis group in Britain have similar opinions and concerns to their Salafis partner worldwide. The British Salafis Muslims believe that Muslims should not be ruled by a secular government. This view comes from Qutb who lay down that Muslims must answer to God alone and that human government is illegitimate.

This is absolutely the doctrine which led some fundamentalist Muslims in Britain to take part in the London bombings and other riots in Britain. They believe that secular government is a target for jihad. They argue that secular government should be taken over by Islamic rulers and systems. For them, it is a religious duty to change Britain into an Islamic society. Philips believes that this doctrine is undoubtedly the basis of Islamism which believes that the entire world should be conquered by Islam. Like Qutb's doctrine, Mawdudi's ideas also spread among British Muslims. The doctrine on the absolute sovereignty of God is promoted by the Islamic Foundation in Leicester. In 1982, when the Islamic Foundation was declared, they said that "the Islamic movement is an organized struggle to change the existing society into an Islamic society".³⁰

As a result of these radical doctrines, they call upon Muslims to show their Islamic identity. For them, Islamic identity, like veils for Muslim women, is not only considered a religious duty but also shows the supremacy of Islam. Identity is believed by fundamentalist Mus-

³⁰Quoted by Melanie Philips, *Londonistan: How Britain is creating a Terror State Within*, London: Gibson Square, 2006, 142-143 from www.chroniclesmagazine.org

lims in Britain to be an Islamic marker that should be strengthened to Islamize the secular Britain.

In this study, Hizbut Tahrir (HT) is categorized as the representation of British fundamentalist Islam. Although HT is not part of the Wahabi movement, HT's ideology is based on Salafi. Since the emergence of HT until the present day, HT has eagerly fought for an Islamic caliphate. As a consequence, HT totally rejects Western political systems like democracy and secularism. HT's position relative to the identity issue is clear. They insist on establishing an Islamic identity, especially in the political system. HT emphasizes the importance of British Muslims' loyalty to their religious identity rather than to their country. In addition, they oppose any Western influences in the Muslim world and reject democracy as being Western and un-Islamic. The source of democracy is man and not the *shari'ah* laws.³¹ Moreover, the aim of this organization is to establish a pan-Islamic state by re-establishing the caliphate and to isolate Muslims from the non-Muslim community and its culture.³² They claim that Islam is a comprehensive way of life that is capable of managing affairs of state and society.³³

They see Western values such as democracy and human rights as being incompatible with Islamic values. Taqiyuddin an-Nabhani, the founder of this organization condemned democracy as a system of unbelief that is incompatible with *sharia*.³⁴ He also said that there is a big distinction between democratic notions and *shura*³⁵. This opinion has lead the HT to reject the adoption of the British culture. For them,

³¹Suha Taji-Farouki, *A Fundamental Quest: Hizb al-Tahrir and the Search for the Islamic Caliphate*, London: Grey Seal, 1996, 69.

³²Philip Lewis, *Young, British and Muslim*, London and New York: Continuum, 2007, 121.

³³See [http:// www.hizb.org.uk](http://www.hizb.org.uk)

³⁴See Taji Farouki, *A Fundamental Quest...*, 69.

³⁵*Shura* is discussing an opinion in Islamic tradition.

Muslims in Britain should choose whether to be British or Muslims. Shiraz Maher, one of the ex-members of *Hizbut Tahrir*, said that the discussion topics revolved around the revival of the caliphate, the establishment of a pan-Islamic state and the duty of Muslims to preserve Islam from America. These were the most important issues discussed among the members.³⁶

It indicates that HT struggles to bind British Muslim society with Islamic identity. As far as I am concerned, they do not focus on dress or other symbols. They place more emphasis on Islamic political identity. For them, it is impossible to be a Muslim comprehensively without the Islamic political system. That is why there are two choices: whether to be Muslim or British. According to them, Muslims should totally follow all Islamic teaching aspects.

The British modernist Muslim's view on Islamic identity

Jama'ati Islami (JI)-related organizations are classified as British modernist Muslims. They have different opinions from fundamentalist Muslims on Islamic identity. Their view on identity is the main factor that allows them to easily adjust to the British culture. They have a willingness to be flexible in responding to modern changes. Their flexibility is rooted in their view about *ijtihad* (independent reasoning) from Mawdudi, who said that the gate of *ijtihad* is never closed.³⁷

These modernist Muslims attempt to form Islam within the context of the British society. That is why, to some extent, their approaches to disseminating Islamic values are interesting for many Muslims, particularly young, educated, professional Muslims. Above all, their ways of thinking are increasingly influenced by moderate-progressive Muslim

³⁶See Lewis, *Young, British and Muslim...*, 119.

³⁷See Taji farouki, *Young, British and Muslim...*, 55.

thinkers. Interestingly, most members of those Islamic groups listed above are also the activists of the Muslim Council of Britain (MCB), because JI-related organizations may be home to significant members or activists who have the energy to drive the political network of the organization. The MCB was established in 1997, stating its constituency as 'British Citizens with an Islamic heritage'. They issued a statement that "there is no contradiction between being loyal British citizens and being Muslims". In implementing this statement, they actively sought to move their members away from their original customs and traditions so that they focus more on identifying themselves as British Muslim. This organization pays attention to the diversity of young Muslims' backgrounds and the radical changes in their lives. Therefore, their main concern was to keep Islam alive for younger generations as a living option.³⁸ These organizations are basically promoting Islam within the wider British society. They did not consider the West to be an enemy, in contrast to the views of the radical-fundamentalist groups.

The descriptions above shows that to a certain extent British modernist Muslims have also promoted Islamic identity. They disseminate Islamic values among British Muslims but they do not ask Muslims to see a contradiction between Islam and British values. According to them, Islam is a universal set of values that can be implemented within the secular British culture.

Young British Muslims and the emergence of a new Muslim identity in Britain

The calls from fundamentalist Muslims for other Muslims to follow the identity which they believe to be an ideal identity will not be followed by

³⁸See Philip Lewis, *Islamic Britain: Religion, Politics and Identities among British Muslims*, London and New York: I.B Tauris Publisher, 1994; Philip Lewis, *Young, British and Muslim*, London and New York: Continuum, 2007, 109.

young Muslims. On the contrary, young Muslims will consider these calls to be 'coercion'. They have progressive ideas and choices about who they want to be. They are searching for an Islamic identity that fits their religious and social needs. They will look for reliable sources and references to find their religious identity. The older generations of both modernist and fundamentalist Muslims should be fully aware of the demands of young Muslims. The elders cannot ignore the aspects of psychological and social maturity of young Muslims. They have their own considerations when they make a decision. They will not directly follow the instructions of their parents.

There are some indicators that the demands for religious identity among young British Muslims nowadays are better than in the past. Firstly, unlike in the past, when many Islamic organizations tended to choose imported imams and teachers from their home country, there is now a tendency to employ well-educated teachers and imams. These shift happened because of the role of young Muslims in managing their organizations. Young Muslims see that the imported imams were unable to fulfill their curiosity about Islamic and modern issues. On Islamic issues, for instance, the imported imams and teachers strictly laid down their teaching and speech materials on the traditional and basic religious teachings. These teaching materials tended to judge and accuse young Muslims of criminality, trouble-making, impiety, and so on. On the modern issues, the old imams and teachers tended to judge democracy and other liberal values as un-Islamic and to be shunned.

Secondly, the current phenomena show that young Muslims are actively participating in various social and political processes. Their involvements in such fields will gradually improve their ways of thinking on how Muslims should live within liberal values. Their involvement will have advantages for both Muslims and non-Muslims. Muslims will

understand that liberal values in general do not contradict Islamic norms. Meanwhile, non-Muslims will understand that Islam and Christianity have many similarities, particularly in responding to human issues. Many scholars, such as Lewis³⁹ and Kepel, insisted optimistically that the prospects for British Islam will be better than in the past. They argue that young British Muslims seem to be moving in the direction of a progressive interpretation of their religious and social identity. Young Muslims will play their role in reconciling Islam and modernity.⁴⁰

Conclusion

The issue of identity within the British Muslims is very important. First of all, most British Muslims are from immigrant families. Their original culture that has mixed or assimilated with Islamic values has a significant influence in shaping their view on Muslim identity. In addition, they maintain Islam not only as a private faith, but also as a reference point, guiding them to solve social, political, and economic problems. In other words, when they migrated to Britain, they faced problems regarding the demand to adjust to secular culture. In this situation, British Muslims are challenged with a dilemmatic position. On the one hand, they have to preserve their original Islamic identity, since it is not only a religious symbol binding them, but also a set of doctrines guiding their social lives. On the other hand, they need to adapt to the British culture, which has a number of different values from their own culture.

The term fundamentalist is used to describe the Salafis, the Wahhabis and the Hizbut Tahrir movement, since this organization fights to establish political Islam and to Islamize social, cultural, and economic aspects of Muslim society in Britain. Meanwhile I categorize Jama'at-i

³⁹See Philip Lewis, *Young, British and Muslim...* 2007.

⁴⁰Gilles Kepel, "The War for Muslim Minds", *Q-News Magazine* (January 2005), 42.

Islami (JI)-related organizations as modernist, because these organizations tend to accept the British economic, cultural, and political system. They call upon Muslims to be a British Muslims and to combine their Islamic values with their British culture. Although these organizations are influenced by Abul A'la Maududi's ideas, it does not mean that they are identical with Maududi's agenda. I found significant differences or shifts between these organizations and Maududi's original thoughts.

The position of HT and other fundamentalist Muslims insists on totally establishing Islamic teaching through economic, social, and political systems. For them, British culture is incompatible with Islam. This indicates that HT tends to emphasize the Islamic identity. HT rejects the possibility of modifying Islamic values within the British context. According to HT, an Islamic caliphate is the best system that has to be fought for by all Muslims. It proves that, for HT, Islamic identity cannot be combined with the British identity. Meanwhile, JI-related organizations and other modernist Muslims have different views about this issue. JI-related organizations and the modernist Muslims in Britain believe that Islamic identity can be mixed with British identity. British Muslims could practice their Islamic beliefs and their secular culture as well. Islam is seen as the basic and universal set of values that can be placed in the British context.

The debate between the British fundamentalist and modernist Muslims shows that Islamic identity is a crucial problem faced by Muslims who migrate to Western countries, including Britain. Both fundamentalist and modernist Muslims believe that Islam cannot be ignored in their social lives. They strongly believe in the Quran and the *Sunnah* as the source of life. It is the same point for both fundamentalist and modernist Muslim groups alike. However, modernist Muslims accommodates the advantages and values of the modern British culture while

fundamentalists strongly believe in the self-sufficiency of Islam. British modernist Muslims, therefore, are more flexible than fundamentalists in defining and practicing the principles of Islamic identity because their core idea is that to be a British Muslim, they will combine both their national and religious identities.

Finally, however, I realize that both fundamentalist and modernist terms and classifications are quite theoretical in nature. There are two problems in using the terms: firstly, there is an overlapping and blurring of the definitions; and, secondly, the scope of the terms and categories today differ in names and concerns from those at the beginning of the 20th century. Nevertheless, I employed these terms only to help me identify the tendencies of British Muslims in defining their identity. Yet, it is not easy for me to find precisely the representation of fundamentalist and modernist Muslims in Britain. I would therefore find it interesting to analyze further this categorization in British context in my future research.

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