



Reflections on the New Visibility of Islam and Muslims in the West Post-9/11: The British Context

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I. Abstract:

The Muslim communities in the West have acquired unprecedented visibility in the aftermath of 9/11. For such a disadvantaged faith minority, coming to the spotlight of public, political, and media attention was expected to open up new opportunities for empowerment. Their new visibility, however, was exploited to fan the flames of anti-Muslim hatred. Drawing on some media case studies and the analyses of some political reactions, this paper explores the implications of this visibility for Islamophobia and the Muslim struggle for empowerment, with a focus on the British context. The paper traces back the origins of Western animosity to Islam and Muslims and highlights the contribution of relevant media coverage and political discourses post-9/11 to promoting the myth of "the Islamization of the West" and "the imminent Muslim takeover of Britain".

Keywords: Muslim minority; New visibility; Western Muslims; Islamization of Britain; media myths



Reflections on the New Visibility ----- Ali Zoui Mahfoud and Pr. Manaa Mohamed

الملخص:

لقد اكتسب الإسلام والمسلمون في الغرب مرتبة غير مسبوقه عقب أحداث الحادي عشر من سبتمبر سنة 2001، وقد كان من المتوقع أن يفتح هذا الاهتمام المتصاعد بالإسلام والمسلمين للمجتمعات المسلمة المهمشة في الغرب نافذة جديدة لإسماع صوتهم وتحسين صورة دينهم على الرغم من حملات التشويه الممنهج. لكن هذه المرتبة الجديدة ثم استغلالها لتأجيج مشاعر الكراهية ضد المسلمين. يبحث هذا المقال في تداعيات وأثار هذه المرتبة الجديدة تحديدا على ظاهرة الاسلاموفوبيا ونضال مسلمي الغرب من أجل ترقية مجتمعاتهم مع التركيز على النموذج البريطاني ، وذلك من خلال تحليل ردود فعل الطبقة السياسية والإعلامية على بعض مظاهر هذه المرتبة الجديدة للمسلمين في الفضاء العام والساحة السياسية ووسائل الإعلام، حيث ساهمت هذه الردود في المحصلة في الترويج لخرافة 'أسلمة الغرب' و'السيطرة الوشيكة للمسلمين على بريطانيا'، وذلك بعد التنقيب في جذور العداء للإسلام والمسلمين في الغرب.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الأقلية المسلمة، المرتبة الجديدة، مسلمو الغرب، أسلمة

بريطانيا، أساطير إعلامية

Introduction

Since the genesis of Islam, the Islam–West dichotomy has been the subject of a huge body of literature. For centuries, western as well as Muslim scholars attempted to approach the complex relationship between Islam and the West from an interdisciplinary perspective within the fields of social sciences, religion, and politics. Monumental academic works from different scholarly fields have tackled the topic. Historically, the large majority of these works depicted Islam and the West as ideologically—but also geographically— distant rivals. As



Reflections on the New Visibility ----- Ali Zoui Mahfoud and Pr. Manaa Mohamed

civilizations based on Islamic values on one hand and those based on Judeo-Christian traditions on the other hand, were perceived incompatible, the relationship was often depicted as one of suspicion, hostility, and confrontation. That is arguably why Islam is often defined in much of the existing literature in opposition to the West.

The Muslim-related actions and reactions that took place in Europe and the United States in the aftermath of 9/11, however, triggered Western curiosity to discover Islam and shifted the focus of academics, the media, and the public to the Muslim minorities living in Western countries. Western Muslims became main actors in the Islam-West debate, and as concern for and curiosity about Islam increased dramatically, their responsibility to give a better image of Islam and Muslims also increased.

The works of accomplished academics like Bernard Lewis, John Esposito, Arun Kundnani, Tahir Abbas , and Tariq Ramadan, among others, have been focused in part on understanding the transformations and alterations brought about to the socio-cultural landscape in Western countries by the new visibility of Islam and Muslims in Europe and the United States post-9/11 which is deemed disruptive.

In Britain which is home to around three million Muslim inhabitants, the Muslim community has acquired unprecedented public, media, and political visibility in the post-9/11 era. A historically disadvantaged faith minority group which has long complained alienation and invisibility became suddenly very visible to the mainstream population, to the media and to decision makers. This increased interest in Muslims and their faith added to the pressures already exerted upon them and



Reflections on the New Visibility ----- Ali Zoui Mahfoud and Pr. Manaa Mohamed

created new challenges. The paper delves into the origins of animosity towards Islam and Muslims in the West to understand better the post-9/11 context, and examines the implications of the new visibility of Muslims in the era that followed the events of 9/11 for anti-Muslim sentiment and the overall status of Western Muslims with a particular focus on the British context.

A Deep-Rooted Hostility

There is ample evidence that hostility towards Islam in the West is not a creation of 9/11. The violent anti-Muslim backlash that erupted in many Western countries in the aftermath of the 2001 events is but a new wave of anti-Muslim sentiment. That is why it is important to refer back to the earliest waves of anti-Muslim prejudice in order to better understand the 21st century context.

There have been encounters between Islam and Europe since the early centuries of the rise of the new religion. And since then Europe's awareness of Islam has been overwhelmingly negative¹. Largely influenced by the writings of churchmen, notably those of the well-known Anglo-Saxon theologian, historian and scholar Bede (673-735), early perceptions of Islam in the British Isles and Europe were totally negative.

Perceiving of the followers of Islam as "other" is in no way the product of modern age. This 'othering' of the followers of 'the new religion' which had its roots in the works of scholars

¹ - see Abbas, Tahir. After 9/11: British South Asian Muslims, Islamophobia, Multiculturalism, and the State. The American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences.2004: 27.P 28.



Reflections on the New Visibility ----- Ali Zoui Mahfoud and Pr. Manaa Mohamed

and churchmen mainly , is as old as Islam . Drawing upon the works of the Christian scholar St Jerome (342-420), the famous English churchman Bede, for instance, portrayed Muslims as “the enemies of Christianity” and “the hateful other”¹ . Bede was arguably one of a number of influential European theologians who laid the foundations for anti-Muslim prejudice in the Christian world².

If today’s Islamophobia, which becomes the greatest challenge to Western Muslims over the last few years, is unfounded and irrational, earliest perceptions of Islam in the west were ironically based on accounts which dated from before the rise of Islam³ The religious aspect of Muslims was somehow ignored in early Western imagination which did not distinguish between Arabs and Muslims, for their views on Muslims were largely formed depending on the stereotypical images of pre-Islamic Arabs⁴. This confusion can be noticed clearly in the very use of the name "Saracen" by Bede when referring to Muslims. The name had been used by Jerome in the fourth century to describe Arabs. Broadly speaking, later European and even American accounts on Islam and Muslims, did not much differ but rather took new forms and dimensions.

Through centuries, such anti-Muslim rhetoric helped shaping a deep-rooted Western apprehension of Islam and

¹-Gilliat- Ray, Sophie. Muslims in Britain: an Introduction. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010: 6.

²- Ibid

³-Beckett, Katharine Scarfe. Anglo-Saxon Perceptions of the Islamic World. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003: 6.

⁴- Ibid: 5



Reflections on the New Visibility ----- Ali Zoui Mahfoud and Pr. Manaa Mohamed

Muslims which is largely negative. Possible motives behind the animosity towards Muslims and distorted portrayal of Islam can be explored in Edward Said's outstanding work 'Orientalism' in which he argued that all western perceptions of the Islamic East are governed by the Western desire for superiority¹. Promoting the idea that the Muslim 'other' belonged to an inferior civilization helped legitimizing the brutal nineteenth century wave of colonialism, under the pretext of the 'civilizing mission'.

In the last few decades, while scholars like Tariq Ramadan rejected altogether the myth of the existence of an inherent animosity between Islam and the West, the works of Western authors like Bernard Lewis, Samuel Huntington, and Robert Allison, among others, helped popularizing the idea that Islamic and Western values are inherently incompatible, and thus the clash between Islam and the West is unavoidable.

In retrospect, this rhetoric has been exploited by some Western polities to serve some political and ideological purposes. It was indeed the fuel of many wars waged against the Muslim world from the Crusades to the later Anglo-American war on Iraq. One well-known example is the use of the word "crusade" by President George W. Bush to describe his so-called 'war on terror' few days after the 9/11 attacks². The use of a term loaded with historical significance, which calls to minds the images of a bloody confrontation between Islam and

¹-Beckett, Katharine Scarfe. Anglo-Saxon Perceptions of the Islamic World. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003: 22.

²-Ford, Peter. Europe Cringes at Bush 'Crusade' Against Terrorists. The Christian Science Monitor. 19 Sept. 2001. 10 Aug 2015.

<http://www.csmonitor.com/2001/0919/p12s2_woeu.html>



Reflections on the New Visibility ----- Ali Zoui Mahfoud and Pr. Manaa Mohamed

the Christian West, is a clear manifestation of the use of the anti-Islam rhetoric for political agendas.

The events of 11 September 2001 and the subsequent attacks in major European capitals gave a tremendous boost to the advocates of the "inevitability of clash" theory. Under the pretext of fighting the so-called "Islamic terror", the clash took place in Afghanistan in 2001 and in Iraq in 2003. The violent attacks on European and US cities by extremist Islamist groups, on the other hand, have been on the rise ever since.

9/11 and the Big Shift

The presence of Muslims in Western countries prior to the twentieth century, though in the most part negligible, had always been controversial. The way Muslim communities were determined to protect their distinctiveness has always been the subject of criticism as it was interpreted as unwillingness to integrate. The dilemma of preserving aspects of their Islamic identity and adapting to the liberal values of the West has been at the heart of the challenges facing Muslims especially the early migrant groups.

It was only during the second half of the twentieth century that the Muslim populations in Europe and America started gaining gradual importance in size and influence. Muslims, therefore, have been growing in number, diversity, and visibility well before 9/11. At the time of the attacks, Islam had already been the fastest growing religion in Britain and Europe¹.

It was the aftermath of 9/11, however, that provided the appropriate climate for an unprecedented increase in their

¹-Kerbaj, Richard. Muslim Population Rising 10 Times Faster than Rest of Society. The Times. 30 Jan 2009. 25 Oct 2011.

<<http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/new...cle5621482.ece>>.



Reflections on the New Visibility ----- Ali Zoui Mahfoud and Pr. Manaa Mohamed

visibility. A series of actions and reactions within many Western countries followed 9/11 in which Muslims were the main actors. Muslim-related issues have been securitized and a sudden interest in Islam and Muslims prevailed in the media, and among decision makers and academics. Public curiosity about the Muslim community living in the West and their faith also increased dramatically. Interestingly also , issues and events involving Muslims have become dominant in Western news agenda.

News reporting violence associated with Western Muslims or hostility and discrimination against them such as France's ban on full-face veils, banning mosque minarets' construction in Switzerland, controversies over the Danish cartoons of the prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), proposals to build a mosque at Ground Zero in New York, and the attacks on the French magazine Charlie Hebdo have captured media headlines and international news stories for years.

Integrating the growing numbers of Muslims, with the fear of radicalization, turns one of the most vexing issues facing Western governments as it becomes increasingly important to the future of social and political stability in some of these countries. The rapid growth of the Muslim population and its increased visibility created some pressure on Western governments as they have been expected to provide a larger platform to accommodate the religious distinctiveness of Muslims and their presence in the public space because the alternative could be social unrest and instability.

Muslims also become more visible to the mainstream population. Muslim-related issues gained prominence in public discourses and debates. Due to the new visibility of Muslims in



Reflections on the New Visibility ----- Ali Zoui Mahfoud and Pr. Manaa Mohamed

Britain for instance, research revealed that Britons largely overestimate the proportion of Muslims in the population thinking they form up to 21 per cent of the population, while they actually form around 5 per cent only¹.

The Multiculturalism Debate in Britain

The disruptive prominence of Islam in the British public space and the need to accommodate the Muslim community's distinct religious and cultural needs by providing a larger platform for their religious practices became a major concern to the British government as for the European Union. This new challenge created a need to redefine concepts of citizenship, identity and multiculturalism triggering heated debates among academics and politicians. Incidents of social and religious tension sparked renewed debate over the efficacy of policies based on the philosophy of multiculturalism in preserving social cohesion. The same old questions on the compatibility of Islam with the universal values of liberalism and secularism have been re-asked.

The question of what can be done practically to cope with the new religious landscape of the country and to address the challenge of accommodating and integrating the increasingly visible distinctiveness of Muslims on one hand, and to promote more tolerance among the mainstream society to accept religious plurality and tolerate the fact that Islam is now an undeniable part of the fabric of the British society has been

¹- Ghani, Aisha. Muslim population in England and Wales Nearly Doubles in 10 Years. The Guardian. 11 February 2015. June 2015.
<<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/feb/11/muslim-population-england-wales-nearly-doubles-10-years> >



Reflections on the New Visibility ----- Ali Zoui Mahfoud and Pr. Manaa Mohamed

emphasized. The rise of the far right made things even worse. Groups like the English Defence League played a leading role in fanning the flames of fear and hatred of Muslims which poisoned the social and political climate in the country .

Some voices argued that policies based on the philosophy of multiculturalism has failed or at least is "in crisis". The coming of the Conservatives to power in Britain in 2010 intensified fears among minorities in general and Muslims in particular. Multiculturalism was openly accused of encouraging separatism and exclusion, and by extension of being the main source of radicalization and social unrest.

In a speech at a security conference in Munich in 2011, the then Conservative Prime Minister David Cameron declared openly that the "doctrine of state multiculturalism" has failed ¹ . "Frankly, we need a lot less of the passive tolerance of recent years and much more active, muscular liberalism," said Cameron².

The Daily Telegraph headlined its report the same day "Muslims must Embrace our British Values". Interpreting the speech as a declaration of the end of multiculturalism, the newspaper came to the conclusion that "the notion that different communities should be able to live according to their own values and traditions as long as they stay within the law "would be abandoned" ³ . This stance was rejected by minority

¹- State multiculturalism has failed, says David Cameron .5 Feb 2011.15 July 2015.<<http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-politics-12371994>>

²-Ibid

³-Kirkup, James. The Daily Telegraph. Muslims must embrace our British values, David Cameron says.05 Feb 2011.15 July 2015

<<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/politics/david-cameron/8305346/>



Reflections on the New Visibility ----- Ali Zoui Mahfoud and Pr. Manaa Mohamed

groups and large sections of mainstream. Moreover, serious surveys refute the claim that separatism and radicalization are consequences of multiculturalist policies¹.

Implications of the New Visibility

The new visibility of British Muslims is said to have intensified the anti-Muslim backlash. Muslim civil society organizations recognized the need to mobilize the community in order to defend them against the abridgement of their civil rights. Their new visibility, while theoretically positive, has worsened an already severe situation. Ironically, in Britain as in other European countries, the rising public profile of Islam and the rapid increase in the Muslim population have been accompanied by the rise of a new type of extreme right, anti-Muslim bodies.

The English Defence League, a new extremist body with a more racist agenda than the BNP joined the anti-Muslim block in Britain in 2009. The EDL has rapidly become the most significant far right street movement in the UK since the National Front in the 1970s². Worryingly, the hate rhetoric and the myths promoted by this racist group and other far right groups about the Islamization of Britain and the imminent

Muslims-must-embrace-our-British-values-David-Cameron-says.html >.

¹-Heath, Anthony. The Guardian. Has multiculturalism failed in the UK? Not really/.10 Aug2012.15 July 2015.

<<http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2012/aug/10/multiculturalism-uk-research> >

²-Taylor, Mathew. English Defence League: Inside the violent world of Britain's new far right. The Guardian.28 May 2010. 8 Feb 2011.<<http://www.guardian.co.uk/uk/2010/may/28/english-defence-league-guardianinvestigation>>.



Reflections on the New Visibility ----- Ali Zoui Mahfoud and Pr. Manaa Mohamed

Muslim takeover of the West gained increasing acceptance among the mainstream population. Their propaganda material included data revealing mounting Muslim visibility in the public space.

Interestingly, there exist a considerable body of serious research refuting most of the stereotypes about Western Muslims promoted by anti-Muslim groups and Islamophobic media concerning the size of population, Muslim citizens' intolerance, and the alleged threat they pose to the British national identity. According to a survey conducted by Ipsos Mori, people from the UK overestimate the proportion of Muslims in the population by a factor of four. While data from the 2011 census found that Muslims are still a small minority forming only 5 per cent of the overall population, those surveyed by Ipsos Mori said they thought it was 21 per cent¹.

Also, contradicting the assumption that Muslims are intolerant of the British way of life, a 2009 survey by Gallup and the Coexist foundation found Muslims to identify more strongly with the UK than the rest of the population, and have a much higher regard to the country's institutions². The survey showed that 3 per cent of British Muslims compared to 26 per cent of the general public believed people belonging to other religions threaten their way of life. Among the most interesting findings

¹- Ghani, Aisha. Muslim Population in England and Wales Nearly Doubles in 10 Years. The Guardian. 11 Feb 2015. 10 Aug 2015

²-16-Green, Chris. Patriotic, respectful and homophobic: a portrait of British Muslims' state of mind. The Independent. 8 May 2009. 17 Feb 2011.

<<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/patriotic-respectful-andhomophobic-a-portrait-of-british-muslims-state-of-mind-1681062.html>>.



Reflections on the New Visibility ----- Ali Zoui Mahfoud and Pr. Manaa Mohamed

of this same survey is that Muslims are more likely to have confidence in the police, the government, the judicial system, financial institutions and the media.

Sections of the British media and policy makers have been hostile to the new visibility of British Muslims. Media have arguably played the most influential role in spreading anti-Muslim hatred and Islamophobia. Their coverage of Muslim visibility has been negatively selective. By focusing on the tiny minority of Muslim radicals, the British press represented the whole British Muslim community as a danger and its members as potential terrorists. Muslims are frequently portrayed in media as enemies of Western civilization who seek to subvert the country with terrorism from within.

There is evidence that large sections of the British media have been concerned with the increase of Muslim visibility in the country, and thus transformed their fears to the public. Some media outlets for instance repeatedly refer to the Capital London as "Londonistan"¹.

Headlines such as "Will Britain One Day be Muslim?" by the *Daily Mail*, "Muslims Will Become Majority in Europe" and "The Islamification of Britain: Record Numbers Embrace Muslim faith" by *the Independent*; and "Muslim Europe: the Demographic Time Bomb Transforming our continent" by the *Telegraph*, which have become very common in British newspapers, should be linked to the rise of Islamophobia, social

¹-Dodd, Fikran. Media and politicians 'fuel rise in hate crimes against Muslims. TheGuardian.28 Jan 2010. 10 Feb 2011.
<<http://www.guardian.co.uk/uk/2010/jan/28/hate-crimes-muslims-media-politicians>>.



Reflections on the New Visibility ----- Ali Zoui Mahfoud and Pr. Manaa Mohamed

tension and the increase in the number of hate crimes against Muslims.

When the mainstream British media channel "Channel 4" decided to broadcast the Muslim call for prayer the "Athán" during Ramadan in 2013 for the first time, many newspapers attacked the move causing a big controversy. *The Sun* attacked the initiative with a front page headline "Ramadan-a-Ding-Dong"¹. Such media stories worked as engines for agitation against Muslim visibility. A consequence of their agitation was that Channel 4's most complained about programme during 2013 was Ramadan's Muslim call to prayer².

Another example reflecting the way media presented news involving signs of increasing Muslim visibility is the controversy over the name Mohammed. Reflecting Muslim visibility. In September 2009, the *Daily Mail* reported that the Office for National Statistics (ONS) published a list of the most popular boys' names in Britain. In this list the name of the prophet of Islam "Muhammad" with its different spellings was the third most popular boy's name in England and Wales in the

¹ -Beal, James "et col". Ramadan a ding-dong. The Sun. 2 July 2013. 10. July 2013.

<<http://www.thesun.co.uk/sol/homepage/news/4992722/Channel-4-plans-to-screen-Muslim-call-to-prayer-every-day-during-Ramadam-as-its-more-relevant-than-Diamond-Jubilee.html>>

² - Boyle, Darren.TV Call to Prayer During Muslim Holy mMonth of Ramadan Got More Complaints than Anything Else on Channel 4 last Year. The Daily mail.8 May 2014.10 July 2014.

<<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2623639/TV-call-prayer-Muslim-holy-month-Ramadan-got-MORE-complaints-Channel-4-year.html>>



Reflections on the New Visibility ----- Ali Zoui Mahfoud and Pr. Manaa Mohamed

year 2008¹. One year after, the same newspaper wrote: "Mohammed is now the most popular name for baby boys ahead of Jack and Harry"². The stories reporting data about the name Mohammed emphasized how it jumped to the first position overtaking names that have deep roots in British traditions such as Jack and Oliver.

The focus of some British newspapers on the story of the name Mohammed helped promoting the myth of an eminent Muslim takeover of Britain. The British census provides exact numbers about the Muslim population which forms a tiny minority of less than 5 per cent, the only fact that can be concluded about the name Mohammed is simply that the name has a great preference among Muslim families. The reaction of some sections of the British media can be depicted as Islamophobic.

According to the official list, which covers all births in 2009 in England and Wales "Mohammed" with this spelling was ranked 16, but when the variant spellings used (Muhammad, Mohammed, Muhammed, Mohamed, Muhamed, Mohammod, Mahamed, Muhamed, Mahammed, and Mohmmed) are added

¹- Hastings, Max. Mohammed is Now the Third Most Popular Boy's Name in England. So why this Shabby Effort to Conceal it? Daily Mail. 11 Sep 2009. 18 Feb 2011.

<<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/debate/columnists/article1212368/Mohammed-popularboys-England-So-shabby-effort-conceal-it.html>>.

²- Doyle, Jack. Mohammed is Now the Most Popular Name for Baby Boys ahead of Jack and Harry. Daily Mail. 28 Oct 2010. 25 Oct 2011.

<<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-1324194/Mohammed-popular-baby-boys-ahead-Jack-Harry.html>>



Reflections on the New Visibility ----- Ali Zoui Mahfoud and Pr. Manaa Mohamed

it moved to the top of the list¹. Some newspapers even accused the British government of trying to hide the fact about "the changing face of Britain". The *Daily Mail* commented: "Unfortunately, in recent times we have been given plentiful cause for paranoia about attempts by official bodies to conceal from us information about the changing face of Britain which our rulers know that many people will not like... the Muslim population of Britain is growing extraordinarily fast"².

The *Telegraph*, in its turn, noticed: "The way in which the true figures emerged...will fuel claims that government statisticians tried to play down the increasing popularity of the Muslim name. The official announcement by thy ONS, which does not take variant spellings into account, states that Mohammed was only the third most popular name in London."³

Such discourses have been on the rise in the British media. Right wing activists and Islamophobic media used the revealed demographic figures related to the Muslims of the country as a pretext to spread fears of the Islamification of Britain claiming that with this rate Islam would take over the country in the space of a few generations.

¹-Doyle, Jack. Mohammed is Now the Most Popular Name for Baby Boys ahead of Jack and Harry. *Daily Mail*. 28 Oct 2010. 25 Oct 2011.

<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-1324194/Mohammed-popular-baby-boysahead-Jack-Harry.html>

²-Ibid

³-Lefort, Rebecca and Ben Leapman. Mohammed is Most Popular Name for Baby Boys in London. *Telegraph*. 15 Sept 2009. 28 Oct 2011.

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/religion/6194354/Mohammed-is-most-popularname-for-baby-boys-in-London.html>.



Reflections on the New Visibility ----- Ali Zoui Mahfoud and Pr. Manaa Mohamed

Not only the media but the government also exploited people's fears of the increase in Muslim visibility politically to serve its local and especially foreign agenda. According to Tahir Abbas, in the post-9/11 era, politicians have used the people's fear of Islam for their own ends. "By focusing on the 'war on terror' instead of Islam, politicians use the existing anti-Muslim frame of reference but replace it with the idea of "terror". This reporting is compounded by its focus on the "enemy within" or the "loyalty of British Muslims to Britain"¹.

Indeed, extreme right wing politicians and parties such as UK Independence Party gained votes by playing on the electorate's fears of the 'Muslim' or the 'immigrant'. In 2009, the UKIP made unprecedented gains in the country's European Parliament elections winning 13 seats. The BNP won its two seats ever in the same election².

On the one hand, it seems that the post-9/11 visibility of British Muslims added to their burdens by triggering hatred and concerns about them. Islamophobia became at the core of the challenges facing their future in the country. On the other hand, this visibility holds the potential to bring some favorable changes to the status of the country's underprivileged Muslim minority. British Muslims can invest in their visibility to make their voices heard and issues addressed, to give a better image of Islam and Muslims and refute the stereotypes about them.

¹-Abbas, Tahir. *After 9/11: British South Asian Muslims, Islamophobia, Multiculturalism, and the State*. The American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences.2004: 27.P 30.

²- "Labour slumps to historic defeat". 8 June 2009. 14 August 2011.<<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/8088133.stm>>.



Reflections on the New Visibility ----- Ali Zoui Mahfoud and Pr. Manaa Mohamed

The outstanding author on British Muslims, Tariq Modood argued that Muslim communities "can be a crucial source for dialogue and bridge-building. Muslims in the West can be part of transcultural dialogues, domestic and global, that might make our societies live up to their promise of diversity and democracy" ¹.

In "Western Muslims and the Future of Islam ", Tariq Ramadan one of Europe's leading Muslim thinkers went even further anticipating that "Western Muslims will play a decisive role in the evolution of Islam worldwide because of the nature and complexity of the challenges they face, and in this, their responsibility is doubly essential." ²

Conclusion

Huge alterations affected the lives of millions of Western Muslims in general ,and British Muslims in particular, as they were thrown to the forefront of public attention in the era following 9/11. Becoming more visible than ever before, Western Muslims found themselves in an odd situation. While their new visibility could have been exploited positively to acquire a stronger voice, have their problems addressed, and help building bridges between the Muslim world and the West, the immediate reactions it brought have been very negative.

There is a consensus among academics and intellectuals interested in the Muslim minorities in the West that Muslims are going through a tense but crucial stage in their quest for

¹-Modood, Tariq. *British Muslims: Within and between Islam and the West*. Global Dialogue; Spring 2002; 4, 2; ProQuest Research Library: 125.

²-Ramadan, Tariq. *Western Muslims and the Future of Islam*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2004: 225



Reflections on the New Visibility ----- Ali Zoui Mahfoud and Pr. Manaa Mohamed

social and political empowerment. Muslims in Britain and the West are undergoing a period of hard transition. Reaching that level of visibility could mean that Muslims should seek to contribute to the larger society and that identity politics which served Muslim minorities in the past may not suit the new circumstances, but the continuous abridgement of their rights and freedoms push them to focus on the issues specific to the community and to seek support from within the community.

The success of Muslims in developing a positive, participatory presence in the cultural, socio-economic, and political life of the Western countries they live in, and to present a better image of their faith is very important to their future, the future of the host countries, and even for the evolution of Islam worldwide. These aims, however, will never be realized without overcoming the mounting anti-Muslim wave in the West --the biggest challenge facing Western Muslims today. For with such a violent anti-Muslim backlash, Muslims will be forced to push back and concentrate their activism on securing their own safety and existence.

Western Muslims have long suffered marginalization and invisibility. Now that they become visible, they face a historic responsibility to invest in their visibility to make their voices heard and to convey the correct message of their faith. Western governments in their turn should not underestimate the importance of promoting tolerance of diversity and difference. In such pluralistic societies, playing on the widespread anti-Muslim fears among the public for some narrow political ends may be detrimental to social cohesion, interreligious peaceful coexistence, and political stability.

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Reflections on the New Visibility ----- Ali Zoui Mahfoud and Pr. Manaa Mohamed

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2- Beal, James "et col" .Ramadan a ding-dong. The Sun.2 July2013.10.July2013.

<http://www.thesun.co.uk/sol/homepage/news/4992722/Channel-4-plans-to-screen-Muslim-call-to-prayer-every-day-during-Ramadam-as-its-more-relevant-than-Diamond-Jubilee.html>

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<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2623639/TV-call-prayer-Muslim-holy-month-Ramadan-got-MORE-complaints-Channel-4-year.html>

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