



Toward a Holistic Strategy to Counter Violent Radicalization in the United Kingdom

Submission to the Parliamentary Committee on Communities
and Local Government

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Ahmed has written for the *Independent on Sunday* and *Muslim News*, and appeared as an expert commentator for BBC News 24, BBC Radio Five Live, BBC World Today, BBC Asian Network, Channel 4, Sky News, C-SPAN, CNN, FOX News, Bloomberg, PBS Foreign Exchange, Al-Jazeera English, Press TV, Islam Channel and hundreds of other radio and TV shows in the USA, UK, and Europe. He is also cited and reviewed in the *Sunday Times*, *Times Higher Educational Supplement*, *The Independent*, *The Observer*, *Big Issue Magazine*, *Vanity Fair*, *New York Observer*, among others.

Ahmed has taught courses in contemporary history and international relations theory at the Department of International Relations, University of Sussex, from where he obtained his Doctorate, and has lectured at Brunel University's Politics & History Unit on empire and globalization at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels. His Doctoral thesis investigated the radicalisation processes and dynamics of violent conflict, particularly mass violence and genocide, in the context of hierarchical (imperial) social systems in the modern world.

Ahmed has also published extensively on international terrorism, al-Qaeda and the 'War on Terror'. His published research is widely cited in the peer-reviewed literature, and used in several US and UK university courses, including the Harvard University School of Public Health's Department of Global Health and Population and the Kings College London War Studies Department. His work is also listed in major bibliographies of expert literature including the US Army Air University's 'Causes of War' collection (2007); the UK Ministry of Defence's Joint Services Command & Staff College *Research Guide on Counter-Terrorism and the GWOT* (2008); and the International Labour Organization's 'World Commission on the Social Dimension on Globalization' social science bibliography on impacts of globalisation (2003).

As well as testifying in US Congress on Western state collaboration with Islamist extremist networks after the Cold War in summer 2005, Ahmed's research on international terrorism was used by the 9/11 Commission. He has also consulted for the legal team representing the 7/7 Survivors Group, and for various media organisations on issues related to terrorism and foreign policy, such as the BBC. He is currently advising the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst on engagement with Muslim communities.

Other books by Ahmed include, *The War on Freedom: How & Why America was Attacked, September 11, 2001* (Progressive Press, 2002), which was a finalist for the Naples Prize 2003 – Italy's most prestigious literary award – and won praise from Gore Vidal as "the best and most balanced analysis of 9/11"; and *Behind the War on Terror: Western Secret Strategy & the Struggle for Iraq* (New Society, 2003), selected by Chatham House's Middle East Programme as a resource on the Iraq War 2003.

Ahmed is a former Senior Researcher at the Islamic Human Rights Commission (IHRC), a London-based NGO in Consultative Status with the UN Economic and Social Council, and is currently on the Executive Committee of the British Muslim Human Rights Centre at London Metropolitan University's Human Rights & Social Justice Institute. He is also Strategy Director for Creative Education at Arts Versa, a consultancy working with a variety of government agencies and civil society organisations to build cultural bridges between faith and ethnic communities to promote shared values and community cohesion, with a focus on Muslim diasporas and the creation of an inclusive progressive vision for British Islam.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- The Government's understanding of extremism inadequately analyses the core social factors behind violent radicalization, seeing these factors as separate and contingent, rather than as mutually interdependent dynamics of a single failed social system that has 1) marginalized the majority of Muslims from British civil society; and 2) thereby facilitated the capacity of Islamist extremists to mobilize on British soil. This has meant that the Government's capacity-building programmes have insufficiently addressed key structural problems at the root of radicalization processes.
- The Government's unwillingness to engage with Muslim communities on terms other than related to counter-terrorism has exacerbated widespread distrust and apathy toward Government, and discouraged communities from supporting the 'Prevent' agenda, which is often viewed instead as a self-serving tool of political control by the very communities that most require Government support.
- The following factors by themselves each constitute *necessary (but not sufficient) conditions* for violent radicalization; their cumulative interaction creates a *mutually-reinforcing positive-feedback system*, acting in *totality* as a *sufficient condition* and causal basis for a minority of British Muslims to experience violent radicalization:
 - Social structural inequalities and institutional discrimination have generated a groundswell of social alienation, civic exclusion, and political impotence that fuels psychological instability and vulnerability to identity crises in many Muslim communities, including those which are more upwardly mobile.
 - This is reinforced by Islamophobic media reporting, which in turn has fuelled social polarisation between Muslim and non-Muslim communities in Britain, contributing to Muslim vulnerability to separate self-identification through negative reflected appraisal, and increasing the ability of extremists to operate among both communities.
 - Foreign policy grievances exacerbate this condition and provide a focal point and critical catalyst for a sense of generic victimization that potentially undermines attachment to British national identity.
 - While the preceding items highlight 'push' factors, the key 'pull' factor comes in the form of Islamist extremist ideology¹ operating through organisations which exploit all these circumstances of exclusion, which navigate the groundswell of potential discontent to identify vulnerable individuals for recruitment into various forms of ideological indoctrination as a means to resolve their identity crises. Some such groups, particularly al-Muhajiroun, provide a radicalizing social network opening material prospects for individuals to participate in violent activities that potentially threaten public safety, at home and abroad.
 - The radicalizing activities of such groups in turn serve to feedback into the previous processes of social and civic exclusion, negative perceptions of Muslims, and so on, processes which become further intensified in the aftermath of terrorist attacks or plots by associated individuals.

¹ The term 'Islamist' here denotes simply the mobilisation of Islamic language and symbolism to legitimize a specific political ideology, often (but not always) involving violent action, and should not be assumed to be co-extensive with Islam.

- The Government's 'Prevent' programme has focused on trying to build the capacity of Muslim communities to counter extremism without properly addressing these social factors and their mutual reinforcement. Urgent interventions are therefore required to holistically address all these fronts to dampen, and eventually extinguish their positive-feedbacks (see Recommendations).

INTRODUCTION

1. Dr Nafeez Ahmed is a political scientist and counter-terrorism expert at the University of Sussex who has published widely on international terrorism and al-Qaeda, including *The London Bombings: An Independent Inquiry* (Duckworth, 2006). He is the Executive Director of the Institute for Policy Research & Development (www.iprd.org.uk), a London-based non-profit research organization analyzing violent conflict in the context of global ecological, economic and energy crises. He has testified in US Congress about his research on security policy toward Islamist extremist groups, which was also used by the 9/11 Commission.
2. Currently, the 'Prevent' agenda is in danger of criminalizing Muslim communities by labelling them as "at-risk" from violent extremism.² The scope of risk-assessment is rendered potentially unlimited by the assumption, recently espoused by the MI5 Behavioural Science Unit for instance, that there is no "typical pathway to violent extremism" for British Muslim terrorists who fit "no single demographic profile" – all genders, classes, ages and localities of British Muslims may therefore potentially be "at-risk".³ Categorizations of being "at-risk" from violent extremism could include anything from holding foreign policy grievances or expressing disillusionment with the parliamentary system, to holding religious beliefs assumed to contradict an as yet amorphous and contested conception of shared values – 'symptoms' which have no proven relationship to a propensity for violence.
3. For example, surveys show that while between 30 and 40 per cent of British Muslims would support the introduction of Shariah Law in some form by British authorities into some areas of public life,⁴ the number of British Muslims who believe terrorist attacks against civilians in the UK are justifiable is between 1 and 2 per cent.⁵ There is therefore no causal correlation between the adherence to certain beliefs suspected of undermining shared values, and actual vulnerability to terrorist recruitment. Thus, the promotion of shared values, while clearly critical for community cohesion, should not be conflated with countering violent extremism. These are overlapping, but nevertheless distinct, areas of work.
4. Over the last decade, the Government has consistently expanded the powers of police and security agencies, and broadened the scope and definition of what constitutes terrorist activity. This trend of 'widening the net' has meant that huge amounts of public funds are being expended on apprehending and pursuing greater numbers of normal citizens to discern evidence of violent extremism. This is an approach that focuses on surveillance to deal with symptoms, and is therefore

² Mark Hughes, "Police identify 200 children as potential terrorists", *Independent* (28 March 2009) <<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/crime/police-identify-200-children-as-potential-terrorists-1656027.html>>

³ Alan Travis, "MI5 report challenges views on terrorism in Britain", *Guardian* (20 August 2008) <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/uk/2008/aug/20/uksecurity.terrorism1>>

⁴ Patrick Hennessy and Melissa Kite, "Poll reveals 40pc of Muslims want sharia law in UK", *Telegraph* (19 February 2006) <<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/1510866/Poll-reveals-40pc-of-Muslims-want-sharia-law-in-UK.html>>

⁵ 1990 Trust Survey, *Muslim views: foreign policy and its effects* (London: The 1990 Trust, October 2006) p. 8 <<http://police.homeoffice.gov.uk/publications/equality-diversity/faith/muslim-survey?view=Binary>>

bound to fail by way of largely ignoring the key ‘push’ and ‘pull’ factors, and their relation to root structural causes.

SOCIAL STRUCTURAL FACTORS BEHIND VIOLENT EXTREMISM

5. Rather than a diverse “range of causes”⁶ being responsible for violent radicalization, as the Government argues, violent radicalization is the *culmination of a hierarchy of interdependent causes* operating as a *mutually-reinforcing positive-feedback system*, which needs to be addressed *holistically*, necessitating not just a targeted and focused counterterrorism strategy, but intensified Government efforts to revitalise the social contract with British Muslim citizens on its own terms.

SOCIAL EXCLUSION & INSTITUTIONAL DISCRIMINATION

6. Social exclusion and institutional discrimination by themselves do not explain the phenomenon of violent extremism in the UK, but they are primarily responsible for a weakening of a sense of British national identity and citizenship, particularly amongst some ethnic Muslim communities in Britain that are most marginalised.
7. The majority of Muslims in the UK are socially excluded.⁷ Studies show that 69 per cent of British Muslims of Pakistani or Bangladeshi ethnic origin live in poverty, compared to 20 per cent of white people. Unemployment rates for Muslims are higher than those for people from any other religion, for both men and women. Muslims aged 16 to 24 years have the highest unemployment rates, and are over twice as likely as Christians of the same age to be unemployed.⁸ Two-thirds of ethnically-South Asian Muslim children in Britain are impoverished. In families with at least one breadwinner, 60 per cent of ethnic Bangladeshis and 40 per cent of ethnic Pakistanis are in income poverty, compared to just over 10-15 per cent of white people.⁹
8. Social exclusion is linked to institutional discrimination. Another survey found that 80 per cent of British Muslims had experienced discrimination, up from 45 per cent in the late 1990s.¹⁰ These findings are corroborated by a Minority Rights Group International study documenting deteriorating conditions in British Muslim “access to education, employment and housing” along with a “worrying rise in open hostility” from non-Muslim communities.¹¹
9. The social exclusion of the majority of British Muslims is a disturbing phenomenon preceding the phenomenon of Islamist terrorism, and worsening in its aftermath, representing the systemic discriminatory violation of the inalienable social, civil and human rights of one of the United Kingdom’s largest religious minority groups.

⁶ HM Government, op. cit., pp. 43, 82-5

⁷ For a nuanced sociological definition of social exclusion and relevant disadvantage discourse, see Matt Barnes, *Social Exclusion in Britain: An Empirical Investigation and Comparison with the EU* (Hampshire: Ashgate, 2005)

⁸ Trades Union Congress, *Poverty, exclusion and British people of Pakistani and Bangladeshi origin* (London: Trades Union Congress Publications, 2005); Annual Population Survey, January 2004 to December 2005 (London: Office of National Statistics, 21 February 2006) <<http://www.statistics.gov.uk/cpi/nugget.asp?id=979>>

⁹ Guy Palmer and Peter Kenway, *Poverty rates among ethnic groups in Britain* (London: Joseph Rowntree Foundation, April 2007); Lucinder Platt, *Poverty and ethnicity in the UK* (London: Joseph Rowntree Foundation, April 2007)

¹⁰ Saeid R. Ameli et. al., *Social Discrimination: Across the Muslim Divide* (London: Islamic Human Rights Commission, 2004) <http://www.ihrc.org.uk/file/1903718287_content.pdf>

¹¹ Humayun Ansari, *Muslims in Britain* (London: Minority Rights Group International, August 2002) p. 3 <<http://www.minorityrights.org/download.php?id=129>>

IDENTITY CRISIS, CIVIC EXCLUSION AND SOCIAL POLARISATION

10. The combination of social exclusion and institutional discrimination contributes to a general collective sense of marginalisation, disenfranchisement, and disenchantment; a sense of being excluded from civil society, which thus exacerbates the experience of a separate or segregated identity to mainstream Britain. This sense of *civic exclusion* is reinforced primarily by a perception of blocked social mobility and discrimination, rather than individual socio-economic status *per se*, which erodes confidence in the British socio-political system, and consequently negatively affects the sense of belonging to Britain. Thus, extremist groups like al-Muhajiroun are able to recruit largely from upwardly mobile groups, such as university students, who retain a consciousness of Muslim socio-economic disenfranchisement in Britain which is buttressed by perceptions and experiences of a discriminatory system which they feel prevents the realization of their full potential.¹²
11. Only a minority of British Muslims are likely to respond by negating their sense of British identity and citizenship, becoming vulnerable to a powerful sense of civic exclusion. While only half the general British population identifies strongly as British, 77 per cent of Muslims in the UK identify very strongly as British, with 82 per cent affirming themselves as loyal to Britain. Although employment levels for British Muslims are at only 38 per cent, British Muslims have a higher confidence in the judiciary than the general public, and 67 per cent of them want to live in a neighbourhood that has a mix of ethnic and religious people, compared to 58 per cent of the general British public.¹³
12. Trends are less heartening regarding non-Muslim perspectives of Muslims in Britain, which are increasingly negative. A YouGov survey found that the number of non-Muslim Britons who believe that “a large proportion of British Muslims feel no sense of loyalty to this country and are prepared to condone or even carry out acts of terrorism” had nearly doubled from 10 per cent after 7/7 cent to 18 per cent a year later. The number of non-Muslims who believe that “practically all British Muslims are peaceful, law-abiding citizens who deplore terrorist acts as much as anyone else” fell from 23 per cent to 16 per cent in the same period. Further, 53 per cent of non-Muslims said they felt threatened by Islam (as distinct from fundamentalist Islamism) – up from 32 per cent in 2001.¹⁴ Overall, only 36 per cent of the general population believes that Muslims are loyal to Britain.¹⁵

ISLAMOPHOBIA IN THE MEDIA

13. These increasingly negative perceptions of Muslims by the general population play a fundamental role in the formation of British Muslims’ self- and social-identities, serving to reinforce a sense of exclusion from British society.¹⁶ Yet these perceptions are largely fueled by reactionary and irresponsible reporting in the mass media, catalysing processes of social polarisation. An independent study of UK press coverage of British Muslims from 2000 to 2008, found that: “Four of the five most common

¹² Tufayl Choudhury, *The Role of Muslim Identity Politics in Radicalization (a study in progress)* (London: Department for Communities & Local Government, April 2007)

<<http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/communities/pdf/452628.pdf>>

¹³ Muslim West Fact Project, *The Gallup Coexist Index 2009: A Global Study of Interfaith Relations* (New York and London: Gallup and The Coexist Foundation, 2009) <<http://www.muslimwestfacts.com/mwf/File/118267/Gallup-Coexist-Index-2009.aspx>>

¹⁴ Philip Johnston, “Islam poses a threat to the West, say 53 pc in poll”, *Telegraph* (25 August 2006)

¹⁵ Muslim West Fact Project, *op. cit.*

¹⁶ This process of social identity construction through the perceptions of others is known as ‘reflected appraisal.’ Although contested as to its function in different circumstances, several studies show that ethnic and racial identities, and self-esteem, can be significantly affected by the perceptions of others. See for instance Nikki Khanna, “The role of reflected appraisals in racial identity: The case of multiracial Asians”, *Social Psychology Quarterly* (2004, Vol. 64, No. 2) pp. 115-131; Shaun Wiley, et. al, “Through the looking glass: Ethnic and generational patterns of immigrant identity”, *International Journal of Intercultural Relations* (September 2008, Vol. 32, No. 5) pp. 385-398

discourses used about Muslims in the British press associate Islam/Muslims with threats, problems or in opposition to dominant British values.”¹⁷

14. Ironically, then, the media has served to reinforce the sense of blocked social mobility, discrimination and alienation experienced by many British Muslims, while simultaneously stoking widespread paranoia about Islam amongst non-Muslims and promoting the views of Islamist extremists as representative of British Muslims. These factors interplay to create an environment that undermines the notion that Muslims belong intrinsically to British society, culture and values as citizens, and even negatively affect the formation of British Muslim social identity.¹⁸
15. Exclusion and discrimination are known to be key causative factors in mental health problems, and there is little doubt that these processes have detrimentally affected British Muslim mental health, raising the question of the link between mental illness and young Muslims’ vulnerability to identity crisis.¹⁹ Although there are insufficient studies of this, one survey found that 61 per cent of British Pakistanis believed that negative perceptions of them by the media and society had damaged their mental health, but were reluctant to seek help due to lack of community-based or women-based faith- and culturally-sensitive mental health services.²⁰

EXTREMIST IDEOLOGY & FOREIGN POLICY

16. By themselves, the social factors described above do not lead to violent radicalization, even while they do undermine community cohesion. However, they generate a climate in which British Muslims are vulnerable to identity crisis. It is at this sociological moment that the ‘pull’ of Islamist extremist organisations becomes significant. These extremist groups, often financed by overseas networks in the Middle East and Central Asia, exploit conditions and perceptions of disenfranchisement fuelled particularly by grievances over British and Western foreign policy, to recruit British Muslims who due to a convergence of personal, psychological and social reasons linked to their peer-networks, family environment and so on, may find a potential resolution of their identity crises in these organizations.
17. The organization of most concern is al-Muhajiroun, founded by Syrian cleric Omar Bakri Mohammed in 1996. The Centre for Social Cohesion reports that 15 per cent of convicted terrorists in the UK were either members of al-Muhajiroun or knew members of the network. In the last decade, “one in seven Islamist-related convictions” have been linked to al-Muhajiroun.²¹
18. Al-Muhajiroun’s primary function is neither logistical nor operational, but consists of providing a *radicalizing social network* that employs ideological techniques to indoctrinate and motivate recruits, as well as providing access and connections abroad through which recruits may receive opportunity to undergo terrorist training with groups associated with al-Qaeda. Al-Muhajiroun exploits grievances about both perceived discrimination in Britain, and British foreign policy in Muslim-majority countries, and is often the first time recruits will come across a detailed presentation of ideas associated with

¹⁷ Kerry Moore, Paul Mason and Justin Lewis, *Images of Islam in the UK: The Representation of British Muslims in the National Print News Media 2000-2008* (Cardiff: Cardiff University, July 2008) p. 3
<http://www.irr.org.uk/pdf/media_muslims.pdf>

¹⁸ Choudhury, op. cit., pp. 9, 16

¹⁹ Saffron Karlsen and James Y. Nazroo, “Relation between racial discrimination, social class and health among ethnic minority groups”, *American Journal of Public Health* (2002, vol. 92, no. 4) pp. 624-631

²⁰ Report from the Aap Ki Awaaz Project, *Our Voice: the Pakistani community’s views on mental health and mental health services in Birmingham* (London: Rethink, 2007)

²¹ CSC Press Briefing, “One in Seven UK Terror-related Convictions Linked to Islamist Group Now Threatening to Relaunch” (London: Centre for Social Cohesion, 1 June 2009) <http://www.socialcohesion.co.uk/files/1243874438_1.pdf>

Islam.²² An internal UK government report concluded that among the factors attracting young Muslims to extremism is “a perception of ‘double standards’ in British foreign policy, where democracy is preached but oppression of the ‘Ummah’ (the one nation of believers) is practised or tolerated e.g. in Palestine, Iraq, Afghanistan, Kashmir, Chechnya; a consequent sense of helplessness over the situation of Muslims generally; the lack of any real opportunities to vent frustration.”²³ This frustration is galvanized to inculcate an ‘Us’ and ‘Them’ mentality in which violence against ‘Their’ (Western) civilians is justified by misappropriation of Islamic language and symbolism as a response to ‘Their’ killings of ‘Our’ (Muslim) civilians abroad.²⁴

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ‘PREVENT’

19. The Government’s focus on capacity-building to undermine violent extremism purely under the rubric of the ‘Prevent’ agenda is highly counter-productive, and communicates to Muslim communities that the only line of engagement between them and their government concerns terrorism (i.e. Muslims as either conducive or a hindrance to terrorism). It is necessary to widen the *terms of engagement* beyond the ‘Prevent’ remit so that the Government addresses Muslims as British citizens with inalienable social, civil and human rights (not simply as potential terrorists), even *if some of the outcomes of doing so would fulfill that remit*.
20. Citizenship is a two-way social contract between Government and citizens, involving mutual rights and duties enshrined in the rule of law. The entrenchment of social exclusion of Muslims in Britain undermines this social contract, and is indelibly linked to the identity crises that render a minority of British Muslims vulnerable to Islamist extremist indoctrination and terrorist recruitment. This illustrates a serious failure at the heart of Government social policy towards its Muslim citizens – of which continued Governmental insistence on addressing British Muslim citizens solely in relation to counter-terrorism is itself symptomatic. The ‘Prevent’ agenda requires urgent efforts to revitalize the social contract between Government and British Muslims *outside this agenda*, on its own terms. This will generate renewed trust, confidence and good faith between British Muslims and their Government that will impact directly on ‘Prevent’.
21. New long-term social policies must be devised to address the severe social inequalities faced by the country’s majority of Muslims, particularly in terms of unemployment, housing, and education, to open up opportunities for social mobility. In the near-term, this can be kick-started by mobilising civil society organisations, particularly Muslim community groups and charitable bodies, to develop opportunities for young British Muslims especially in deprived regions linked to a wide variety of professions and skills. This should be accompanied by establishment of more community-based faith- and culturally-sensitive local services, particularly in the health and social care sectors. Further, new research is needed to understand the link between British Muslim social exclusion, mental illness and identity crisis.

²² Quintan Wiktorowicz, *Radical Islam Rising: Muslim Extremism in the West* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2005); Ahmed, *The London Bombings: An Independent Inquiry* (London: Duckworth, 2006)

²³ John Gieve (ed.), *Draft Report on Young Muslims and Extremism* (London: Home Office and Foreign & Commonwealth Office, April 2004) Restricted Document leaked to the British press, available here <<http://www.globalsecurity.org/security/library/report/2004/muslimext-uk.htm>>

²⁴ See Choudhury, op. cit. and Change Institute Report for the European Commission, *Studies into violent radicalisation: the beliefs, ideologies and narratives* (London: The Change Institute, February 2008) pp. 29, 133-137. Also see Ahmed, “Engaging the enemy within: Their legitimate concerns turn into a psychology of victimization”, *Independent on Sunday* (13 August 2006)

22. This should be pursued in tandem with stronger legislation and procedures to tackle institutional discrimination against Muslims, especially in the form of Islamophobia. Such measures should be extended and enforced in relation to Islamophobic media reporting, which violates journalistic obligations to report with honesty and integrity, and implicitly encourages hate-crimes. This should include establishing transparent and enforceable professional standards to avoid demonization of Muslims as a group, as well as ensuring more equal representation of Muslims as journalists, editors and commissioners in media institutions. Such standards need not be established solely for Muslims, but should be developed to protect the safety of all ethnic, religious and racial groups.
23. Tentative acknowledgement by Government of the centrality of British foreign policy as a recruiting sergeant for extremists is welcome, but should be supplemented by greater inclusion of Muslim community stakeholders in the consultative processes by which foreign policies for Muslim-majority countries is formulated. This should include cultivating formal institutions for sustained consultative dialogue between security agencies and British Muslim civil society organisations concerning the extent to which these policies genuinely conform to the national interest. These should provide space for meaningful grievance platforms providing opportunities for Muslims disaffected with foreign policy to critically engage with policymakers.
24. More *focused* counter-ideology measures should be adopted against Islamist extremist organisations to de-legitimize *violent extremist* ideology. Rather than being so broad-based as to potentially demonise common Muslim religious beliefs whose relation to British shared values is contested, focus should be on actively de-constructing and de-legitimizing the specific Islamist 'jihadist' theological, ethical, and socio-political interpretations mobilised by al-Qaeda, and adopted by groups like al-Muhajiroun. This also requires the cultivation of alternative progressive interpretations of Islam – particularly regarding the key issues such as jihad, voting, women, Shariah, and so on – that remain authentic, traditional and scholarly, while also dynamic, modern and British, so as to be truly appealing to grassroots British Muslim communities. This inclusive, progressive vision for British Islam needs also to provide a positive outlet for positive political activism commensurate with British civil society, such as social welfare, ecology & environment, human rights, and so on. Such a dynamic and vibrant vision of Islam as indigenous to Britain and supportive of progressive values shared by all citizens, is not only possible, but an inherent requirement of authentic traditional Islamic scholarship. However, this cannot be truly achieved simply by importing foreign scholars from the Middle East and Central Asia, but requires efforts to nurture an indigenous, inclusive British Islamic discourse and scholarship, supported by grassroots British Muslim communities themselves.