Institution: King's College London

Unit of Assessment: UoA28

Title of case study: Impacting Public Discourse on Islamophobia

1. Summary of the impact (indicative maximum 100 words)

Almost everything about Islamophobia is contested, from the very phenomenon and name, to its attendant facts and the responses it calls for. This case study focuses on a research-based intervention which has impacted how key stakeholders frame the discussion of Islamophobia at critical junctures of the grassroots-media-policy continuum. Specifically, for those most actively affected by and engaged with the issue, it has opened up more robust critical modes of intervention and argumentation. The research was conceived and informed by a commitment to public engagement envisaged as a two way and participatory process with communities and stakeholders, and has influenced public debate and benefited community relations in the UK, Europe and beyond.

2. Underpinning research (indicative maximum 500 words)

This case study's underpinning research on the nature of Islamophobia draws and builds upon Vakil's disciplinary interests and research strands in Portuguese Studies, European History and Critical Muslim Studies developed at King's College London since 1992. These interests combine theoretical and methodological perspectives from literary and cultural studies and historiography, on the one hand, with reflections on the centre-periphery paradigm through the experiences of Portugal and Britain and their empires, on the other. As such, they have shaped a distinctive approach to the framing of Islamophobia: historical and comparative, and drawing in particular on postcolonialism, race and ethnicity studies, poststructuralism, and intellectual and conceptual history. The research was also, and from the start, developed through broader discussion and interventions with Muslim organisations, governmental and NGO bodies and their associated non-academic audiences.

More specifically, the approach to Islamophobia immediately underpinning the case-study emerges from and builds on work on representations and practices in Portuguese literature and culture, and on colonial intelligence and Muslim policies in the context of counterinsurgency in Portuguese Africa, which led to a 2011 book publication. This work has involved a thorough critical and conceptual reorientation towards the global, a critical dialogue with S. Sayyid (then Director of the Centre for Ethnicity and Racism Studies at the University of Leeds) and other academics, and a broadening of the range of stakeholders and interlocutors in the UK and Europe. The first stage in its development, informed by a comparison of the French and British contexts, was a critical review of the literature and debates on Islamophobia and the identification of their conceptual weaknesses, limitations and gaps [3.2]. The second stage was a research Workshop convened by Sayyid and Vakil at the University of Leeds in May 2008, where briefing contributions by 12 researchers were debated in a day-long discussion involving some 20 academic and non-academic participants (published as a CERS Working Paper in 2008 [3.2]). The third stage, following the selection of some of these papers, was the commissioning of new essays for an edited collection of 25 chapters by 28 authors published (in January 2011) as *Thinking Through Islamophobia: Global Perspectives*. Two prefatory and afterword chapters by the editors concisely set out the thrust of the volume's critical intervention [3.1].

Four fundamental approaches are advanced in the underpinning research as concentrated in this book and in subsequent interventions, for which the researcher's comparative investigation of the Muslim Question in the lusophone and Anglophone worlds has offered original perspectives and insights: an evaluation and critique of the term Islamophobia, with reference to its history, usage, limitations and potential; a broadly framed comparative perspective, in disciplinary, legal, policy and national terms; a global approach broadening the debate beyond Western contexts where most of the debate and analysis has been centred, and the inclusion of Islamophobia in Muslim majority contexts in particular; and a historicist approach identifying Islamophobia as a specifically postcolonial phenomenon. In particular, the research locates Islamophobia in critical racism studies, which shifts the terms of discussion of Muslims into questions of politics,

racialization, rights and recognition.

A 2012 Workshop (Islamophobia@2012: Challenges & Strategies, Vakil and Laachir) complemented the development of the underpinning research and its dissemination with a comprehensive multidimensional assessment of the current situation and debates [5.9]

3. References to the research (indicative maximum of six references)

3.1 *Thinking Through Islamophobia: Global Perspectives*, edited by S. Sayyid and AbdoolKarim Vakil, London: Hurst/New York: Columbia University Press, 2010 [NY: Oxford UP since 2013] including chapters by AbdoolKarim Vakil: 'Is the Islam in Islamophobia the Same as the Islam in Anti-Islam; Or, When is it Islamophobia Time?', pp.23-43 [first publication of full version]; 'Who's Afraid of Islamophobia', pp.271-278 [Editor's afterword to the edited collection] [see the review article by Brian Klug, 'Islamophobia: A Concept Comes of Age', Ethnicities 12:5 October 2012];

3.2 *Thinking Thru' Islamophobia*, Workshop papers, co-ed. with S. Sayyid, Centre of Ethnicity and Racism Studies Working Papers, University of Leeds, 2008, includes 'Talking Back Muslim: A Selected Bibliography on Islamophobia', pp.94-105;

3.3 'Is the Islam in Islamophobia the same as the Islam in Anti-Islam; or, When is it Islamophobia Time?', *The European Imaginary in the Cartoons Controversy: Drawing Civilisations?*, ed. by Marta Araújo, Marisa Matias, Hélia Santos e Bruno Sena Martins, *e-cadernos CES* 03 (2009), pp.96-108;

3.4 'Doing the "Muslim Question" in Different Voices', in *The New Muslims: Runnymede Reflections* (Runnymede Trust), edited by Claire Alexander, Victoria Redclift and Ajmal Hussain, 2013, pp.8-9, & Muslim Multicultures Runnymede video [5.5];

3.5 'Islamofobia/ Islamophobia' in *Anti-Dicionário Contra o Racismo*, ed. By Marta Araújo and Silvia Rodriguez Maeso, Tolerace-Centro de Estudos Sociais-Universidade de Coimbra, 2013 in preparation;

3.6 *Islamophobia@2012: Challenges and Strategies*, [2012 Workshop proceedings under agreement for publication by Kube Publishing, 2013].

4. Details of the impact (indicative maximum 750 words)

The significance and timeliness of the research was quickly recognised, as evidenced by Dr Brian Klug's announcement, in a magisterial review article, that the concept of Islamophobia has 'come of age' [5.1]. Moreover, the book's opportuneness and broad significance for public debate in an international postcolonial setting are unequivocally demonstrated by the fact that it is cited as the single recommended reference on the question in two important new books by public intellectuals Richard Sennett and Patrick Chabal [5.1]. Following its publication the two editors, individually, jointly and in partnership with other contributors, have pursued the project of shifting public and policy debates across the range of civil society, grassroots organisations, political institutions and international fora.

Exemplifying the first of these, Vakil's work in partnership with the Muslim Council of Britain (MCB), the largest umbrella body of Muslim organisations in the United Kingdom, and in particular as the leader of its Islamophobia working group, has directly transformed the thinking and language of the Muslim community's representatives. In a recent communication the Secretary General of the MCB states: 'The Muslim Council of Britain is pleased to place on record the profound and direct impact that the writings, speeches and presentations of AbdoolKarim Vakil have had in shaping British Muslim civil society's understanding and responses to the phenomenon of Islamophobia and anti-Muslim discrimination... [His] intervention has made a positive impact on community relations in Britain by intellectually empowering Muslim spokespersons in their advocacy and representational roles. The MCB is now able to articulate its position more effectively and confidently which is important for social cohesion in Britain because all sections of society should be able to have a voice and a say on matters of public policy and interest.' [5.2]

At the grassroots level, workshops and talks to affiliated organisations and representatives at MCB community briefing meetings, AGMs, and Central Working Committee meetings have helped develop both engagement and discussion with local groups. One MCB activist commented on the importance of Vakil's initiatives in 'building a better understanding across disciplines and silos with a focus on problem solving rather than just issue raising' [5.2]. Contributions to broad public activist

initiatives have included panel presentations and workshops at meetings such as the 'Confronting Anti-Muslim Hatred in Britain and Europe' European Conference (London Muslim Centre, 21 May 2011), and the 'Celebrate Diversity, Defend Multiculturalism, Oppose Islamophobia and Racism' National Convention, organised by One Society Many Cultures and United Against Fascism (15 October 2011) [5.4]. The corroborating statement from the MCB confirms that, in his capacity as an invited speaker at a variety of fora, Vakil 'has made a direct contribution to the emergence of a civil society coalition including the trade unionists that is now confronting Islamophobia in different settings, from the shop floor to the senior common room.' [5.2]

The reconceptualisation of Islamophobia proposed in the book has also informed Vakil's participation and contributions to closed network and information exchange meetings organised by other civil society organisations. These include the October 2010 'End the Isolation: Building solidarity networks against Islamophobia in Europe', organised by the Institute of Race Relations; the 'Far Right and the EDL, challenges for us all' round table at the Muslim College London (31 May 2012), and post-Woolwich crisis meetings such as the London Muslims Community Forum (12 June 2012), an advisory body for the London Metropolitan Police, and the 'Woolwich and Beyond: Future Directions' Workshop convened by the Coventry University Centre for Social Relations, Faith Matters and the National Association of Muslim Police (London, 27 June).

In terms of political life and policy, the book's findings have reached MPs particularly interested in these issues, including at two Westminster initiatives to launch an All Party Parliamentary Group on Islamophobia; the first by the MCB, with the Muslim Safety Forum, the Cordoba Foundation, and the European Muslim Research Centre (3 March 2010), and the second by Engage, at a meeting hosted by Lord Mohammed Sheikh (12 October 2010) where Vakil spoke as expert witness. He is also cited in recent written evidence to the APPG [Allen, 2011 in 5.8]. A book launch for *TTI* was also held at the House of Commons (21 January 2011), chaired by Sadiq Khan MP (Shadow Lord Chancellor and Shadow Secretary of State for Justice) who described *Thinking Through Islamophobia: Global Perspectives* as 'essential reading.' [5.3]

The new perspectives that the research has opened up on Islamophobia by drawing on insights from Vakil's work on the Portuguese-speaking world, from literary studies and historiography have been central to the novelty of these interventions, but have also contributed to public debate elsewhere in Europe: in Portugal itself, Spain, Scandinavia, France and Turkey. In a Portuguese context where Islamophobia is absent from anti-racist discourse, Vakil's interview in the national daily newspaper *Público*, and his commentary on the 2009 European Parliament meeting and debate on Islamophobia, broke new ground by firmly positioning the discussion of Islamophobia in terms of racism and racialization [5.6]. Young professional audiences in particular were reached through a workshop on Islamophobia in August-September 2011 at the 2nd United Nations Alliance of Civilizations Summer School in Lisbon [5.7], involving recent graduates from across the Middle East and North Africa and Eastern Europe.

Vakil's University of Helsinki Public Lecture ('Dreams of Europe Without Muslims') occasioned two interviews on Islamophobia in the Finnish and Swedish press [5.6]. In January 2011 he represented the MCB in Paris at a workshop of the French monitoring and advocacy organisation Collectif Contre L'Islamophobie en France (CCIF) which aimed to network British, French and German anti-racism and Muslim civil society organisations and academics, and the following April he spoke at a Colloquium on Islamophobia organised by the CCIF and Salaam Sciences Po. According to the spokesman for the CCIF: 'Vakil's work has been a reference book when it comes to framing Islamophobia into modern social science debates. He has also participated in the CCIF 10th anniversary conference at Sciences Po on 20 April this year, where he produced one of the best contributions to the debate, by re-framing the issue from a post-colonial perspective' [5.2]. Attesting to international policy impact, at the invitation of the Turkish Prime Minister's Office, Vakil contributed to a panel discussion (which included the Turkish Deputy PM) at the 2012 Istanbul World Forum [5.4] and at the International Conference on Islamophobia, Law and Media organised by the Prime Minister's Office and the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (Istanbul, 12-13 Sept 2013).

As a final indicator of international impact, *Thinking Through Islamophobia* has been included in the resource bibliographies listed in *Guidelines for Educators on Countering Intolerance and Discrimination against Muslims: Addressing Islamophobia Through Education*, compiled for the

Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE)-Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR). Domestically, it has also been cited in INSTED (Inservice Training and Educational Development) resources which were compiled by Robin Richardson, who drafted the original 1997 Runnymede Trust Report on Islamophobia [5.8].

5. Sources to corroborate the impact (indicative maximum of 10 references)
5.1 Brian Klug 'Islamophobia: A Concept Comes of Age, *Ethnicities* 12:5, October 2012, 665-681; Richard *Sennett, Together: The rituals, pleasures and politics of Cooperation* (Allen Lane, 2012); Patrick Chabal, *The End of Conceit: Western rationality after postcolonialism* (Zed, 2012).
5.2 Statements: Secretary General of the Muslim Council of Britain (advancing the work of civil society organisations especially MCB); spokesman of Collectif Contre L'Islamophobie en France (impact in European and French context). Contact: MCB activist (effecting research-civil society interface and networking in addressing Islamophobia).
5.3 *Thinking Through Islamophobia* as 'essential reading'
http://www.mcb.org.uk/article_detail.php?article=announcement-969; The City Circle:
http://www.thecitycircle.com/past-events/islamophobia-perspectives
5.4 Istanbul World Forum: http://www.byegm.gov.tr/docs/2012/10/5/BYEGMParticipantsENG.doc
5.5 Public engagement event podcasts: *Secularism, Racism and the Politics of Belonging: a conference on race, religion and public policy*, UEL January 2011 parts 1&2:
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mOzG64IUnLs&list=PLBA9F52FCD45ADAC2&index=6&feature=plpp_videop; Runnymede Trust 'The Muslim Question' Roundtable & publication:
http://www.runnymedetrust.org/news/499/272/The-New-Muslim-Report-Launched.html; 'Muslim Multicultures' video: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2jFI1jFZk_c
'Celebrate Diversity, Defend Multiculturalism, Oppose Islamophobia and Racism', TUC Conference Centre London October 2011: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0At8vDy0sjI
5.6 Media: 'Islamofobia é racismo', Público 22.11.2009; 'Mil Islamofobias', Público, 6.12.2009; 'Islam-Kammo eriyttaa muslimit saarekkeiksi', *Aamulehti*, 8.11.2011, p.A13; 'Myter om muslimer sprids pa natet', *Hufvudstadsbladet*, 21.11.2011, p.8: http://hbl.fi/nyheter/2011-11-21/myter-om-muslimer-sprids-pa-natet.
5.7 UNHR AoC: http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/nscentre/2011AOCSummerSchoolleaflet.pdf
5.8 *Guidelines for Educators on Countering Intolerance and Discrimination against Muslims: Addressing Islamophobia Through Education*, OSCE-ODIHR, CE, UNESCO:
http://www.osce.org/odihr/84495. INSTED (insted.co.uk) resources: http://www.insted.co.uk/anti-muslim-racism.pdf; reference to *TTI* is also included in the bibliographies of *Islamophobie: La Construction du problème Musulman* (www.hypotheses.org) and Amy Ansell's *Race and Ethnicity: The Key Concepts* (Routledge Key Guides, 2013), and cited in Allen (2011) Written Submission to the Relaunched APPG on Islamophobia:
http://wallscometumblingdown.files.wordpress.com/2012/10/chrisallen-written-evidence-appg-launch-nov-2011.pdf
5.9 Islamophobia@2012: Challenges & Strategies Workshop:
http://www.mcb.org.uk/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=2273&Itemid=93.