

Institution: ROYAL HOLLOWAY, UNIVERSITY OF LONDON
Unit of Assessment: D.30 History
Title of case study: Muslim Society in Modern Britain
<p>1. Summary of the impact (indicative maximum 100 words)</p> <p>The research of Humayun Ansari, at RHUL since 1990, and Akil Awan, appointed 2006, examines the interplay of political, social and religious relations within Muslim societies and between Muslim minorities and non-Muslim populations. This expert knowledge has underpinned engagement with government and community organisations in the UK and abroad, often through Royal Holloway's Centre for Minority Studies (CeMS). Ansari's research contributed directly to legal changes regarding discrimination on the grounds of religion, while both have advised the British and US governments on issues relating to Muslim community affairs and Islamic activism, contributing to shaping security policy, both in the UK and internationally.</p>
<p>2. Underpinning research (indicative maximum 500 words)</p> <p>Ansari's 2004 monograph, <i>The Infidel Within: the History of Muslims in Britain since 1800</i>, was the first comprehensive, scholarly history of the Muslim presence in the UK. It historically deconstructs the prevalent and largely negative perceptions of a reified, homogenised and morally threatening community uneasy with modernity, secularism and democracy. Challenging popular views of Muslims as newly arrived outsiders with exotic beliefs and practices, Ansari demonstrates their deep roots in Britain's multicultural history. The research thereby addressed contemporary public anxieties and social tensions. A spin-off policy-oriented publication 'Muslims in Britain' (2002) for the Minority Rights Group drew on the research conducted for <i>The Infidel Within</i> [http://www.minorityrights.org/?lid=1014].</p> <p>In the aftermath of 9/11, the 'war on terror', occupations of Iraq and Afghanistan, and 7/7 in London anxieties were particularly high regarding the loyalty of Muslims in Britain. Ansari's subsequent research explored the specific history of military contribution and sacrifices of Muslim soldiers in Britain's Armed Forces, notably in the Great War. In 'Between Collaboration and Resistance: Muslim Soldiers' Identities and Loyalties in the two World Wars', <i>Arches Quarterly</i>, 4 (2011), he demonstrates that historically Muslims have been as loyal to the Crown as any other community.</p> <p>In 2010, Ansari uncovered records of the East London Mosque and commenced research on them. His 2011 study of the Mosque's origins (<i>The Making of the East London Mosque, 1910-1951</i>) explains the complex struggle to create a mosque in London that was worthy of the capital of the worldwide British empire. It was the first in-depth historical analysis of Muslim community and institution-building in East London. By exploring the interplay between the Muslim experience and the wider public and institutions, it engages with debates surrounding identity and belonging, the radicalisation of young Muslims, struggles for power within and beyond Muslim communities, and policies on integration and social cohesion. It deepens understanding of present-day cultural contestations, the sources of inclusion and exclusion of particular groups, especially in policy-making arenas. During 2010-12, this research fed into the collaborative research project 'Building on History: Religion in London', conducted with the Open University, for which Ansari was a co-investigator.</p> <p>Awan was appointed to a five-year RCUK fellowship at RHUL thanks to an initiative by Ansari under the History Department's strategic research programme on 'Faith, Power, Terror'. Awan's research analyses contemporary political responses among Muslims in the West, especially the intersection between Islamic radicalism, <i>jihadism</i> and the use of new media.</p> <p>Between 2008-10, Awan was co-investigator for an ESRC/ FCO-funded project 'Legitimising the</p>

discourses of radicalisation: Political violence in the new media ecology', which produced the volume, ***Radicalisation and Media: Connectivity and Terrorism in the New Media Ecology*** (2011). Transnational in scope, this work analyses the role of mass media coverage in promoting or hindering radicalisation and political violence. It shows how the acts themselves and explanations for them on the web are picked up and represented in news media through words, phrases, graphics, images, and videos, how interpretations of the term 'radicalisation' are shaped by news representations.

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

Ansari:

1. *The Infidel Within: the History of Muslims in Britain since 1800* (Hurst & Company: London, 2004).

'[A]s Ansari argues in this history of Islam in Britain, British Muslims have consistently been portrayed as denizens of a monolithic and undifferentiated world. Through painstaking research, and an inspired exploration of the issues of identity, Ansari sets out to dispel this absurd, but widely held, myth', (*Independent*, 30/4/2004).

2. *The Making of the East London Mosque, 1910-1951: minutes of the London Mosque Fund and East London Mosque Trust Ltd* (The Royal Historical Society and CUP, Camden Series: Cambridge, 2011).

3. 'Burying the dead: making Muslim space in Britain', *Historical Research* 80, 210 (2007): 545-566.

4. 'Between Collaboration and Resistance: Muslim Soldiers' Identities and Loyalties in the two World Wars', *Arches Quarterly* 4 (Spring/Summer 2011): 18-29.

Awan:

5. 'Jihadi ideology in the new-media environment', in J. Deol (ed.), *Contextualising Jihadi Thought* (Hurst & Company: London, 2011): 99-119.

Based on research rated on completion as 'outstanding' by ESRC peer review panel.

6. Co-author, *Radicalisation and Media: Connectivity and Terrorism in the New Media Ecology* (Routledge: London, 2011).

'...a must read for scholars, security policy makers and general readers who will each find something to learn from, something to think about and something to be a little more "uncertain" about.' - Hiba Ghanem, *Journal of International Relations Research, Violence and Terrorism*, Issue 1, January 2012.

'...this is a first-rate book that furthers in significant ways our understanding of the interconnectivity between old-timers and newcomers in the new media/communication ecology and how these linkages influence the information that influences how citizens think about radicalisation and the threat of terrorist violence. While recommended for those involved in the study of terrorism, counterterrorism, media and communication, the volume is equally informative for those working in the media and public officials who deal with the causes and consequences of radicalisation.' *Critical Studies on Terrorism*, 4 (3).

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

Ansari is regarded as the leading academic expert on the history of British Muslims. His research has benefited policy-makers and community organisations. Between 2008 and 2013,

Impact case study (REF3b)

he briefed senior officials at the Home Office, the Cabinet Office and the Crown Prosecution Service, and advised staff at Defence and Foreign Affairs academies in Britain and Europe, and the UK Security Service. His meetings with Home Office officials to discuss the development of religious discrimination legislation had a direct impact on their subsequent recommendations to include religious belief as a specific 'protected characteristic' in the Equality Act 2010.

Ansari's policy-oriented publication 'Muslims in Britain' (2002) for the Minority Rights Group directly shaped the MRG Council Seminar (Autumn 2010) stance on the Danish "Muhammad cartoons" and the prohibition on Muslim women wearing full face veil. In addition, according to MRG records, between 2009 and 2013, his report received c. 2,000 unique user-views.

Organisers of the East London Mosque (ELM)'s centenary celebrations (2011) drew upon Ansari's 2011 monograph for an exhibition spotlighting its Minute Books. Ansari was interviewed for the BBC Radio 4 'Sunday' programme (5/12/2010) feature on the ELM centenary. He made a BBC Radio 3 documentary (27/11/2011), 'Three Centuries of the British Mosque', exploring the history of mosque-making in Britain since the mid-1800s. In 2012, his guidance directly helped the ELM secure an award of £42,250 from the 'National Cataloguing Grants Programme for Archives' to catalogue its archives. From 2013, Ansari has sat on the steering committee driving this project. According to the Chair of the ELM Trustees, Ansari's work 'has helped young British Muslims place themselves within the British narrative and take pride in their roots and contributions of earlier generations'. Ansari's 2007 research article on Muslim burial ('Burying the Dead') inspired mosque staff to retrieve records of the Indigent Muslim Burial Fund during 2011-12. The archives of this second institution, established in 1927, have now been uncovered, and can be accessed by the public.

In 2008, the Muslim Council of Britain (MCB) commissioned Ansari to write on '*Proving Loyalty? Muslims and Britain's Armed Forces*' for the MCB's pamphlet *Remembering the Brave: the Muslim contribution to Britain's Armed Forces*, published in 2009 at a particularly sensitive moment. Members of the Royal Family, national politicians including the Prime Minister, Opposition Leader, House of Commons Speaker and Armed Forces Minister, and policy-makers in various institutions commented that it 'set the record straight' about the past and current role of Muslims within the British military. As well as generating self-reflection in Muslim publications, on blog sites and in interfaith organisations (South London Inter-Faith Group and Reconciliation Talk), the MCB uses the pamphlet to counteract the arguments of protesters who regularly disrupt commemorations on Armistice Day. In July 2013, Ansari was invited by the Minister of State for Faith and Communities to provide advice on how to ensure that the contribution of Commonwealth nations formerly in the British Empire is honoured during the centenary commemoration of the First World War.

The search for improved inter-faith relations based on a better understanding of history propelled Ansari's research for 'Building on History: Religion in London Project' in 2011-13. This project included public seminars on 'Engaging the Past to Inform the Present'; community exhibitions; and engagement with local schools. Ansari was the focus of a Q&A session at Urswick School, in Hackney, where pupils from diverse backgrounds explored the experiences of being Muslim in Britain, racism at school, and why it is important for them to know about the history of British Muslims.

Awan's collaborative 2008-10 research project on 'Legitimising the discourses of radicalisation' was commissioned and part-funded by the FCO to assist the formulation of policy on security and counterterrorism. The FCO committed itself to accepting the research findings and developing any recommendations for policy. In November 2008, Awan contributed, by invitation, to a closed high-level Home Office (Office of Security and Counter-Terrorism) workshop on understanding and countering online radicalisation. Participants included the Home Office director, Research, Information and Communication Unit representatives, deputy head of FCO, and senior civil servants. He has also had confidential meetings with senior Home Office staff to advise on policy making. Awan has also worked with NGOs and think-tanks (RUSI, Chatham House, IISS, ICSR, Germany Embassy and US Congressional Research

Impact case study (REF3b)

Service), and was commissioned by *The Sentinel* – produced by the West Point Combating Terrorism Center (<http://www.ctc.usma.edu/>) – to write articles on combating terrorism/insurgency that were read by US military personnel and policy makers. In July 2013, Awan was lead academic expert witness on violent extremism in Britain at the All-Party Parliamentary Group for Global Uncertainties at the House of Commons.

5. Sources to corroborate the impact (indicative maximum of 10 references)

1. Executive Director, Minority Rights Group International [for impact of ‘Muslims in Britain’ Report <http://www.minorityrights.org/?lid=1014>, and MRG’s 2010 Council Seminar].
2. 2010 Equality Act (Part 2, Chapter 1), available at <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/contents> [for impact of ‘Muslims in Britain’ Report <http://www.minorityrights.org/?lid=1014>, and joint discussions with MRG and Home Office officials that fed into 2010 Equality legislation].
3. Chair of Trustees, East London Mosque [for impact regarding the centenary celebrations of the East London Mosque in 2011 and subsequent archival developments].
4. Deputy Secretary General, The Muslim Council of Britain [for impact of 2009 ‘Remembering the Brave: the Muslim contribution to Britain’s Armed Forces’ pamphlet].
5. Details of the ‘Building on History: Religion in London Project’ available at <http://www.open.ac.uk/Arts/religion-in-london/index.html> [for impact of the activities that took place under the auspices of this project during 2011-13].
6. Final report on ‘Legitimising the discourses of Radicalisation’, grant reference: RES-181-250041, <http://www.esrc.ac.uk/my-esrc/grants/RES-181-25-0041/read/outputs/Date/25/2> [for corroboration of research findings of report commissioned by FCO].
7. Awan was invited to advise the Home Office and make recommendations to the OSCT (Office for Security and Counter Terrorism) [for impact of advice and recommendations to OSCT regarding approaches to the censorship of online radical materials].
8. Articles from *The Sentinel* [in-house US military journal produced by the Combating Terrorism Center at West Point for US personnel and policy-makers] <http://www.ctc.usma.edu/posts/success-of-the-meta-narrative-how-jihadists-maintain-legitimacy> and <http://www.ctc.usma.edu/posts/the-virtual-jihad-an-increasingly-legitimate-form-of-warfare> [for impact of research findings on US non-academic policy-makers].
9. Head of All-Party Parliamentary Group for Global Uncertainties, House of Commons [for impact of Awan’s evidence to the APPG in 2013].