

# Religious pluralism in the United States and Britain: Its implications for Muslims and nationhood

Social Compass

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## Abstract

This article provides a historically informed analysis of the contemporary incorporation of Islam and Muslims into an idea of common – national – membership in the United States and Britain. It shows that there is a current movement towards synthesis between religious and national identities by Muslims themselves, and explores the ways in which this synthesis is occurring within rich and dynamic public spheres in societies that have historically included and incorporated other religious groups. The authors argue that both countries are wrestling with the extent to which they accommodate Muslims in ways that allow them to reconcile their faith and citizenship commitments, and that the British ‘establishment’ is no less successful at achieving this than secular republicanism in the US.

## Keywords

American Muslims, British Muslims, citizenship, nationhood, religious pluralism

## Résumé

Cet article fournit une analyse historiquement informée de l’incorporation actuelle de l’islam et des musulmans dans une idée d’appartenance commune – nationale – aux États-Unis et en Grande-Bretagne. Les auteurs montrent qu’il existe un mouvement en

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cours généré par les musulmans eux-mêmes promouvant la synthèse entre les identités religieuses et nationales. Ils analysent les façons dont cette synthèse se produit dans les sphères publiques riches et dynamiques de ces sociétés qui ont historiquement inclus et intégrés d'autres groupes religieux. Alors que les deux pays sont actuellement aux prises avec les limites dans lesquelles ils peuvent accueillir les musulmans d'une manière qui leur permette de concilier leurs engagements en matière de foi et de citoyenneté, les auteurs soutiennent que l'établissement au Royaume-Uni ne connaît pas moins le succès que le républicanisme laïque aux États-Unis.

### Mots-clés

citoyenneté, musulmans américains, musulmans britanniques, nation, pluralisme religieux

## Introduction

In this article we explore how Muslims have been incorporated into conceptions of nationhood in Britain and the United States. Scholarship on national identity has long recognised the close connection between religion and nationhood. The variety of territorially anchored Protestant Churches in post-reformation Europe illustrates this relationship, and even where organised religions have not achieved the 'established' status of the Anglican or Lutheran Churches, or have been subject to Church–State separation, this has not resulted in God–State separation. This partly explains why Ernest Barker (1948: 14) insisted that 'nations [have] long dreamt for their national unity in some common fund of religious ideas'. Linda Colley's (1992: 362) characterisation of an earlier Britain as 'a protestant Israel' and Geoff Levey's (2009) reminder that despite its wall of separation, the US has always remained 'One Nation Under God' affirm Barker's earlier observation. Going further, in his *Chosen people: Anglo-American myths and reality*, Longley (2002: 10) insists that 'we are never going to reach the bottom of issues of national identity until we delve into the religious dimension ... Religion is a weightier ingredient in these national stories than most modern English people or Americans would expect' (cf. Wuthnow, 2006).

This article contributes to these broader debates by focusing on how *contemporary appeals* to national identity react to Muslim 'differences'. Specifically, we explore the extent to which the British experience is consistent with Casanova's (2009: 140–141) conclusion that:

while in the United States the new immigrant religions have mainly contributed to the further expansion of immigrant religious pluralism, in the case of Europe, immigrant religions present a greater challenge to local patterns of limited religious pluralism, and even more importantly, to recent trends of drastic secularisation.

Our aim is to contribute a historically contextualized analysis of the contemporary incorporation of Islam and Muslims into an idea of common – national – membership in these two countries.

We begin by outlining the particular configuration of religion and nationhood in each context. We then discuss the ways in which Islam and Muslims are integrated into – and

revise – the two Church–State relationships and prevailing conceptions of nationhood. We conclude by examining the implications for theories of religious pluralism. Our observation is that there is a current movement towards a synthesis of religious and national identities by Muslims themselves, and that *both* the US and the UK boast rich public spheres and dynamic civil societies in which such a synthesis is possible. Both countries are currently wrestling with the question of how to incorporate Muslims in a manner that reconciles faith and citizenship commitments, and so is not governed by racialising discourse and policy, and we demonstrate that the British ‘establishment’ is no less successful at this than the US.

### The ‘perils of modelling’

The title of this section is taken from Viet Bader’s (2007: 871) preference for the use of ‘fairly disaggregated frames’ in studying the dynamics of State–Church relations, in that ‘State–Church relations do not “determine” but “shape” accommodation policies’ for more recent religious minorities (Bader, 2007: 880; cf. Fetzer and Soper, 2005). We broadly agree with Bader’s position, particularly its encouragement of a context-sensitive approach. We still find it helpful, however, to utilise the idea of contrasting ‘models’ – loosely defined – to explore the incorporation of Muslims into existing social and political configurations of nationhood in the United States and Britain.

It is often stated that the First Amendment of the US Constitution erects a ‘Jeffersonian’ wall of separation between Church and State by mandating that Congress ‘shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof’. Upon this relatively slender constitutional stipulation has come to rest a great deal of legal and political architecture that has been elaborated and tested in primary legislation, precedent and practice. Two particular features of this are relevant to our discussion. One is that within the historical practice of the idea of absolute separation there have actually been more complex outcomes that go beyond the privatisation of religion *per se*. Examples include the provision of government resources to religious organisations that deliver social services, the entitlement of religious organisations to significant tax benefits, the fostering of relationships between political parties and religious organisations and the prominence afforded to religion in civil society.

The focus of our discussion, however, is on the second feature. Despite its theoretical rejection of ‘all political or economic privilege, coercion, or disability based on religious affiliation, belief, or practice, or lack thereof’ (Weber, 1988: 685), the US retains and reflects cultural vestiges of Anglo-Saxon Protestantism, which may consign some minority religions to the periphery. This need not be a politically multiculturalist critique, given Tocqueville’s (1969: 292) observation that ‘in the United States it is not only mores that are controlled by religion, but its sway extends over reason’, to the extent that even with the First Amendment ‘Christianity reigns without obstacles, by universal consent ... although the world of politics seems given over to argument and experiment’.

While it is true that the Protestant core has been a persistent obstacle to the incorporation of religious groups outside of it, through Tocquevillian processes of ‘argument and experimentation’ Catholic and Jewish groups have historically sought inclusion. Levey (2009: 9) lists a series of Jewish campaigns opposing Sunday closing laws and supporting denominational schooling and holidays, which illustrate how ‘in the United States the

new immigrant religions have mainly contributed to the further expansion of immigrant religious pluralism' (Casanova, 2009: 140–141). In the time between Tocqueville's observation and Casanova's celebration, however, there has been much contestation in the *re-forging* of an American public culture in which 'being a Protestant, a Catholic or Jew are three acceptable ways of expressing American identity, that being religious has become in fact an evidence of adherence to national values' (Wilson, 1966: 89–90). In his *Protestant, Catholic, Jew* (1955), Herberg frames the study of religion in the United States through an analysis of how national culture is saturated with religious movements and institutions. This illustrates how nationhood and religion enter a dynamic relationship that produces new touchstones for identification. As Wilson (1966: 90) states:

In the recent historical development of America instead of religion being the source of such values as patriotism and the sense of national allegiance, as was the case in Europe, the acquisition of American nationality ... has come in time to need a further affirmation, and that affirmation has been found in religious affirmation.

Importantly, Wilson argues that for religion to be appropriated in the course, or renewal, of nation building, it would have to minimise religious differences such that 'all faiths might serve the same end, and become more similar to each other in doing so' (Wilson, 1966: 98). Bellah (1967), too, understood the American story as one that had taken on the hallmarks of a 'civil religion'; one in which a conception of the 'nation' is imbued with Christian language, rhetoric and values. This presents an exception to Levey's (2009: 5) view that 'the religion model and the nation-state model have different logics and press in opposite directions', but is consistent with the broader 'paradox' of American religious and ethnic pluralism (e.g. 'hyphenated identities') illustrated in the notion of Judeo-Christian American nationhood. The latter category was perhaps facilitated by three factors. The first is that, numerically, American Jews – unlike American Catholics – never presented a demographic challenge to the Protestant predominance. The second is that 'Judaism in America did not encounter ... religiously based anti-Semitism' (Casanova, 2009: 157), for reasons related partly to the third factor, that 'in general American Protestantism has tended to maintain a philio-Hebraic attitude' (Casanova, 2009: 157).<sup>1</sup> The centrality of the Judeo-Christian concept in the wider discourse of American nationhood is powerfully summarised by Connolly (1996: 57), who states that

'the American people', 'our culture', 'our children', 'the Judeo-Christian tradition', 'family values' or 'common sense'... summons the imagination of a country in which each regular individual is a microcosm of the nation and the nation is the macrocosm of the regular individual. The church, the nuclear family, the elementary school, the media and the university are institutions that must maintain these two primal units of culture as reflections of each other. The endlessly reiterated phrase 'the American people' captures this combination precisely ...

So how does this religiously infused, but potentially re-made, relationship between religion and nationhood contrast with the models of nationhood that exist in Europe, especially in the light of Casanova's (2009: 140–141) unfavourable assessment of the latter, as quoted above?

There are a number of ways in which Britain does *not* fit Casanova's portrayal. While it is quite true that the established Episcopal Church expresses the continuing Christian identity of England, this is *in spite* of the consistent challenges to its superior status by other Christian denominations; in Scotland, for example, where the religious majority is Presbyterian, this led to the creation of a Church of Scotland. Indeed, 'the failure of the established Church to represent sections of the population dates back to the middle of the seventeenth century' (Trigg, 2007: 21); thus, in both England and Wales, Protestant nonconformists have been vocal. Further, Wilson (1966: 99) maintains that 'nonconformity was a challenge to the idea of social consensus implicit in the existence of an Established Church which assumed itself to be the religious expression of the nation'.

The cycles of 19th-century migration from Ireland to London, Glasgow and the north of England considerably expanded the Roman Catholic presence in Britain. The turn of the 20th century, meanwhile, witnessed the arrival of destitute Jewish migrants fleeing both pogroms and economic deprivation in Russia. Both groups have been subject to processes of racialisation and civil discrimination on the basis of their religious affiliation, but in due course have come to enjoy some of the benefits initially associated with the 'establishment'. This includes the Catholic Church being allowed to set up schools alongside state schools and then, following the 1944 Education Act, these schools being permitted to opt in to the state sector and receive similar provisions to those enjoyed by the established Church – an option that was soon extended to other religious groups, notably Jews (around half of whom are educated in state-funded denominational schools).

What this shows is that Britain is not the case of 'limited pluralism' Casanova understands it to be, insofar as immigrant religions do not necessarily face greater obstacles in the British mode of religious pluralism than in that of the US. Trigg elucidates the question they *do* face (2007: 23): 'if we say that the Church of England is somehow the repository of English identity, might that not suggest that those who are not Anglicans are somehow less than English?' Trigg's answer is ambiguous, but he concedes that the established church 'can at times represent all Christian voices in the country, and even ensure that other faiths can receive proper, public, recognition'. Trigg points particularly to the House of Lords Select Committee's insistence that 'the constitution of the United Kingdom is rooted in faith – specifically the Christian faith' (quoted in Trigg, 2007: 24). We concur with Trigg's recognition of Britain as a country in which Christianity is historically established, though we contend that it has *also* developed a 'moderate secularism' (Modood, 2010a) that is able to accommodate non-Christian faiths without disestablishment by selectively pluralising the Church–State link through constitutional reform, public policy and social services delivery. This reflects

how established or institutionalised patterns, like principles and rights (of religious freedoms, for example) have been and have to be continuously re-interpreted and re-framed, and framing depends on competing discourses of incorporation, on discourse coalitions and power relations, and on crucial events. [*sic*] (Bader, 2007: 880)

Symbolically, this prospect is illustrated in recent years in the moderately controversial statement by Prince Charles (Prince of Wales and heir to the throne) that as the next figurehead of the established Church he could be the Defender of Faith rather than

Defender of *The Faith*. Much more controversially, Dr Rowan Williams – the former Archbishop of Canterbury – publicly considered what degree of accommodation the law of the land could and should give to minority communities in terms of their own strongly developed legal and moral codes (Modood, 2010b). He spoke particularly of Britain's experience with Islamic Sharia courts and their capacity to rule on such matters as family disputes and claims. For the purposes of forging a coherent nationhood that is inclusive of more than a majority religion, therefore, both of these moves invite a 'shift in the self-recognition of a dominant constituency [that] works best if it acknowledges the shifting and historically contingent character of, say, the sensualities, language, faith, and canonical texts that have inspired it the most' (Connolly, 1996: 61).

Britain has faced its own challenges in addressing social disadvantages tied to cultural differences as experienced by a variety of ethnic and religious minorities. The most substantive response developed cumulatively during the final quarter of the last century and comprised a range of policies and discourses commonly known as 'multiculturalism'. Multiculturalist efforts strive for equality of access and accommodation of minority differences, while also promoting the social and moral benefits of ethnic minority-related diversity in an inclusive sense of civic belonging (Meer, 2015). Indeed, at a public policy level Britain rejected operationalising integration as a drive for unity through an uncompromising cultural 'assimilation' over 40 years ago, when the then Labour Home Secretary Roy Jenkins (1966) defined integration as 'not a flattening process of assimilation but equal opportunity accompanied by cultural diversity in an atmosphere of mutual tolerance'. This has been neither a linear nor a stable development, however, and has frequently been criticised not only by a variety of camps who have – for different reasons – militantly opposed it, but also by those who 'accept[ed] multicultural drift grudgingly as a fact of life, regretting the passing of the good old days when, they believe, Britain was a much more unified, predictable sort of place' (Commission on the Future of Multi-Ethnic Britain, 2000: 14).

## Configurations of Muslims and the State

An examination of the issues characterising specifically *Muslim* integration and accommodation in the US and UK is now appropriate given that many of the historical multi-faith settlements were achieved with non-Muslims in mind, and some have argued that Muslims present a unique challenge to religious pluralism. According to Joppke (2009: 108), 'if one considers that explicit Muslim claims did not emerge in earnest before 1989, the year of the Rushdie controversy in Britain, ... the speed and depth of accommodating Muslims [has] been breathtaking'. Joppke (2009: 111) explains this by claiming that 'in pious Muslims there reverberates the archaic power of religion, which is not merely subjective belief, but objective truth, which cannot leave room for choice'. This quite narrow interpretation ignores the fact that, while 'Muslims are religiously active, they lack the political power that well established churches have historically enjoyed, thereby threatening their capacity to win state recognition for their religious needs' (Soper and Fetzer, 2010: 12). The issues of claims-making and accommodation go to the heart of our discussion, though they vary between the US and UK contexts.

Haddad and Lummis (1987: 3) were among the first to insist that ‘The religion of Islam is now an American phenomenon’. Whether or not their optimism was premature, their description of the subsequent empirical state of affairs is undeniable. According to Smith (2010: 29), ‘America today is home to the most heterogeneous Muslim community at any time or place in the history of the world’. Detail is provided by Cainkar (2010: 177): ‘By 2005 the number of Muslim Americans had reached an estimated 6–7 million, although the estimate is disputed, the majority of whom lived in medium to large-sized American cities and were born outside the US’. There is some debate on the precision of these figures because the surveying of religion in the national Census is prohibited, but the broad proportions are supported by a number of authors (see Ba-Yunus and Kone, 2004), and most estimations suggest that Muslims now marginally outnumber Jews (Mazrui, 2004: 118). One striking and often overlooked feature of American Islam is not only that ‘Islam is the second-largest expression of Black religion in the United States’ (Jackson, 2005: 18), but that ‘among the great Western democracies, America is unique in that the largest single group of its Muslims consists of indigenous converts’. Indeed, ‘whereas prior to 1975 American Islam had been dominated by Black Americans, by the early 1980s immigrants had moved into a position of political, economic, and intellectual dominance’ (Jackson, 2004: 216). Despite an earlier historical record, for a long time the Muslim presence in the US was synonymous with the modern African-American experience<sup>2</sup>, which perhaps commences with the 1913 founding of Noble Drew Ali’s ‘Moorish-American Science Temple’, before WD Fard created the ‘Nation of Islam’ (NOI) in 1930, through which the conversion of African-Americans, under the subsequent direction of Elijah Muhammad, became common.<sup>3</sup>

As a result of both this historical presence and subsequent settlement, there are estimated to be over 1,200 mosques, 300 Muslim organisations, 200 Muslim student groups, 200 Muslim schools, 100 Muslim media groups and 50 Muslim social services and relief organisations. The most widely known are the ‘umbrella’ groups: The Islamic Society of North America (ISNA), the Muslim American Society (MAS), the American Muslim Council (AMC), the Council of American–Muslim Relations (CAIR), the Muslim Public Affairs Council (MPAC) and the American Muslim Alliance (AMA). Grewal (2014: 128) understands these groups as forming part of the ‘dramatic reshuffling of Muslim American religious leadership’, which she traces to three developments. The first is the migration and reordering of American Muslims as majority-Sunni; the second is the configuration of the professional and managerial classes that make up the American Muslim constituency; and the third is the shift in racial dynamics from ‘Black Muslims’ to ‘Muslims’ as the Muslim constituency was broadened, especially in the public mind. At the same time, some of these organisations seek to follow paths established by earlier groups, often viewing Jewish minorities as a successful example (Mazrui, 2004: 119). Al-Alwani (2004: 7) details institutional progress in a number of key areas that build upon the concessions afforded to other groups. For example:

In 1992, the Pentagon approved the appointment of religious instructors inside the three branches of the U.S. Armed Forces. The first minister, Chaplain Abdul-Rasheed Muhammad, was inaugurated in an official ceremony ... The number of mosques and Islamic institutions and schools markedly increased, and 1997 was designated the year of the introduction of Islam and Muslims to the United States.

It is equally important to acknowledge that, in contrast to the experience of American Jews, Muslim American political activism is inevitably being defined by post-9/11 domestic and international struggles. This tendency is evident in the CAIR's (2006) statement that 'regardless of the cause for a more politically conscious Muslim community, there are more politically active Muslims engaging in proactive discourse and professional activism than there [were] ten years ago'.

To this end the political scientist and public intellectual Muqtedar Khan (2004) often turns to the American Constitution to ask: 'What is in this constitution that an Islamic state would not like to provide its people?' In so doing, his broader project is to distinguish between 'Muslim realists' and 'Muslim idealists' (Khan, 2004: 103–104). The realists, he argues,

are incensed with the United States for having an utter disregard for Muslim lives and Muslim society. The media demonises Islam, everyone gets away with defamation of Muslims ... Muslim realists are not impressed with America's democracy or its values of freedom and pluralism. They point to the Secret Evidence Act, used only against Muslims, which violates both these values by not allowing defendants full access to due process ...

In contrast, Muslim idealists have

transformed American Muslims from a marginal, inward-looking immigrant community to a reasonably well-organised and well-coordinated interest group ... Muslim idealists were quick to grasp the significance of the constitutional guarantee of religious freedom in the United States. (Khan, 2004: 105)

He continues: 'They are not Americans who are Muslims or Muslims who have been born in the United States. They are American Muslims' (107). Khan seeks to move beyond either 'outright rejection' or 'blind imitation' of both readings by encouraging American Muslims to develop 'first-hand' accounts of their own.

Khan's invocation of the constitution was particularly pertinent in the dispute over the proposed building of The Cordoba Centre, an Islamic centre now named the Park 51 Project (widely referred to as the Ground Zero Mosque), two blocks from the site of the World Trade Center buildings. The wider context for this controversy has been the securitisation of Muslim–State relations and increasing instances of Islamophobia (Gosh, 2010). 'In the fraught, post September 11th political climate', argues Grewal (2014: 301), 'the triumphal narratives of a Muslim American Dream no longer ring out in Muslim American counter publics as they did in the nineties'.

Whilst Britain, too, has undoubtedly witnessed some securitisation of ethnic relations, it is not quite the case, as one commentator has suggested, that State–Muslim relations amount to being 'tough on mosques, tough on the causes of mosques' (Fekete, 2004: 25). According to data from the last decennial Census (2011), between 2001 and 2011 the Muslim population grew by almost 1.2m to 2.7m, increasing its share of the population from 3% to around 4.8% (Jivraj, 2013). This makes Islam the most populous faith in Britain after Christianity (59.3%); more numerous than Hinduism (less than 1.5%, numbering 816,633), Sikhism (0.8%, equivalent to 423,158), and Judaism (0.5% or 263,346). Muslims in Britain, as in the US and globally, are predominantly Sunni, and

their two largest sects – the Barelvis and Deobandis – are of South Asian origin. This heterogeneity of ethnic, national and theological allegiances has led Ansari (2004: 3) to insist that

presumptions of Muslim homogeneity and coherence which claim to override the differences ... do not necessarily correspond to social reality. A Sylheti from Bangladesh, apart from some tenets of faith, is likely to have little in common with a Mirpuri from Pakistan, let alone a Somali or Bosnian Muslim.

While such readings counter the idea of Muslims in Britain being a monolithic group, it is equally true that certain concerns transcend Muslim differences – particularly since the (albeit small) majority of British Muslims have not migrated to Britain but were born there. Shared concerns are likely to encompass strategies to combat ‘racism’ against Muslims, a desire parents to school children in Islamic traditions, and so on. In 1997, a national body was created to represent mainstream Muslim opinion and to lobby on behalf of Muslims in the corridors of power. With some encouragement from the main national political parties, the Muslim Council of Britain (MCB) was accepted as a consultee by the then New Labour government until the mid-2000s, when it began looking for new interlocutors. The MCB was highly successful in relation to its founding agenda. By 2001, it had achieved its aim of having Muslim issues recognised separately from issues of race and ethnicity, and of being itself accepted by government, media and civil society as the representative of Muslims. Two other achieved aims were the state funding of Muslim schools on the same basis as Christian and Jewish schools, and the establishment of educational and employment policies targeting the severe disadvantages facing Pakistanis and Bangladeshis (who are nearly all Muslims) as opposed to targeting minority ethnicity generally. Additionally, the MCB played a decisive role in persuading Tony Blair, against ministerial and civil service advice, to insert a religion question into the 2001 Census (Sherif, 2011).

This laid the groundwork for the matching of policies targeting Muslims to those targeting groups defined by race, ethnicity or gender. Laws against religious discrimination were introduced in 2003 and strengthened in both 2007 and 2010, making them much stronger than any in the rest of the European Union. Incitement to religious hatred, the legislation most closely connected to the protests over *The satanic verses*, was introduced in 2006, though there is no suggestion that it would have been applied to that novel. Indeed, the protestors’ original demand that the blasphemy law be extended to cover Islam has been made inapplicable, as the blasphemy law was abolished in 2008 – with very little protest from anybody. Moreover, even as the MCB fell out of favour, because of its views on the government’s foreign and security policies, local and national consultations with Muslim groups continued to grow and probably now exceed consultations with any Christian body and certainly any minority group. Inevitably, this has caused occasional friction between Christians and Muslims, but overall these developments have taken place not only with the support of the Church of England, but also largely in a spirit of interfaith respect. This respect is particularly striking when compared to the Islamophobia of some evangelical Christian discourses in the US.

One further issue that has come to the fore in the UK is the provision of mortgages compliant with Islamic approaches to saving and investing, and the operation of Sharia law in civil matters more broadly. For example, the Islamic teaching that *riba* (usury or interest) is *haram* (forbidden) is a guiding tenet for some observant Muslims, but it is made impracticable by systems of financial products that either generate or charge interest. One alternative system that has organically developed in Britain includes an arrangement whereby banks buy property on the customer's behalf, then sell it back to the customer with an additional charge equivalent to the total amount of interest. For some time, however, this incurred two sets of stamp duty (a tax on the purchase of a property). In 2003, then Chancellor of the Exchequer Gordon Brown abolished this double charge, and since then the Council of Mortgage Lenders and the MCB have continued to liaise with various government departments on how to make Islamic home finance products more viable in the UK.<sup>4</sup>

Further, since the 1970s some marital and inheritance disputes have been judged by Muslim arbitration boards if both parties have freely consented to such adjudication, and this has taken place within the broader remit of English civil law. Where the application of Sharia has contravened English civil law, it has been rejected by the courts, as Pearl and Menski's (1988: 57–58) critical account of British traditions of positive law has detailed. These kinds of development illustrate the ways in which 'it is theologically naïve and historically misguided to assume [that] Islam is any more inherently incapable of making peace with liberal democratic values than are Christian and Jewish traditions' (Soper and Fetzer, 2010: 13).

It is true that since 9/11, and especially since the London bombings of July 2007, Muslim communities have become objects of public suspicion and fear, and targets of extensive and often draconian surveillance and security measures. (By 2013, according to the Home Office (2013), 175 British Muslims had been convicted on terrorism-related charges and a further 261 charged but not convicted.) Moreover, media coverage in relation to Muslims and Islam often uses stigmatizing terms such as 'fundamentalist', 'fanatic' and 'extremist' (Moore et al., 2008), and nearly half of respondents to a survey conducted by Zick et al. (2011) considered that 'there are too many Muslims' in the country. Nevertheless, these dynamics have also inadvertently *empowered* some Muslim actors by bringing them into civil society and funding them as participants in certain spheres of governance (O'Toole et al., forthcoming).

In fact, despite the securitisation of the Muslim communities and openly expressed antipathy, self-identification as British and trust in public institutions are *higher* among Muslims than among non-Muslims. Heath and Roberts' analysis of the UK government's Citizenship Survey found 'no evidence that Muslims or people of Pakistani heritage were in general less attached to Britain than were other religions or ethnic groups. Ethnic minorities show clear evidence of "dual" rather than "exclusive" identities' (Heath and Roberts, 2008: 2). These authors point instead to hyphenated identities, showing that 43% of Muslims consider that they belong 'very strongly' to Britain and a further 42% 'fairly strongly'. Taken together these figures are higher for Muslim respondents than they are for Christians or those of 'no religion' (Heath and Roberts, 2008: 2). This is consistent with an accepted body of findings, recently reiterated by Wind-Cowie and Gregory (2011: 41), that 'overall British Muslims are more likely to be both patriotic and

optimistic about Britain than are the white British community'. What is especially interesting is that this confident British Muslim identity has developed alongside pan-Muslim solidarities, including the idea of the Muslim 'ummah' or 'community of believers'. Evidence suggests that 'Muslim trans-nationalism should not be treated as a post- or near-9/11 phenomenon, but rather as a space and set of practices that have evolved over decades' (Mandaville, 2009: 497).

## Conclusions: The implications for theories of religious pluralism

The implications of this analysis are significant for theories of religious pluralism. It is evident that there is a current movement towards a synthesis between religious and national identities by Muslims themselves, and that this synthesis is facilitated by the creative public spheres and dynamic civil societies that have historically incorporated other religious minorities in both the US and the UK. Further, the British establishment has been no less successful in this incorporation than the US. It is true that no effort has been made to disestablish the Church of England, and this has led many to argue that the constitutional status of the Church makes it more difficult for Muslims to achieve the kind of integration into the nation that their co-religionists are achieving in the United States. Kymlicka (2009: 548), for example, has argued that 'American denominationalism ... has been successful precisely in relation to ... religious groups composed primarily of recent immigrants, and Muslims in particular', who are more likely than European Muslims 'to express the feeling that their religion and religious freedoms are fully respected, and that they are accepted as citizens'. Similarly, it has been said of the US, in explicit contrast to certain European countries like Britain, that '[w]ithout the separation of church and state, we believe, the religions imported by past immigration streams could not have achieved parity with Protestant versions of Christianity' (Foner and Alba, 2008: 379). Bhargava (2011) further argues that the 'weak establishment' or 'moderate secularism' of Britain alienates the majority of Muslims.

What problematises this type of argument is that there is no evidence that the Anglican establishment *actually* alienates British Muslims. British Muslims include many vocal political groups and between them they have made numerous critiques of socio-economic deprivation, religious discrimination, incitement to religious hatred, various foreign policies, anti-terrorist policies and so on. Yet there is no record of any criticism by a Muslim group in relation to the religious establishment. However, many Muslims *do* complain that Britain is too unreligious and anti-religious, too hedonistic, consumerist and materialist. The difficulty that Britain has with incorporating Muslims arguably has more to do with what Casanova identifies as the 'recent trends towards drastic secularisation' (Casanova, 2009: 141). Hence, if the US *is* better at integrating immigrant religious minorities, this may be due *not* to non-establishment, but rather to the greater presence and social status of religion and its closeness to the mainstream of society – a point recognized by Casanova (2009) and by Foner and Alba (2008). Indeed, while the US may be more of a secular *State* than Britain, the latter is more of a secular *society* and has a much more secularist political culture. Consequently, two quite different social compacts are at work: in the British case the 'deal' is that the religious majority can have

State recognition at the highest level, but it must exercise self-effacement in relation to the democratic process, if not public culture as well (Modood, 2009). In contrast, the 'deal' in the US is that if all Churches can agree to allow a certain limited area of public life as 'religiously neutral' and 'beyond religion', the rest of public life is an open field for religion. In the US, all religious groups are free to lead the nation, to seek to make the nation in their own image – as long as it is not through establishment. While both nations differ dramatically in the normative role religion plays in their political cultures, we argue that *both* can offer meaningful routes to not only political participation, but also meaningful incorporation for their respective Muslim minorities.

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## Notes

1. This is in contrast to the initial fate of Catholicism, which was perceived as a threat because 'it was viewed as a un-American religion, insofar as Republicanism and Romanism were defined as being incompatible' (Casanova, 2009: 157).
2. There is an important genealogy of a much longer presence of Islam in the Americas. For example, Levtzion and Hopkins (2000: 169) point to evidence of pre-Columbian voyages by Mansa Musa of Mali. Elsewhere, Bukhari et al. (2004: xvii) recount the story of the Arab scholar Al-Idrissi, whose works were allegedly carried by Columbus on his voyage.
3. The NOI departs from orthodox Islamic traditions in two respects. First, while believing that the Prophet Muhammad *was* the final prophet, it upholds the view that Elijah Muhammad was a further messenger. Second, the NOI emphasises skin colour as something important in a manner that departs from conventional Islamic teaching.
4. See MCB press release 9 April 2003.

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