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Islamophobia in the United Kingdom: A Critical Global
Perspective

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Introduction

The terms global terrorism and Islam will forever be linked in the minds of the West, thanks in part to radical extremist ideologies, and to various media groups and governments. But make no mistake, Islamophobia is by no means solely a Western phenomena, rather a global problem that needs to be addressed. The term Islamophobia encompasses more than just a fear of Islam, as it would suggest. Members of the Commission on British Muslims and Islamophobia were sure to include four terms in their definition of Islamophobia: prejudice, discrimination, fear, and violence.¹ Islamophobia is the umbrella term that encompasses all of these terms when they pertain to Muslims. The perpetrators of some terrorist attacks claim to practice Islam, but this is refuted by much of the Muslim population. Islam is a religion rooted in peace, but since these attackers claim to be Muslim, this report refers to them as Islamic extremists. In Myanmar, there is an ethnic cleansing occurring against the Muslim population there, known as the Rohingya. "... the Rohingya minority in Myanmar has been persecuted for decades. Since 2012, some 120,000 Rohingya have been living in squalid internally displaced persons (IDP) camps in Rakhine after communal violence flared up against them, led by Buddhist extremists".² The Rohingya are not only being displaced, but they are being subjected to a genocide. "First-hand accounts of survivors from these areas who have reached Bangladesh are consistent in reporting burning of homes and communities, torture, extrajudicial killings of civilians (including women and children) by the security forces, systematic rape of Rohingya women and girls, and verbal

¹ Conway, G. (1997). *Islamophobia: A challenge for all of us*(Rep.). Retrieved May 2, 2018, from The Runnymede Trust website:

<https://www.runnymedetrust.org/uploads/publications/pdfs/islamophobia.pdf>

² Beyrer, C., & Kamarulzaman, A. (2017). Ethnic cleansing in myanmar: The Rohingya crisis and human rights. *The Lancet*, 390(10102), 1570-1573. Retrieved April 18, 2018.

threats to leave Myanmar or be killed”.³ There is a clear attempt by the Buddhist government of Myanmar to rid the country of the Muslim population. Islamophobia, in the case of Myanmar, has led to the destruction and displacement of the local Muslim population. This must lead us to question whether this is possible in other places in the world, as the anti- Islamic sentiment is undoubtedly present.

Since the World Trade Center attack on September 11, 2001, the view on terrorism changed drastically, and it sent a wave of a new and more modern Islamophobia through the Western world. Islamophobia is not new, and has existed for as long as Europeans knew about the peoples living to the East. Islamophobia is a form of Orientalism, where Muslims, and often times people from the Middle East and North Africa, as a whole are persecuted and stripped of their rights for the actions of radicals. In particular, this report focuses on structural Islamophobia, where this anti- Islam sentiment is incorporated into the laws and infrastructure of a particular state, in this case the United Kingdom. The recent attacks in the United Kingdom have done nothing but add fuel to the fire of Islamophobia in Western Europe. During my time at the University of Essex, in England, there were several terrorist attacks in the United Kingdom. The Manchester Arena Bombing and the Westminster Attack had very powerful effects on the British population, but these are not the first terrorist attacks committed by extremists in the United Kingdom. First, this report explains two case studies of terrorist acts committed by Muslims in the United Kingdom, the Lockerbie bombing and the 7/7 attacks. These two attacks are historically significant, with the Lockerbie bombing signalling a new threat post IRA extremism, and the 7/7 attack is among the largest terrorist incidents in the United Kingdom,

³ Beyrer, Ethnic Cleansing in Myanmar

leading to increased laws and restrictions on Muslims, citizen or not. Then, the report explores the legislative effects of these attacks, and how laws are shaped to target a specific group of people. Finally, the report connects these effects to the institutionalization of Islamophobia, and go in depth on why this is a problem, and what it means for the future of the United Kingdom, and the Muslims living there. This report seeks to understand modern Islamophobia, and educate readers not only on how Islamophobia takes shape, but how it affects the current population. How does Islamophobia take shape in the United Kingdom, and what is its effect on the Muslim population?

Literature Review

Terrorist plots executed by followers of Islam are a relatively new phenomenon in Western Europe, and they have a different effect on the populace than similar events where the perpetrators were not followers of Islam or from the Middle East. Two such examples of terrorist events in the United Kingdom are the Lockerbie bombing over Scotland, and the 7/7 attacks in London. The Lockerbie bombing occurred on December 2, 1988, when a bomb smuggled onto a large passenger jet killed 270 people. Rodney Wallis, in his book *Lockerbie: The Inside Story*, discusses the bombing in great depth, and goes into detail on what this bombing meant for security standards around the world. He talks about the implementation of security measures such as passenger and bag matching, improved screening of checked baggage, the investment in dual energy technologies like X- Rays, and bomb proofing aircraft. It is important to note this book was written and published prior to the attacks on the World Trade Center in 2001. This source provides a wealth of knowledge on an attack that perhaps signalled the modern wave of anti- Islam sentiment in the United Kingdom, and began the institutionalization of Islamophobia.

Dilshad Sarwar and Dilshad Razaq, authors of the article *Islamophobia, Racism and Critical Race Theory* analyze Islamophobia in the West using critical race theory. They assert that the “general impression of Islam in the West is one that of a sectarian and fundamentalist religion. A religion which oppresses women, advocates values which are outdated and medieval and supports violence”⁴. Their argument here is based around the idea that Western culture is built upon racism, and these beliefs are an integral part of the creation of Western society. Sarwar and Razaq view Islamophobia as harmful for all involved, and that modern society is serving to increase the distance between the white Western races and Muslims. Gema Martin Munoz, in her article, *Unconscious Islamophobia*, agrees that Islamophobia is part of Western culture. She states that this is a known phenomena, and cites the European Fundamental Rights Agency’s work as an example of steps being taken to monitor this growing racism. Munoz also makes the connection between the historical sense of dominance many Europeans hold, and how that leads to Islamophobia. The Europeans believe themselves to represent the best civilizations and cultures, but Muslims do not share the same civilizations or cultures. When Muslims migrate to Europe, they bring their religion and culture with them, rather than adapting to European ideals, which represents a breakdown in the reproduction of “traditional” European culture. The product of this blend is a new culture, with aspects of their native and mainstream British culture

Authors Hamilton Bean, Lisa Keränen and Margaret Durfy co wrote the article “*This Is London*”: *Cosmopolitan Nationalism and the Discourse of Resilience in the Case of the 7/7 Terrorist Attacks*. In this article, they discuss the 7/7 attacks, detailing how they were executed

⁴ Sarwar, Dilshad, and Dilshad Razaq. “Islamophobia, Racism and Critical Race Theory.” *International Journal of Safety and Security in Tourism and Hospitality*, vol. 1, no. 15, 2016, pp. 1–12.

and the intent of the attackers. The main point of the article, however, is how the 7/7 attacks assisted in the construction of the discourse of resilience in the United Kingdom and United States. What the authors argue is that terrorist attacks are being normalized, much like the inevitable nuclear war during the Cold War, by the policies being created in these two nations. These actions, instead of creating resilience, are actually revealing them to be vulnerable to such attacks. This article serves as a good bridge between the details of the attack and the effects of it. It also discusses the psychological effects of terrorism, and the government's role in helping to build this national identity of resilience.

In the article, *Watching the Detective: Sherlock, Surveillance, and British Fears Post-7/7*, Darcie Rives East claims the modern iteration of the Arthur Conan Doyle stories serve to: “respond to the ongoing British middle class fear of the Other based on race, class, and gender. The revival of the Holmes character in *Sherlock*, and the program's subsequent popularity in the United Kingdom seven years following the 7/7 attacks, can be read as articulating the British public's continuing anxiety regarding its government's ability to contain and contend with threats, foreign and domestic, to the British nation”.⁵ With acts of terror happening seemingly continuously throughout the world, the show *Sherlock* acts as a coping mechanism for British citizens. By using the character Sherlock Holmes as a representation of the British police, the showrunners give the appearance of a very competent force able to deal with the greatest of dangers the United Kingdom may face before they even occur. This gives viewers of the program a sense of comfort, in an increasingly uncomfortable world.

⁵ Rives-East, Darcie. “Watching the Detective: Sherlock, Surveillance, and British Fears Post-7/7.” *Journal of Popular Culture*, vol. 48, no. 1, 2015, pp. 44–58., doi:10.1111/jpcu.12232.

Shahid Bux and Sarah Coyne co-wrote the article *The Effects of Terrorism: The Aftermath of the London Terror Attacks*. In this article, they seek to understand different coping mechanisms utilized by victims of terror attacks, and what emotions lead to them being used. The two primary coping mechanisms Bux and Coyne found to be used were resilience and religious faith. Resilience is a common theme when analyzing the effects of terrorism, as it is the national policy of most Western governments. The other, religious faith, though it is viewed by the authors as a positive coping mechanism, cannot be viewed as solely positive. Excessive religious fervor can lead to tension between religions, which would only serve to add to the already delicate balance between Islam and the other Abrahamic religions.

Maarten van Leeuwen wrote a book pertaining to the policies enacted by different countries in regards to terrorism, titled *Confronting terrorism : European experiences, threat perceptions, and policies*. The first major legislation passed by Parliament was the Terrorism Act of 2000, which completely redefined what a terrorist was. The Anti- Terrorism, Crime and Security Act of 2001 was the United Kingdom's attempt to reform the initial legislation, as the 9/11 attacks changed how terrorism was viewed, with prominent groups such as al- Qaeda and the World Islamic Front. These laws attempted to ban these groups from existing inside the United Kingdom, but van Leeuwen argues that many of the U.K.'s measures to prevent terrorism are not in accordance with the European Union's standards, and suggests they could be considered in violation of basic human rights.

Arun Kundnani begins to bridge the gap between the policy being enacted in the United Kingdom and institutional Islamophobia in his books *The End of Tolerance: Racism in 21st Century Britain*, *Echoes of empire : racism, migration and the war on terror*, and a paper he

wrote, titled *Racial profiling and Anti-Terror Stop and Search*. Kundnani, while he discusses a wide variety of topics pertaining to Muslims in the United Kingdom, focuses on the negative effects of Islamic extremism on the Muslim population in the United Kingdom. A quote from one of his books sums up one of the biggest arguments he makes, which is then echoed in the rest of his writings on the subject: “In [Western countries], political leaders, policymakers, and pundits ask themselves how ‘abusive’ asylum seekers and migrants can best be deterred; how minorities, particularly Muslims, whom they regard as being at odds with Western societies, can be integrated; and how Islamic terrorism, ‘extremism’ and ‘radicalisation’ can be prevented”⁶. Kundnani subscribes to Samuel Huntington’s “Clash of Civilizations” theory. In his book, *The clash of civilizations and the remaking of the world order*, Huntington asserts that post Cold War conflicts will all be based on the conflicting religious identities of peoples. He believed that the Islamic nations, once exploited by the West, would become major players on the world stage, leading to a conflict between the two regions, based on religion.⁷ This modern wave of Islamophobia, coupled with the seemingly never ending conflicts in the Middle East, only serve to support Huntington’s theory.

Critical race theory is a very important concept when seeking to understand Islamophobia. In their article, *Shut the f*** up’, ‘you have no rights here’: Critical Race Theory and Racialisation in post-7/7 racist Britain*, Mike Cole and Alpesh Maisuria approach the topic

⁶ Kundnani, Arun. *The End of Tolerance: Racism in 21st Century Britain*. [“London ; Ann Arbor, MI”, “S.I.”], London ; Ann Arbor, MI : Pluto Press, 2007. Page 1.

⁷ Huntington, Samuel P, and Rogers D. Spotswood Collection. *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*. [“New York, NY”, “New York”], New York : Simon & Schuster, 0ADAD.

of terrorism using critical race theory. They go over many instances where Muslims, or those who share a similar appearance, such as Hindus, are targeted with verbal and physical abuse. The Terrorism Act of 2000 actually gave police the ability to search people without reasonable cause in the name of public safety and counter terrorism, and was used to profile people from the Middle East. They then go into numerous statistics regarding numbers of Blacks and Asians being stopped by police before, and after, the 7/7 attacks in London. The article makes the connection between the first terrorist act committed by non white British citizens, and the sudden increase in policing and hate crimes upon the Asian and Black communities in the United Kingdom, using London as their case study. Allen and Dempsey further report on terrorism statistics in their report, *Terrorism in Great Britain: The statistics*. In this report, they examine what communities are being targeted by anti- terrorism laws, and the statistics they gathered actually show that people from North Africa and the Middle East, areas with large Muslim populations, are being affected by these laws at higher rates. Not only this, but just under half of people arrested between the years 2001 and 2011 identified as Muslim, and many of these people never even received any terrorism charges.⁸

In order to apply critical race theory to Islam, we must first understand how Islam has transformed into something more than just a religion in the Western world. Neil Gotanda discusses the racialization of Islam in his article, *The Racialization of Islam in American Law*. Though he doesn't discuss the process in England, the two countries share legal origins in common law, and thus have an extremely similar racialization process. In the article, Gotanda

⁸ Allen, G., & Dempsey, N. (2017, October 06). *Terrorism in Great Britain: The statistics* (Issue brief No. CBP7613). Retrieved March 28, 2018, from House of Commons Library website.

says, “the racial trope of the Muslim terrorist has come to displace Islam as faith”.⁹ He bases this argument on the different legislative treatment Islam receives compared to other religions in the United States, and how the ‘Muslim Terrorist’ brought about this difference.

In the article *To Brexit or Not to Brexit*, the authors seek to explain how Islamophobia in the United Kingdom influenced the voting on the European Union membership referendum, more commonly known as Brexit. The piece relies upon social identity theory as the basis of their findings, stating “The more that individuals identify with their ingroup, the more they are likely to be concerned with its interests and react negatively to perceived threats from outgroups”¹⁰. These perceived threats are a part of what Bean, et al. describe as the policy of resilience. If British citizens view these attacks as a part of normal life, they are going to want to change their current way of life, if possible. The European Union proved to be a good scapegoat due to their relatively lenient immigration policy, and the Brexit referendum offered the British the chance to separate themselves from this entity.

A problem Muslims in the United Kingdom face is a lack of understanding and knowledge of their religion and culture. In the article, *Islam, ‘War on Terror’ and the Future of Muslim Minorities in the United Kingdom: Dilemmas of Multiculturalism*, Javaid Rehman outlines this lack of knowledge, and how it affects the Western view on the religion. Rehman uses the incredibly misunderstood terms, *Jihad* and *Sharia*, as examples of Western misunderstandings of the religion. This misunderstanding creates a wedge between the British

⁹ Gotanda, Neil. “The Racialization of Islam in American Law.” *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, vol. 637, no. 1, 2011, pp. 184

¹⁰ Swami, Viren, et al. “To Brexit or Not to Brexit: The Roles of Islamophobia, Conspiracist Beliefs, and Integrated Threat in Voting Intentions for the United Kingdom European Union Membership Referendum.” *British Journal of Psychology* (London, England : 1953), 2017, doi:10.1111/bjop.12252

and the Muslims, as they view the Muslims as the “Other”, with the little knowledge they have of them often being incorrect. He also cites further problems, such as high unemployment rates, discrimination, and a loss of culture. Another one of the problems Muslims face in the United Kingdom is the integration of the Church of England within the culture and government of the nation. In their article, *Religious Pluralism in the United States and Britain: Its Implications for Muslims and Nationhood*, authors Nasar Meer and Tariq Modood explore this very problem. In the article, they assert that many Muslims in the United Kingdom feel as though the government is too anti-religious. These Muslims may view the United Kingdom’s recent secularisation efforts as an attempt to separate them from their religion. This report seeks to connect, and expand upon, the connection between terrorist attacks and a rise of Islamophobia, and the effect this has on the Muslim population in the United Kingdom. How do international acts of terrorism contribute to a rise of Islamophobia, and how does this rise affect British Muslims.

Western knowledge on the Middle East has historically been limited to what Edward Said classified as Orientalism in his book, *Orientalism*. This theory explains the line drawn between the West and East, where Europeans paint the peoples East of them as exotic, backward, or uncivilized.¹¹ This view creates an immediate disconnect between themselves and Asians, which the term “oriental” groups together as one. Said described Orientalism as the rationale used by Europeans during the colonization of the Arabian peninsula during the Age of Enlightenment, citing the need to help modernise the region.¹² This same idea exists today, with heavy European and U.S. involvement in the region which serves to create “stability” in the region, along with helping the people there to “modernise”. Another, more relevant, topic Said discusses is the

¹¹ Said, Edward W, et al. *Orientalism*. New York : Vintage Books, 1979.

¹² Said, *Orientalism*

cultural depictions of Arabs found Western society. Said identifies the 1973 Arab- Israeli war as signalling a shift in Orientalism, where “the Arab appeared everywhere as something more menacing... their sharply hooked noses, the evil mustachioed leer on their faces, were obvious reminders...”¹³. This vilification of Arabs moved the Western view on Arabs from being not only inferior and backward, but also dangerous. Orientalism and Islamophobia have always existed in Europe, but this report seeks to identify how terrorist acts committed by extremists lended in the rise of institutional Islamophobia in the United Kingdom.

Theoretical Framework

This report uses Orientalism and critical race theory as the primary lenses of analysis. This report relies heavily upon ideas found in Edward Said’s book, *Orientalism*. Said discusses the process of creating a mystique around what the West would call “the Orient”, the lands to the east of Europe. Western literature and scholarship tended to create a very exaggerated view of these areas, and their population, depicting them as exotic and strange. However, in the 20th century, the image of the Middle East began to shift in order to better support Western military involvement in the region. People in the region began to be viewed as violent and backward, in need of Western support to modernize. This report explores not only how Islamic extremism influenced this, but how Islamic extremism may be a product of this Islamophobia.

Critical race theory analyzes the relationship between society and culture, seeking to understand how the two affect one another. In this report, the cultural aspect is represented not only by a religion, Islam, but an imagined ethnicity, which is composed of some North African countries and Middle Eastern countries. The society, on the other hand, is represented by the

¹³ Said, *Orientalism*

British, primarily the government and large scale media corporations. Critical race theory seeks to understand the effects the two have on one another, and how power structures come into play. A key aspect of critical race theory is how social hierarchies are maintained in an evolving world, and how tools such as laws and policies are used for this purpose.

This report uses critical race theory to analyze how counter terrorism laws and policies are used to target people from the Middle East. I first encountered critical race theory in the article *Islamophobia, Racism and Critical Race Theory*, authored by Dilshad Sarwar and Dilshad Razaq. They explain how Western culture is based upon racism, how this has impacted legislation, and how this legislation affects minority groups, primarily Muslims. In order to do this, I explain how Islam is viewed not only as a religion, but also as a race. I do this using Neil Gotanda's article, *The Racialization of Islam in American Law*, which explains how Islam comes to be viewed as a race legislatively. I have based my own theoretical framework on the idea that some laws are passed with certain groups of people in mind. I apply this theory to key variables in my study, including government policy, British residents of Middle Eastern descent, white British residents, and media outlets. I apply my theoretical framework to look into how terrorist acts influenced a rise in institutional Islamophobia in the United Kingdom through the creation of anti- terror laws that target primarily non- white Muslims.

Methodology

My interest in global terrorism grew exponentially during my time studying abroad in the United Kingdom, where I witnessed the aftermath of terrorist acts committed by Islamic extremists. The attacks upon Westminster Bridge, Manchester, and the Borough Market in London all happened while I was in the United Kingdom, and I witnessed the effects they had on

the population. In this report, I use primarily qualitative research. However, while my methodology is primarily qualitative, but I utilize some statistics to enhance my argument. My research was focused around key words and ideas, such as “critical race theory”, “Islamophobia”, and “United Kingdom”. The use of keywords helped me to gather a cluster of sources with a focus on these keywords, which are all an important part of my report. After finding lists of articles and books that matched these keywords, I narrowed down the list by reading abstracts to see if the writing could be of use to my report. If the abstract seemed to match, I read the article to ensure it would be useful, and contained information relevant to my arguments. All of my sources are secondary, though one of my sources includes first hand accounts of British Muslims. My research is diachronic, as I am seeking to understand how certain terrorist events influence Islamophobia in the United Kingdom. This report is based upon a cause and effect relationship between the two, and is therefore chronological.

In this report, I use the term Islamic extremists to refer to people who have committed terrorist acts, but it is important to note that many Muslims around the world shun their extremist views and actions. Islam, like most other religions, is founded and based in peace. While this paper does not join this discourse, it does describe these extremists to be followers of radical branches of Islam. Though many Muslims would not accept these individuals to be true Muslims, they self identify as Muslims, and so this paper will refer to them as followers of Islam.

Findings/ Analysis

First, this report examines the direct effects of two major terrorist attacks carried out in the United Kingdom: the Lockerbie Bombing and the 7/7 Attacks. The Lockerbie bombing is a very important example of a major terrorist attack committed by Muslims against the West

before 9/11. This is used as an example of an early Islamist terrorist attack, providing the report a good base level on how the perception of Muslims changed in the coming years with the rise of Islamist terrorism, not only in the United Kingdom, but other Western countries like the United States and France. The Lockerbie bombing resulted in increased airport security measures, but none of them necessarily targeted Muslims or people from the Middle East. These measures included passenger and bag matching, improved screening of checked baggage, the investment in dual energy technologies like X- Rays, and bomb proofing aircraft.¹⁴ These regulations are fairly reasonable, and difficult to apply to any particular race. Islamist terror attacks continued to occur, and more and more laws were implemented or manipulated in order to more effectively target people who they believe to be potential terrorists, particularly people from the Middle East. One such law that was abused was the Police and Criminal Evidence Act of 1984, which was originally designed to aid in the prevention of IRA attacks, but was then used to target potential Islamic terrorists. The act “permitted stop and search measures on civilians only if there was reasonable suspicion”.¹⁵ Reasonable is word that is fairly open for interpretation, and gives police a lot of leeway in their attempts to identify potential terrorists. This power would be expanded in future additions to the law. There has been a notable increase in powers given to police in their pursuit of terrorists, but is it justified?

It is important to understand the historical basis for modern day Islamophobia, which is largely centered around the term *Orientalism*. This idea of viewing Asian cultures as exotic or backward can be traced back to the Ancient Greeks and Romans, but this report focuses on this concept and its status during the early days of Islam, beginning in the early 7th century. One of

¹⁴ Wallis, Lockerbie.

¹⁵ Cole, ‘Shut the F*** up’.

the first encounters Europe had with the Muslim world was the conquest of Spain, and subsequent excursions into Southern France and Western Italy. However, while Europe had a fairly negative view on these invaders, it was not inherently tied to their religion. They labeled all peoples to the East as ‘Saracens’, and classified them as just another group of Pagans who sought to destroy them, no different from the ‘Northmen’; present day Scandinavians.¹⁶ Most conflicts between the Europeans and the Muslims during these early stages of interaction were nearly always politically and religiously motivated, with both playing a major role in the conflicts. During countless attempts at inciting rebellion in Spain to regain control, the wealthy Christians would always cite religious reasons to gather support from the Christian population to accomplish their political goals. Paulus Alvarus is one such example, being a Christian theologian in Spain during the Moorish occupation, he vied for more power for the Catholic church within the country. He used violent rhetoric against the Muslims, depicting them as soldiers of the Antichrist, hoping to raise an army to combat them.¹⁷ This same combination of political and religious motives also led to the Crusades, the European attempt to restore the Christian Byzantine Empire’s control over the Middle East, which they deemed the ‘Holy Lands’.¹⁸ Often times, the conflicts arose over political disputes, and they gathered support by spouting anti-Islamic rhetoric. This rhetoric was created to achieve political power, but remained long after the crusades had finished and Spain had been reclaimed from the Moors. The idea of

¹⁶ Lockman, Zachary. 2004. *Contending Visions of the Middle East : The History and Politics of Orientalism*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Accessed February 26, 2018. ProQuest Ebook Central.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

the evil Muslim ‘Other’ remained not only in European churches, but European minds, with the ever growing Ottoman Empire serving as a constant reminder of the perceived Muslim threat.

Now, nearly 800 years after the 8th and final Crusade, the portrayal of the evil Muslim remains. In 1978, Edward Said described the vilification of Islam in its early stages, and how this occurs. He argued that media and cartoons depicted Arabs as the “disruptors” of the West’s existence.¹⁹ This holds true today, with shows and movies portraying Middle Eastern men as the villains, and the media highlighting the ethnicity and religion of criminals in their reporting of the event. In the reporting of the Westminster Attacks in 2017, nearly 40 years after Said published *Orientalism*, Islam is still being depicted as the enemy. In reports on the attack, various British news agencies were sure to point out Masood’s religion, and how this attack fit in with the grander scheme of “radical Islam’s” war on the West. On March 22, 2017, the same day the attack occurred, the BBC reported, “It looks like the type of attack that jihadis have wanted to carry out in Britain - mainly attacking people with a vehicle and taking on the security forces with knives”.²⁰ This statement supports the concept that there is an active movement against the West, and that there may be reason to believe that more attacks will come. While this may not be untrue, the normalized treatment of this attack is surely a sign of the institutionalization of Islamophobia. Recent coverage of the Manchester Arena bombing was also riddled with anti-Islamic sentiment. A BBC report stated that the attacker’s radicalisation likely took place during a trip he took to Libya shortly before the attack, assigning blame to radicals in Libya.²¹ Assigning blame not only to the religion, but also a specific state, or even region, is another vital part of the

¹⁹ Said, *Orientalism*. Pg. 286.

²⁰ Casciani, D. (2017, March 22). London attack: Two killed in Westminster 'terror' incident.

²¹ Manchester attack: What we know so far. (2017, June 12).

institutionalization of Islamophobia. The assignment of blame makes it very easy to rationalize who the enemy is. Britons are able to point at these people as being the radicals, and can then better support law enforcement when they do the same.

Popular television programme, *Sherlock*, embodies the growing fear of uncontrollable threats, which Islamic extremists seem to represent. “In light of Islamic fundamentalist campaigns against Britain and other Western nations... Sherlock reveals that the notion of Anglo identity is once again troubled in the twenty-first century and so must be vigorously policed”.²² The character, Sherlock Holmes, is a very significant piece of British culture, originating in a collection of books written by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle in the late 1800s, following a brilliant detective and his life of solving very difficult cases. This most recent iteration of the character reveals the vulnerability of the British population. Sherlock helps to reassure the British populace of the work being done by law enforcement, and works subliminally to provide a sense of comfort to a worried population. The show allows viewers a complete overview on not only Watson, the normal narrator of Sherlock tales, but of Holmes as well. Normally this view is limited to Watson, but this sense of knowledge and control granted to the audience by this change gives the audience a sense of security in an increasingly dangerous world. While the show strays away from depicting radicalized, the message behind it is undoubtedly meant to reassure Britons they are safe from this threat. This sense of British superiority is not only seen in the show, but also in the aftermath of actual terrorist attacks. It seems after many extremist attacks, articles are published declaring the attack happened due to a mishap in the country’s intelligence programmes. After the Manchester Arena bombing, the Guardian published a story

²² Rives East, *Watching the Detective: Sherlock, Surveillance, and British Fears Post-7/7*.

stating “the attack on Manchester Arena that killed 22 people might have been prevented if different decisions had been made by MI5”.²³ This is another example of the idea that of the superiority of the West, in the sense that such an attack was only possible due to a mistake made by Western intelligent services, not because of the actions of an Islamic extremist, which in reality it was. The United Kingdom has attempted to create scapegoat states as the root causes of extremism, portrayed Islam negatively in the media, exacerbated already what was already severe Islamophobia occurring in the country, and lulled its citizens into a fall sense of security using various media outlets.

Deaths caused by terrorist attacks in the United Kingdom have steadily decreased since statistics were first recorded in 1970. The peak of deaths caused by terrorism were during The Troubles in Ireland in the 1970s, but it wasn't until the tail end of this conflict that strict laws were being enacted to combat terrorism.²⁴ These laws were then built upon, creating stricter regulations and increased powers for police in a time where less terrorist attacks were occurring. While these laws don't inherently target Muslims, they certainly laid the foundation for Muslims to be persecuted and watched more than any other group. Perhaps the most clear example of this can be found in Article 44 of the 2000 Terrorism Act, which gave police officers the power of “ethnic profiling”.²⁵ This gave officers the power to stop people based on ethnic background, leading to a mass amount of random stops relating to the appearance of people, particularly those from the Middle East and North Africa. After 7/7, the 2006 Terror Act built further upon existing

²³ Dodd, V., & Travis, A. (2017, December 05). MI5 might have been able to stop Manchester attack, report finds.

²⁴ Allen, G., & Dempsey, N. (2017, October 06). Terrorism in Great Britain: The statistics (Issue brief No. CBP7613).

²⁵ Kundnani, A. (2007). *Echoes of empire : racism, migration and the war on terror*.

terror laws, expanding the powers of the police. Perhaps the biggest addition was the extension of the holding period, which was increased to 28 days.²⁶ This meant that police could hold people, without charging them with any crime, for 28 days, which was double the previous allowance of 14 days. This detention period was further increased by another 14 days two years later in the Counterterrorism Act of 2008, granting law enforcement a total of 42 days to detain suspects without charging them.²⁷ Along with these stricter laws came a disproportionate arrest rate for Muslims in the United Kingdom. “Between 1 September 2001 and 31 August 2012, there were 2,297 people arrested for terrorism related offences, of which 1,066 (46%) self-declared to be Muslim”.²⁸ It is quite clear these new laws are designed to target a particular group of people, and this is creating tension in areas where these stops and arrests are frequently being made, such as the Tower Hamlets area in London.²⁹ This targeting transfers over to international politics as well, with one of the most notable examples coming in 2017. The United Kingdom, along with the United States, banned large electronics, such as laptops, from being taken on planes which departed from certain countries.³⁰ All of these countries are in North Africa or the Middle East, and also have a Muslim majority population. This regulation clearly targeted Muslim populations, and though it lasted less than a year, it shows the Islamophobic stance the United Kingdom has on that region of the world.

²⁶ United Kingdom: Terrorism Act 2006 [United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland], 2006 Chapter 11, 30 March 2006.

²⁷ “Counter-Terrorism Act 2008 (c. 28).” Office of Public Sector Information,

²⁸ Allen, *Terrorism in Great Britain*.

²⁹ Kundnani, *Racial profiling and Anti-Terror Stop and Search*.

³⁰ “US and UK ban cabin laptops on some inbound flights.” (2017, March 21).

Conclusion

Facing increased discrimination, what does the future look like for Muslims around the world? Currently, Muslims are extremely segregated, with different communities being isolated in certain areas. London, home to nearly half of the Muslims who live in the United Kingdom, has been doing a notoriously bad job integrating these communities into mainstream British society. Nearly a third of the Muslim population in the United Kingdom is 16 or younger, and the average age is 28. According to Rehman, “For the Muslim youth, the pervading social, sociological, and political environment has resulted in disillusionment, despondency, and crises of identity. Amidst an occasional rare success story, Muslim communities on the whole remain immersed in deprivation, poverty, high unemployment, and low educational achievements”.³¹ British Muslims also have less access to higher education, which traps them in low skilled occupations, and often bars them from achieving managerial positions and higher level jobs. The Muslim unemployment rate, as of 2016, was just under 12%, while the national unemployment rate was just above 5%.³² With Muslim communities remaining marginalized, it is not surprising that many of these extremist attacks are committed by British nationals. “The majority of people arrested for terrorism related offences in Great Britain since 11 September 2001 have been British nationals: 57% of people declared they were a British national at the time of their arrest”.

³³ With their marginalization, coupled with the appeal of a religion that offers salvation in the afterlife, many of the more impressionable and disillusioned youth are radicalized. Thus, a cycle

³¹ Rehman, Javaid. “Islam, ‘War on Terror’ and the Future of Muslim Minorities in the United Kingdom: Dilemmas of Multiculturalism.” *Human Rights Quarterly*, vol. 29, no. 4, 2007, pp. 846.

³² Siobhan Fenton Health and Social Affairs Correspondent. (2016, August 11). 6 charts which show the employment barriers faced by British Muslims.

³³ Allen, Terrorism in Great Britain.

of fear and hate has been created in the United Kingdom. The radicalisation of relatively few Muslims has expanded Islamophobia in the nation, making it harder for the average Muslim to integrate into society.

Though Islamophobia is built into the power structures of the non-Muslim world, it is not too late to begin the process of dismantling it. The first step, which is essential for any other potential steps, is to educate the population on Islam. Unfortunately, a lot of media coverage surrounding Islam focuses around Islamic extremists, which does not accurately portray the religion. The Commission on British Muslims and Islamophobia have done an excellent job attempting to fix this Orientalist image of Islam. The Commission had two primary goals, the first being to “counter Islamophobic assumptions that Islam is a single monolithic system, without internal development, diversity and dialogue...”³⁴ This way of thinking is very harmful, as it lays the foundation of equating all Muslims to the few extremists that are depicted in the news as terrorists. The second goal is to “draw attention to the principal dangers which Islamophobia creates or exacerbates for Muslim communities, and therefore for the well-being of society as a whole”.³⁵ It is extremely important to understand the effects Islamophobia has on the Muslim population, which is something this paper has attempted to do. Islamophobic sentiment has led to the oppression and isolation of Muslims, but with proper education on Islamophobia, and Islam in general, this can be undone. Groups such as journalists, teachers, and policy makers should be the primary targets of this education, as they would have the highest potential to influence change in larger groups. Also, incorporation of religious studies into curriculum in schools would be very beneficial. Educating young people would help to dispel prejudices

³⁴ Conway, *Islamophobia: A challenge for all of us*.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

against religions that may be developed if the only exposure young people have to Islam is through the media, which highlights extremism and wars in the Middle East. Islamophobia is not something that will go away quickly, as it has been developed and reinforced for centuries. However, as more people reject it, Islamophobia will become less institutionalized, and less visible.

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