

United Kingdom

Immigration and settlement

The immigration of people of Muslim background in the period after the Second World War has tended to be subsumed under the general heading of 'coloured', 'immigrant', New Commonwealth and similar all-embracing terms. This disguises not only the fact that these general definitions include Afro-Caribbean, South Asian and other origins, but also the significant differences of origin, culture, religion, class and education which are to be found within the main subcategories. I shall concentrate on those groups which come from a wholly or mainly Muslim background.

Until 1962, entry into Britain by citizens of British colonies and member countries of the Commonwealth was unrestricted. The first major wave of immigrants after the end of the Second World War came from the various islands of the West Indies, starting in the late 1940s. The migration from the Indian subcontinent took off much more slowly, and was based very much on those hundreds of men who had worked on British ships during the war, as well as on the smaller number of professionals. During the 1950s, 'travel agents' from these communities were active in setting up business alongside the family networks. Together, they facilitated an annual gross immigration of about 10,000 men from the Indian subcontinent. Economic decline reduced this rate in the last couple of years before 1960, but the existence of the networks meant that when the time was ripe, there was the capacity for a very sharp rise in the rate of immigration from the Indian subcontinent.

The one immediate cause of the sudden rise in entries during 1961 and 1962 was the prospect of legislation restricting entry. The Commonwealth Immigrants Act 1962 was a response to a growing public debate over the desirability of large-scale immigration of 'coloureds'. There were clear elements of racism in the debate, linked to a perception of Britain moving out of its imperial mode. The debate had been fuelled by 'race riots', in particular those in Notting Hill (London) and Nottingham in 1958. Over the eighteen months during which policy and then legislation were discussed, there was a massive increase in immigration from all regions, particularly from the Indian subcontinent. In addition, the controls were ineffective. The networks had developed sophisticated methods of circumventing the exit controls of their home countries, which

were now put to use to get into Britain. Almost half of the more than 130,000 Pakistanis who had arrived in Britain by the end of 1967 had arrived after the introduction of controls on 1 July 1962; the majority of the rest had arrived in the eighteen months before that date. Less than one-fifth of Indians arriving before the end of 1967 had arrived by the end of 1960, before the big debate started. This unintended effect of the immigration act was particularly ironic, since a number of studies have shown that the rates of immigration during the 1950s were very directly related to the swings in employment in the general labour market in Britain.

The regions of origin of settlers from the Indian subcontinent were quite limited. Muslim Gujaratis have come from the well-educated trading and professional families of the three adjoining districts of Baroda, Surat and Broach, and often had relatives among the Gujaratis of East Africa.

However, the largest groups of Muslims from the Indian subcontinent have come from Pakistan, both West and East (the latter Bangladesh since 1971), but here also from a few very defined areas. In Pakistan (the western part before 1971), major impetuses to emigrate came from the poorer agricultural areas of the Mirpur district in southern Kashmir and in the Cambellpur district of the north-eastern Punjab. Smaller numbers left limited areas of the North-West Frontier Province next to the Afghani border. In the case of Mirpur, a further factor was the disruption caused by the Mangla Dam project which started in 1960 and was ultimately to flood about 250 villages. In East Pakistan (later Bangladesh), the two main sources of immigration were in the Sylhet district in the north-east and the maritime region around Chittagong.

The Muslim population of Indian subcontinental origin did not all come directly from India and Pakistan. In 1968, a further restriction on immigration was introduced, primarily by withdrawing the automatic right of entry from British passport-holders who could not show a family connection with Britain. The purpose of the Act was to control immigration of East African Asians who were experiencing pressure from the Africanisation policies of especially Kenya and Uganda. These people had originated in India in the nineteenth century, when most of them had been brought over as indentured labour by the British, but they also included traders usually of Gujarati origin.

A completely different group of Muslim background to settle in Britain was the Turkish Cypriots. The number of immigrants from Cyprus started to rise in the mid-1950s and speeded up in the aftermath of the 1957 troubles. It then peaked in the two years before the implementation of the 1962 immigration act. Other groups to have arrived in smaller numbers have come from Malaysia, West Africa, Morocco and Yemen. The attraction of London as a political and commercial centre has ensured that substantial numbers have arrived and settled from Iran and the Arab world.

As with most European countries, Britain has not generally kept religious

statistics. Census and other figures are mostly analysed by place of birth rather than nationality, and as the vast majority of Commonwealth immigrants have almost automatically become UK citizens, place of birth was for a long time a more useful indicator. However, such figures include British people who were born in the colonies and have since returned home, so there has been a degree of unreliability attached to using the figures from the censuses before 1981. By 1981, however, this ageing population had virtually ceased to influence the census figures, while at the same time it was still possible to identify the children of immigrants, born in Britain, as they were listed in one analysis by the place of birth of the head of household. On this basis, it was possible to reach the following estimate of Muslims in Britain for 1981:

Pakistanis-Bangladeshis	360,000
Indians	130,000
East Africans	27,000
Malaysians	23,000
Nigerians	15,000
Turks	5,000
Turkish Cypriots	40,000
Arabs	50,000
Iranians	<u>20,000</u>
	690,000

Corrections, in particular for underenumeration, would allow a total estimate of the number of people of Muslim background in 1981 of about 750,000.

Ten years later, the 1991 census suggested the following results:

Bangladeshis	160,000
Pakistanis	476,000
Indians	134,000
Malaysians	43,000
Arabs	134,000
Turks	26,000
Turkish Cypriots	45,000
Sub-Saharan Africans	<u>115,000</u>
	1,133,000

Corrections indicate that the total 1991 population of Muslim background was possibly about 1.25 million.

Behind some of the increases lay new factors encouraging immigration to Britain. The increase in Iranians and Arabs reflects the unrest in those regions during the early 1980s, in particular the revolution in Iran, the war between Iran and Iraq, and the civil war in Lebanon.

In 2001, the census included, for the first time, a question on religious adherence. It had been introduced comparatively late in the planning process in response to significant lobbying and was one of the few questions in the census which it was voluntary to answer. The total number of people who identified themselves as Muslim in 2001 was just short of 1.6 million in England and Wales and just over 42,000 in Scotland. The underenumeration, which a number of studies has suggested affects the 2001 census results, is likely to have led to the Muslim figures being particularly low, although it is not certain that this justifies a total of 2 million Muslims as some have suggested. The most recent census, of 2011, stated that 2,822,095 Muslims lived in the UK.

As elsewhere, the immigration ban of 1962 moved the emphasis in immigration towards family reunion. In the 1961 census, only 15 per cent of Pakistani-born people were women. By 1981, almost half of the Pakistani-born population were women. Having come latest, the Bangladeshi population in 1981 was still only one-third women. The nature of the migration has also ensured that the population was young. Again using the Pakistani figures, the age group 25–44 dominated. In the 1961 census, 52 per cent of Pakistanis were in this group, a figure which rose slightly in the 1971 census, compared to 26 per cent for the British population as a whole. A 1974 survey showed that 71 per cent of the Pakistani-born population had arrived when they were between fifteen and thirty-four years old.

A consequence of this age distribution is, of course, a relatively high birth rate compared to the size of the population. At the same time, the peaking of the immigration during the 1960s means that by the 1980s a fast-growing proportion of Muslims have been born in Britain. Again the Pakistani figures are a good indicator of this (including Bangladesh):

	total	of which UK-born	as %
1951	5,000	—	
1961	24,900	300	1.2
1971	170,000	40,000	23.5
1981	360,000	135,000	37.5
1991	636,000	299,000	47.0

By 2001, the census showed that almost 55 per cent of Pakistanis and over 46 per cent of Bangladeshis had been born in the UK. Overall the Muslim population was among the youngest in the country with one-third aged fifteen and under, and a further nearly 20 per cent aged 16–24.

Settlement in Britain has been geographically very uneven. On the one hand, one sees the common phenomenon of settlement in the large cities and towns. Almost 40 per cent, slightly more than a million, of the Muslims in

Britain live in and around London. The West Midlands, Yorkshire, and the region around Manchester account for almost two-thirds of the rest. Within the West Midlands, three-quarters of the Pakistani and Bangladeshi community live in Birmingham, forming a major part of the 14 per cent of the city's total population declaring itself to be Muslim in 2001. Three-quarters of this community are concentrated in just eight of the city's forty-two wards (local electoral districts). In Yorkshire, almost half of the Pakistani and Bangladeshi community live in the city of Bradford, while in Scotland, nearly half the Muslim population lives in Glasgow. The ethnic distribution around the country is also uneven. Turkish Cypriots live almost exclusively in the inner-city areas of East London, where more than half of the Bangladeshis are also concentrated. London accommodates most of the Arabs and Iranians, with the exception of Yemenis, who have significant communities in Cardiff, Liverpool, Birmingham and some north-eastern ports. Outside London, the only major Indian concentration is the West Midlands, while less than a third of Pakistanis live in London. So the impression is one of a large and varied, cosmopolitan Muslim community in London and the south-east, while outside that region the Muslims are almost synonymous with communities of Indian subcontinental origin. Altogether, the 2001 census indicated that there were nineteen local authority districts with more than 10 per cent Muslim population and a further twenty-five with more than 5 per cent. By far the largest concentrations were to be found in the two London boroughs of Tower Hamlets (36.4 per cent) and Newham (24.3 per cent). In the census of 2011, Tower Hamlets was the one borough of London where the percentage of Muslims (34.5) was higher than that of Christians (27.1).

In Britain, conversion to Islam is not of the magnitude or significance seen in some other countries. It is almost impossible to arrive at any even remotely reliable figure. Using the 2001 census for Scotland that included questions on religion of birth as well as on current religious affiliation to create a model for calculation, researcher Sopic Gilliat-Ray reached an estimation of 20,000–21,000 converts for 2010. As distinct from many other countries, very little conversion takes place through marriage – the small numbers of cases are usually university and college students. During the late 1980s and the early 1990s, the largest single source of converts to Islam appears to be people of Afro-Caribbean origin, who were particularly attracted into various Sufi-oriented groups. Certain smaller Sufi groups have also shown some success in attracting white converts, particularly marked during the 1990s in the case of the Naqshbandi group led by Shaykh Nazim al-Haqqani. There has also been a noticeable group of young white students and professionals who have become Muslim through individual independent choice and only subsequently linked themselves, sometimes only loosely, to an organised form of Islam. Because the immigrated Muslim community has had a relatively high and active professionally educated component,

converts have not been asked to play the kind of mediatory role characteristic of their position in, for example, Germany.

Mosques and organisations

Britain has no generally applicable legal framework for religious communities. In England, the Anglican Church of England has established status and the monarch is the head of the church. In Scotland, the monarch is Presbyterian, but the church is not established. Other churches are governed by their own legislation passed by the Houses of Parliament, the most recent significant case being the 1972 Act of Parliament which enabled the amalgamation of the Congregational and Presbyterian churches in England and Wales into the United Reformed Church. On the one hand, this means that the traditional religious communities, including the main churches and the Jewish community, have historical privileges, which in many fields have more to do with status than with material advantages. On the other hand, it means that there are statutory limits to their freedom of action, which many of their members would prefer to be without. A status of recognition, such as that which can be achieved in Austria, Belgium and Germany, does not exist in Britain.

The law which regulates charitable organisations provides the form under which most Muslim organisations and mosques operate. There is no legal requirement that a group register with the Charity Commissioners under this law. Technically, organisations can set themselves up without registering anywhere. So long as they have some agreed internal rules, they have a juridical existence, although the bank manager may require some conditions to be satisfied before the bank will open an account and accept signatures on cheques. Registration under charity law provides, however, some material advantages, especially company tax exemption and reduced local property taxation. Two of the three categories of organisation which qualify for charitable status are religion and education, so virtually all mosques and Muslim organisations are registered charities.

The growth of mosques in Britain has been closely related to the phases of immigration. In 1963, there was a total of thirteen mosques registered with the Registrar-General; the first opened its doors in Cardiff back in 1860. From 1966, new mosques began to register at an annual rate of nearly seven. This new activity was the direct result of the reunion of families brought about by the immigration policies earlier in the decade.

A new phase started in 1975, when eighteen new mosques registered within one year. This was, at least in part, an effect of the new oil wealth of certain Muslim states. Most anecdotal evidence suggests that only a few mosque projects have in fact benefited from infusions of oil money, and most of these have been purpose-built, prestige projects in city centres. But a number of house

purchases were clearly made for conversion to mosque use, where the organisers proceeded in the hope or expectation of receiving such support. But this phase also coincided with the immigrants' increasing acquaintance with local political and administrative power structures and preparedness to make use of them. In the years following 1975, registrations never fell below an annual seventeen and in several years reached more than twenty (see Table 4.1). By June 1985, a total of 314 mosques had been registered, a figure which by 1990 had reached 452. A number of local planning departments know of more mosques than those registered within their districts, but it is unlikely that this would increase the total by more than a few dozen. In England and Wales, there were 870 officially registered mosques in 2009, but estimations including unregistered mosques or mosques constructed without full planning permission might be as high as 2,000. In Scotland and Ireland there are at least sixty additional mosques as of 2015.

A variety of organisations and their activities are centred on these mosques. Among the Sunni communities, they fall into three basic categories, none of which can really be said to be earlier than any other. Most mosques and organisations have arisen out of local initiatives, and are community mosques in the sense that they have been set up by processes familiar to the community and to serve a particular community, however defined. Simultaneously – and not seldom overlapping – has been the process whereby Islamic movements with origins in the Indian subcontinent in particular have established branches in Britain.

It is out of this background that the Deobandi and Barelwi movements appear in Britain in a number of guises. It is clear that among the mass of ordinary members of the community, it is these two traditions which have the widest support. This support has been so deep-rooted that conflicts over control of mosques and associated resources are almost stereotypically presented as Deobandi–Barelwi conflicts. Even where there are evidently clan and caste reasons for the conflict, its presentation in Deobandi–Barelwi terms has served to legitimise it and to mobilise support from wider circles. Neither network is structured directly in a formal way. Among the Barelwis, various competing *pir* loyalty groups serve to prevent common action except in the most unusual circumstances. Deobandi mosques are held together by the personal links of their imams and other religious functionaries, links established through the 'old school tie' of the Deobandi colleges and kept alive through the Dar al-Ulum in Dewsbury. The *Jama'at-al-Tabligh* serves to keep the network alive at the more popular level. Neither of these networks has a formal organisational structure, at least not in terms recognisable by British forms of organisational structure.

Two other movements fit more clearly into the second category, that of movements of Indian subcontinent origin. The *Ahl-i-Hadith* movement controls some dozen mosques around the country, with its main centre of operations

Table 4.1 Annual registration of mosques, 1966–90

Year	No.	Total
1966	5	18
1967	4	22
1968	9	31
1969	7	38
1970	11	49
1971	8	57
1972	8	65
1973	8	73
1974	8	81
1975	18	99
1976	20	119
1977	17	136
1978	21	157
1979	17	174
1980	19	193
1981	30	223
1982	23	246
1983	22	268
1984	22	290
1985	24	314
—	—	—
1990		452

in Birmingham. Apart from providing the common services expected from mosques, mainly Qur'an school facilities for the young, the *Ahl-i-Hadith* have made themselves particularly noted for their distribution of literature and audio- and video-cassettes propagating a policy of separation from non-Muslim society. They have on several occasions sponsored speaking tours by the South African preacher Ahmad Deedat and are the main European distribution centre for his materials.

The *Jama'at-i-Islami* have, in Britain, adopted a quite deliberate form of organisation based on an analysis of perceived needs and priorities. The *Jama'at* exists as a movement, but not as an organisation. Its four organisations are held together by overlapping personnel and cooperation in programmes. The Islamic Foundation, in Markfield outside Leicester, was established as a centre of research and publishing, and has taken the lead in publishing materials for children, as well as a growing list of translations of the writings of Mawdudi. It also has a special interest in Islamic economics. Its interest in research led to the creation in 2000 of the Markfield Institute of Higher Education, which offers postgraduate degree programmes with formal university validation. The Muslim Educational Trust specialises in making arrangements with schools for the provision of Islamic instruction to Muslim pupils outside the regular timetable. The Trust usually has contacts with over fifty schools at any one time. The UK Islamic Mission works primarily through a network of mosques centred in Birmingham, although the national main office is in London. In 1976, recognising the tensions between Pakistanis and Bangladeshis, a Bangladeshi parallel was created in the Da'watul Islam. The Mission provides Qur'an school facilities for hundreds of children every day, but it is perhaps more remarkable for the role it has taken upon itself of linking with local authority structures. On the one hand, its mosques welcome visiting groups of professionals who wish to familiarise themselves with Muslim perspectives and concerns. On the other hand, the Mission makes itself available to local officials in government, law, school and church, and it invites them to open celebrations of the major festivals. The Mission is thus able to play a mediating role which gains it public standing and dependants in the Muslim community which far outstrip what sympathy the *Jama'at-i-Islami* may have as a movement.

The third category is that of 'elite' organisations founded on a national basis, or at least aspiring to that status. This began with the increasingly international organisation of Islam during the 1970s, especially around the Mecca-based Muslim World League (the *Rabita*), but also the Libya-based World Islamic Call Society. Several small institutions started as 'one-man operations', some with more success than others. The Muslim Institute achieved prominence by identifying with Iran during the 1980s, but it attracted more attention in the press than it found support within the Muslim communities of Britain. Others, like the International Centre for Islamic Studies in London, have no link with

the wider community as such, nor do they appear to be particularly interested in such links.

All these categories have overlapped. National elite structures have been inspired by movements with some history in the Muslim world. This is clearly the case with such as the Islamic Foundation and the UK Islamic Mission. Likewise, the Federation of Students' Islamic Societies (FOSIS), which until recently recruited mainly among Muslim students from abroad, has had a close association with the ideas of the Muslim Brotherhood of Egypt. At the same time, there is clearly an overlap between these and the community-based mosques, when one looks at the work of the UK Islamic Mission in some of its main centres: Birmingham, Manchester and Glasgow.

A further dimension is that of national umbrella organisations, or federations of organisations. In 1970, the Union of Muslim Organisations of the UK and Eire (UMO) was established. It was the first attempt of its kind, and visionary in so far as it recognised the importance of establishing a Muslim presence in the national structures. The annual conferences of the UMO and its lobbying of party and government figures have been a preview of the direction in which the Muslim community might go if it takes seriously the constructive involvement in British social and political life about which its leaders so often talk. The problem of the UMO has been two-fold. On the one hand, it failed to recognise that most of the decisions and policies affecting Muslims in everyday life are taken at local, not national, political level. On the other hand, the UMO was essentially premature. The major Islamic movements, as they established themselves, found that their concerns were more limited and internal to their constituencies and immediate tasks.

By the mid-1980s, when the main groupings had begun to feel need for some kind of country-wide coordination, the UMO had come to be regarded as just another grouping among several, and very much identified with the person of its general secretary, Syed Aziz Pasha. At this point, two attempts at establishing national federations were made. The Council of Mosques in the UK and Eire was set up with the encouragement of the London office of the Muslim World League, where it has its head office. This has been used as a channel for joint action on several occasions, particularly in coordinating a Muslim reaction towards the major multicultural education report of 1985 (see below). The Council has also been the network through which the League has arranged various kinds of courses and conferences for mosque functionaries. At the same time, and with much public fanfare, a Council of Imams and Mosques was established at the initiative of a former director of the Islamic Cultural Centre in London, Dr Zaki Badawi. He had established a Muslim College in West London in cooperation with the Call of Islam Society of Libya, and the new Council operated from there. For some years, this Council particularly succeeded in linking together mosques from the Barelwi network, which had no

sympathy with the rival Council of Mosques and its perceived Saudi connections. However, one of the immediate effects of the ‘Rushdie affair’ was a serious weakening of the link between the mosques and the leadership of the Council (see Chapter 10).

The most successful attempt to create a national umbrella organisation arose out of the organised response to the Rushdie affair. In 1997, a number of the individuals and organisations which had joined together in the UK Action Committee on Islamic Affairs established the Muslim Council of Britain (MCB). The MCB brought together a broad spread of Sunni groups but did not succeed in including Shi‘ite or Barelwi associations. Its internal structures were arranged so as to maximise the Council’s impact on public policy, with subcommittees on, for example, education, social affairs, employment and foreign affairs. For several years, the Council met with some success in representing Muslim interests to government and, indeed, on a couple of occasions was able to get draft legislation changed to reflect Muslim concerns. The MCB became a prominent partner in the policy of widespread consultation introduced by the Labour government elected in 1997, but it was also accused of wanting to be the only partner, creating resentment among those Muslim groups not represented in the Council. However, the MCB was to fall from grace because of its criticism of British engagement in the US-directed so-called ‘war on terror’. Later, in the years following the London bombings of 7 July 2005, the MCB was increasingly drawn into a web of suspicion and accusations of political extremism. Instead the government turned its ear to the newly established British Muslim Forum (2005) and the Sufi Muslim Council (2006), both considered to be less politicised and therefore more suitable collaboration partners. Neither the Forum nor the Sufi Council have been very successful or high-profiled as lobby organisations. The latter has not been active at all since 2012–13.

The Islamic Cultural Centre and mosque in Regent’s Park in London has to be treated separately from these categories. As already indicated in Chapter 1, its history is peculiar. As it became increasingly active in the 1950s and 60s, it served mainly the expatriate, business and professional communities in London, so it made eminent sense for it to be run by a board of trustees consisting of the ambassadors of Muslim countries. Two developments served to change the role and perception of the mosque and Centre, as well as the pressures to which its management had to respond. Firstly, the construction of a new, prestigious building created its own pressures. There were disputes over design and orientation of the building while plans were being made. The construction itself was expensive, and continuing maintenance since has placed financial pressures on the management. Secondly, the growth of the immigrant Muslim community raised questions about the role of the Centre. While it continued to serve its old clientele, the Centre also felt encouraged to take a lead in representing the Muslim community. For a time, this meant a policy of activity with a

public profile, seeking to guide the Muslim community in directions considered appropriate by the leadership of the Centre. This almost inevitably provoked negative reactions in some parts of the community, leading to disputes which were picked up in the British press. Subsequently, a much lower profile was adopted, in which the Centre sought to serve the whole community by placing itself at the disposal of all major groups which wanted an Islamic location from which to address wider constituencies. It also started, during the 1990s, to adopt individual causes. Thus, the Home Office's introduction in 1999 of official Muslim 'chaplains' within the Prison Service was the result, at least in part, of a long campaign of lobbying by the Islamic Cultural Centre.

These various organised expressions of Islam, including others at the local level and single-issue groups, are the ones which are, so to speak, visible to the world outside the Muslim communities. They represent that part of the search for a new way of life which needs to relate to the wider society for Muslim reasons. This represents an acceptance that there are areas of life which affect Muslims significantly but which are generally outside their control; they therefore need to organise themselves visibly to gain at least some influence on these external circumstances.

Such an attitude of relating to the wider society cannot necessarily be taken for granted. For many years, there was in Norwich a small Muslim community of varied ethnic background, including a number of British converts. This community had specifically decided that it did not need the structures of British society. It educated its own children, organised its own family relations without reference to civil registries or English family law, spurned the health service in favour of traditional 'Islamic' medicine, and so on. When it split up in the early 1980s, much personal bitterness as well as ideological conflict was involved. The question must be raised whether such an 'isolationist' mode of expressing a Muslim way of life does not produce such pressures on its participants that bitter fragmentation is the almost inevitable outcome.

In the early 1990s, a new phenomenon was the growth of small but highly profiled groups which particularly attracted the disaffected young. The most notable among these was *Hizb al-Tahrir*, notable for its call for the reestablishment of the Caliphate, for which reason one of its symbols is the date 1924, representing the year in which the Ottoman Caliphate was abolished. The movement initially made itself most noticed on university campuses, where it was occasionally successful in winning temporary control of the local Islamic students' society, until a number of universities banned its activities. In the mid-1990s the movement split, with one group forming the movement known as *Al-Muhajirun*, whose policy was both more radical and hard-line against non-Muslim institutions.

There are other ways of expressing Islam in British urban society which are almost invisible to the outsider. The orders, or *tariqas*, of the Sufi tradition

have moved to Britain with immigration, just as well as other more visible movements. But both their structures and aims have contributed to keeping them out of sight for a long time. Their structures are usually informal, with a leadership, charismatic in style, which gains a following by appointment rather than by merit. As their purposes are usually centred around the development of individual piety and devotion, they hardly impinge on the wider society. Most of these groups have come into Britain as branches of orders with centuries-long traditions in the Indian subcontinent, especially out of the Naqshbandi and Chisti traditions. However, the geographical distance of the community from its roots has also given space for individuals to establish their own small followings in Britain, a case of leadership by merit rather than by appointment, especially if recruitment could take place on the fringes of the social networks, for example among converted Afro-Caribbeans. It is notable that some of these Sufi groups have become more 'visible' over the years, often because they have seen advantages in giving themselves a formal structure recognisable in the wider society. This has enabled them to apply for public funding and has given them a degree of legitimacy in social networks which otherwise would not have taken notice of them. The already mentioned Sufi Muslim Council (SMC), with headquarters in London, was set up in 2006 with government funding. The strongest organisational part of the SMC was the Naqshbandi-Haqqani led by Shaykh Hisham Qabbani. Its goal was to provide British Muslims with advice about how to live based on traditional Islamic legal rulings and spiritual guidance. In its webpages, the SMC strongly proclaimed its repudiation of extremist violence. General support for the SMC was marginal among other Muslims groups; much criticism was directed towards the council for its pliability.

Britain, among all western European countries, is unique in the extent to which political participation is possible for immigrant ethnic minorities. Residents in the United Kingdom with Irish or Commonwealth nationalities have the right to vote and to stand for election in local and national elections. In fact, for the vast majority of Muslim immigrants, this right soon became of marginal significance. Until the introduction of the new Nationality Act 1983, Commonwealth citizens resident in Britain could acquire full UK citizenship by a simple process of registration, rather than through the longer, more complicated process of naturalisation. By the mid-1970s, the vast majority of immigrants had done this. Today, most Muslims are UK citizens, the exception being refugees from outside the Commonwealth who arrived after 1983. When, in 1973, Parliament made special transition arrangements for Pakistani citizens following Pakistan's departure from the Commonwealth (the country rejoined in 1990), the majority of Pakistani citizens in Britain registered as UK citizens under special provisions.

Traditionally, the votes of 'New Commonwealth' immigrants have gone to the Labour Party, often in a proportion of over 90 per cent, primarily due to

the perception that the Labour Party was more sympathetic to their interests. This held true also of those groups which came from a Muslim background. But during the 1980s, Muslim support for Labour appeared to begin to weaken. This was due partly to the internal disputes within the party and the contradictions between the views, especially in the field of sexual ethics, of Muslims and their leaders and Labour politicians, especially those to the left of the party. At the same time, the pronouncements of the Conservative government (not necessarily matched by policy) on family values were attractive to Muslims. The weakening appears to have shown itself only marginally in voting patterns; it has rather tended to find expression in more vocal criticism of certain Labour policies and actions, and pressure for them to be changed. In particular, the Labour Party's readiness to support 'the war on terror' has damaged its reputation among Muslim supporters. But as long as the Conservative Party remains identified as being against immigrants and ethnic minorities and soft on racism, and as long as the upcoming populist and nationalist UKIP has a hard-line anti-Muslim agenda, it is not likely that conservative or nationalist politics will gain votes from a more critical Muslim stance vis-à-vis Labour.

The accession to power in 1997 of the Labour Party, which had by then drawn back into the centre of the political spectrum, provided opportunities for pushing forward a number of Muslim interests in the political arena. The election itself had seen the arrival in the House of Commons of the first Muslim member since the period of major immigration, namely Mohammed Sarwar representing Glasgow Govan; a further Muslim member joined the Commons from Birmingham in the 2002 election. The new prime minister soon appointed three Muslim personalities to the House of Lords, to which more were added in subsequent years. In 2014, there were thirteen Muslims. As already mentioned earlier, regular consultations now took place between government ministries and Muslim representatives, including the Muslim Council of Britain, sometimes with specific policy results, in particular in education. At the same time, however, there was a growing resentment in some places at the persistent hold over local Labour Party structures by its traditional, especially trade union, elements which were often successful in preventing South Asian or Afro-Caribbean activists from furthering their political ambitions. In Birmingham, this resentment led to the creation of a 'Justice Party', whose ostensible purpose was to raise the profile of Kashmiri concerns, but which became the conduit for such resentment. It succeeded in taking a number of city council seats from Labour and also in finding some following in a number of other cities. The twenty-first century has seen the rise of several Muslim politicians. In 2005, there were 230 Muslim local government councillors and, after the election in 2010, Parliament had eight Muslim MPs in the House of Commons (out of 646). Still, if the number were to reflect the proportion of Muslims in the country, there ought to be twenty!

Sections within the churches were among the earliest to react seriously to the religious dimension of the ethnic minority communities. The immediate spur to action was the large cultural World of Islam Festival, which took place in 1976. In advance of that, the then British Council of Churches (BCC) set up a small group to consider the relationship of the churches to Islam and Muslims in Britain. A few years later, this developed into a Committee for Relations with People of Other Faiths, dealing with all the major religions that had settled in Britain. At an early stage, the United Reformed Church had established a subcommittee on other faiths within its Committee on Mission and Unity. This pattern was adopted by most of the other mainstream churches through the 1980s, working in close cooperation with the BCC's committee. The work of these groups has been addressed primarily to the churches themselves in a programme of informing and raising awareness. Individual members of the various groups were all in different ways in close contact and local cooperation with Muslim and other groups. It was this kind of experience and the related informal network which facilitated the creation in 1987 of the Interfaith Network for the UK. This encompassed the main organisations of all the major religious communities in Britain, including the Muslims. It was this same experience and network which meant that the churches were the only major British institution where Muslims found some degree of understanding for their concerns during the affair over Salman Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses*. Interfaith dialogue played a significant role in civil society and in local politics in Britain years, if not decades, before it became of importance in other European countries.

Particular issues

Many of the practical problems faced by Muslims in living as Muslims in Britain have had to be sorted out at the local level, since much of government administration is decentralised, as are decisions on the details of policy implementation.

Establishment of mosques is subject to local planning permission for a place of worship. For many years, Muslim communities experienced serious problems in obtaining such permission for the buildings they wanted. The planning authorities were reluctant to allow scarce housing to be converted to use as a mosque. They were also reluctant to accept that mosques had different functions from churches, so it took a long time before many authorities accepted that mosques would also be used for education and that the need for car-parking space was not so important as it has tended to become for churches. On the whole, Muslim communities have been reluctant to take over redundant churches, as distinct from Sikhs in particular, for whom traditional English church architecture appears to be more easily adaptable. During the late 1970s and early 1980s, a change of attitude took place, led by cities such as Leicester and Birmingham. In 1981, the latter adopted guidelines for religious communities such as the

Muslims, whose requirements differed from those of the churches. It became possible to convert houses, and it was accepted that teaching might take place, that an official, usually the imam, might be living in part of the house, and that the usual car-parking requirements could be eased. A few years later, Birmingham City Council gave permission to the Central Mosque to call to the noon prayer over an external loudspeaker, a facility granted to only very few other mosques in the country, for example in Bradford, Blackburn, Bolton, Coventry and Manchester.

Most mosques, once they have achieved planning permission, have sought registration as a place of worship with the Registrar-General of England and Wales, although this is not a legal requirement. It does have the advantage of further legitimising an application for local tax reduction. It is, however, also a prerequisite if the mosque is to be used for the performance of marriages with validity in civil law. About a quarter of mosques in Britain are recognised as buildings where valid marriages may take place – the figure is not higher because traditionally the community has tended not to want to celebrate marriages in the mosque. In these instances, an official of the civil registry must be present. A few individual mosques have gone one step further and sought recognition of one of their officials to act on behalf of the civil registry. In such cases, a fully valid marriage can be performed in the mosque by a Muslim official. It remains the case, however, that the vast majority of Muslim marriages are performed in the offices of the civil registry, and the associated celebrations take place in a rented hall where the Muslim formalities usually take place as well, unless they have already been done in a private home.

No general survey has been undertaken to indicate the extent to which Muslims in Britain practise aspects of their religious duties. Anecdotal evidence and personal observation suggest that mosque attendance is far from including the majority of the adult community. However, it is also apparent that during the 1980s there was a rising participation, in the Friday noon prayer in particular, of the younger and more educated. The purpose-built mosques usually have a very small women's section or balcony – small because of a traditional expectation among Indian subcontinent Muslims that women do not attend mosque prayers. Almost without exception, these sections are proving too small, as especially the younger educated women are beginning to participate in congregational prayers in growing numbers.

Observation of Ramadan and the great festivals is more widespread – but therefore also raises more acutely the question of time off work or school. As in other spheres, there are enormous varieties of practice among employers and schools, ranging from those who make no allowances, through those which seek to deal flexibly with individual cases, to such as Leicester City Council which allows Muslim employees time off for the two main festivals as part of statutory leave provided annual advance notice is given. But with the passage of time,

more and more employers, especially in the public sector and among the larger private-sector companies, have adopted permissive personnel policies. From December 2003, in response to a European Union directive, all employers are required to adopt policies which outlaw discrimination among employees on religious grounds. This has led to a distinct increase in the number of private and public employers that consider it fair that Muslim employees take time off for larger Islamic holidays. However, the differences between Muslim denominations and the multitude of Islamic holidays they celebrate cause confusion at times, not least when the same celebration has different names and celebrations furthermore start on different days.

Britain has one of the most liberal regimes in Europe as regards the provision of halal meat. The law provides that exceptions may be made to the requirement of stunning before slaughter on religious grounds. Resistance to proposals to abandon this exception has been so strong from both Jewish and Muslim quarters that the government has left the law alone. The decision as to granting such permission to individual slaughter-houses rests again with the local authority. As a result, some half-dozen Muslim slaughter-houses operate around the country providing halal meat from cattle and sheep. Poultry slaughter has been more difficult to control, as many small grocery shops have tended to keep live poultry in their back yards and, despite health hazards, have resisted attempts by the authorities to concentrate the provision of poultry into fewer, larger centres. Still, the acceptance of pre-stunning at slaughter has grown in Muslim circles. In 2012 it was estimated that 75–90 per cent of halal meat is pre-stunned.

As elsewhere in Europe, for a long time Muslim families preferred to send the bodies of deceased relatives back to the country of origin for burial. But this preference has been declining, and more and more Muslims are now being buried in Britain. In most cities with significant Muslim populations, burial areas have been set aside allowing for the correct alignment of graves. But problems have remained over the wish to bury the deceased within twenty-four hours of death and whether to bury in a coffin or a shroud, even though the former is quite permissible by strict Islamic law. Some local councils have insisted on having forty-eight hours' notice, and, with a few exceptions, all have insisted on burial in a coffin. It was reported in 2009 that a general disapproval of autopsies from the Muslim side has caused coroners – wanting to be faith-sensitive – to use, when possible, Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI) instead.

The practice of Islamic family law as a Muslim right has been raised in Britain. It was first raised in 1975 by the UMO, and has regularly been raised by that organisation since. Other groups have expressed sympathy, although without the effort and enthusiasm of the UMO. Soundings among ordinary Muslims seem to suggest little active support for the idea. While the reaction of the British authorities and legal circles was for a long time uncritically negative, some legal experts suggested during the 1980s that the concept should not be

dismissed out of hand. They were not suggesting a separate system of family law for Muslims, but they were suggesting that the legal system should develop some degree of flexibility to accommodate varying cultural traditions within a consensus framework of common law. To meet demands from British Muslims, but also to apply control, Muslim arbitration tribunals (or Shari‘a councils), some licensed in accordance with the Arbitration Act of 1996, have been set up. A BBC programme broadcast in 2013 claimed that eighty-five such tribunals were active, but there are certainly not that many licensed. The tribunals take it upon themselves to advise British Muslims how to solve conflicts taking both British and Islamic law into account. If all parties agree, an arbitration can become final if put down in writing and registered. Voices have been raised about the need to protect women’s rights and about the alleged claims of tribunals to be courts with the right, not only the possibility, to enforce Islamic law. A bill with the aim of outlawing any court conflicting with the British legal system was presented in 2011 and is still under discussion.

Education

For the first part of the period under consideration, the education system in England and Wales was determined by the 1944 Education Act. In 1988, a new education act was adopted which is having far-reaching effects, but this will be discussed later in this section. Under both acts, responsibility for providing education is in the hands of local education authorities, which are the counties or, in the major conurbations, the district councils. Within the general framework set by the local council, the individual head teacher has had substantial autonomy. Implementation of curriculum, choice of textbooks in a free market, entry criteria for pupils, and selection of teaching staff have all been substantially in the hands of head teachers.

The 1944 Act was the result in part of a compromise between the state and the churches, and Jewish and private foundations which had for a long time been the main providers of education – it should be noted that compulsory primary education was only introduced in Britain in 1870. The compromise involved the churches handing over a major part of the responsibility for education to the state in exchange for a continuing commitment to religious education within the general state system. Thus, religious ‘instruction’ and daily collective acts of worship within school were the only part of the school day which were required by law. All other parts of the curriculum were governed by regulations, government inspection of schools, examination requirements, local education authority decisions and the policy of the individual head teacher.

Muslim pupils came into this system slowly at first and could, in effect, be assimilated into classrooms in which they appeared in ones and twos. This no longer applied after the burst of immigration in the early 1960s. In the second

half of that decade, the numbers of Pakistani children in schools doubled, on top of an already major growth earlier in the decade. By the end of the 1980s, there were numerous schools right across the country with a majority – sometimes more than 90 per cent – of Muslim pupils.

The initial reaction of the authorities to increasing numbers of ethnic minority children in schools was to concentrate on provision of English-language teaching and, in some places, policies of transporting children around to even out the proportion of ethnic minority children in different schools. The 1970s saw major advances in recognising that some practical concessions had to be made by schools for Muslim children to feel at home to some degree. In 1971, a national report on schools' reactions to immigrant pupils listed matters relating to religious education, school worship, uniform dress, dress for physical education and swimming, and diet under the heading 'miscellaneous provisions'. No authority had been approached regarding single-sex education, and most approaches on the other matters had been made to individual schools, which made their own decisions. Most advance had been achieved in the provision of variety in school meals, though always by providing vegetarian alternatives rather than halal meat. Some authorities had made special provisions for religious education and assembly. A survey conducted fifteen years later showed that most authorities had relaxed school uniform rules to allow Muslim girls to wear acceptable dress, and the same had been widely achieved for physical education and swimming. By the end of the 1980s, some authorities were providing halal meat and were cooperating with local Muslim organisations over religious education.

At the same time, however, continuing disappointing academic progress by ethnic minority children led to a widening of educational policy options and the introduction of concepts such as multicultural and anti-racist education. This process reached its high point of official acceptance with the publication in 1985 of the report of a government commission, chaired by Lord Swann, and entitled *Education for All*.

Reaction to the so-called Swann Report was evidence of the significant changes which had taken place over the previous two decades. On the one hand, there were signs of a growing reaction among English parents and communities against perceptions that the ethnic minorities' concerns had increasingly been taking precedence over those of the 'white' majority. On the other hand, the reaction of Muslim bodies, while generally welcoming, was sharply critical of the report's attitude to religion and Muslim concerns.

What had happened over the intervening period was not only that Muslim organisations had come into being to campaign for what they saw as their concerns. Major changes had also been taking place in the education system. During the 1960s and early 1970s, a major restructuring had been attempted towards non-selective secondary education. Part of this policy was a massive

reduction in the number of single-sex schools just at the time when growing numbers of Muslim parents were looking to send their teenage children to them. These changes were taking place at a time when research and policy-making in relation to the new ethnic minorities was increasingly being expressed in terms of the 'black' minorities living among a 'white' majority, an analysis which was strongly influenced by the US civil rights movement. This analysis was one which ignored the significant differences among the various ethnic minority groups, and which tended to ignore the inherited potentials for tension between Muslims, Hindus and Sikhs among the 'Asians' as well as signs of new tensions between Asians and Afro-Caribbeans. Additionally, it was an analysis which ignored religion as a symbol of communal identity of increasing strength through the 1980s.

Equally significant was the change of the nature of religious education (RE), which had traditionally been Christian and Bible-based according to the understanding underlying the 1944 Education Act. But new research and theories on children's comprehension of religious concepts were coinciding with the realisation that growing communities of world religions other than Christianity were now present in the schools. In the decade following 1975, the majority of education authorities introduced new RE syllabuses of a multifaith nature. Related to this was a growing debate over the role and nature of the legally required collective worship at the start of each school day. How was the traditional pattern of hymn, prayer and Bible reading to be justified in a multifaith school – and what was to replace it? While much solidly professional work was being done, arguably much more was being done incompetently and without understanding of the fundamental principles and problems by a teaching profession which, with a few exceptions, had little conception of the backgrounds from which their pupils came. With little in the way of credible practice replacing what white parents had known from their own school days, or offering the new communities something satisfactory, a reaction from both sides should not have been a surprise.

The late 1980s saw the process come to a head as various trends combined. In RE, the continuing difficulties experienced by the education authorities in convincing a wider public of the legitimacy of multifaith curricula met a growing disquiet among Muslim leaders. The example of the Inner London Education Authority (disbanded in 1990) may serve to illustrate the point. During the early 1980s, an actively anti-racist policy was being implemented which at times brushed off RE as mere tokenism, and at times simply ignored RE. At the same time, another group within the authority was developing a new RE syllabus. When it was published in 1984, it was condemned by teachers because it included within its objectives 'to help young people to achieve a knowledge and understanding ... so that they are able to continue in, or come to, their own beliefs ...' For many teachers, this was too close to being an educationally

unacceptable nurturing of faith. On the other hand, a wide spectrum of Muslim leaders objected to what they regarded as the secular foundations of the syllabus and to the implication that all religions were equally valid.

This Muslim hesitation was expressed more strongly in reaction to the Swann Report the following year. The good intention of the commission was acknowledged, but its perceived misunderstanding of the Muslim concerns and Islam was sharply criticised. The report, reflecting the general attitudes of the educational and race-relations establishments, dealt with Muslims in terms of culture and ethnic groups rather than in terms of religious principles and priorities. The uncritical acceptance of educationists that one of the purposes of education is to create an autonomous and critical individual was decried as being a refusal to accept the absolute of the divine. Here was an expression of a common element in Muslim concern about education both in Britain and elsewhere, namely a fundamental disagreement about purpose. From some quarters, this was expressed as being a refusal by educationists to accept the authority of 'revealed truth'. Other quarters put forward the view that if the education system produced good Muslims, it would thereby have produced good citizens.

The two specific points on which Swann and Muslim leaders clashed were religious education and Muslim schools. The report had praised RE as one of the few subject areas which had taken the multicultural nature of British society seriously, and strongly recommended that it be supported to continue to do so. Muslim reactions again expressed disquiet over the underlying secular implications in the theory and practice of RE as they saw it.

The Muslim schools issue went deeper and further because it had serious political implications at both local and national level. Three years before the Swann Report was published, the Muslim Parents' Association in Bradford had applied unsuccessfully for five local schools with a large majority of Muslim pupils to be made into voluntary aided schools under Muslim control. This status had been invented in the 1944 Education Act to allow mostly church schools to remain in church control but receive the bulk of the running costs from public funds. In the mid-1980s, the Church of England and the Roman Catholic church each had over 2,000 such schools, while the Jewish community and the Methodist church each had a few dozen. There was no reason in law why other communities should not be able to establish their own schools with voluntary aided status, and certainly during the decade a number of new voluntary aided Church of England schools were created.

The arguments against the Bradford applications were primarily in terms of the danger of such schools leading to social segregation and the probable poor quality of the education likely to be provided. The latter argument was based on observation of the dozen or so private Muslim schools which had been set up, schools which were usually chronically underfunded and badly staffed because of the poverty of the community and the unreliability of foreign

donors. The former argument, although much more substantial, ignored other forms of social segregation in the British school system: segregation based on class or wealth, or on academic ability. It also ignored the fact that numerous schools were already ethnically and religiously segregated simply because of the geographical distribution of the school population.

At about the same time as the Bradford applications were being rejected, the Islamiah Primary School, set up in the London Borough of Brent by the former pop singer Cat Stevens, now Yusuf Islam, was seeking similar recognition. After several years of negotiations and bureaucratic delays, the borough council first accepted it; then when political control changed hands, new obstacles were raised in the form of planning, health and hygiene regulations. In 1990, the government rejected the application, but the school governors asked for a judicial review in the High Court. Two years later the court ruled that the government's decision had not been properly considered. In the spring of 1993, the minister again rejected the application, much to the anger of parts of the Muslim community.

In Bradford, the relationship between the city council and the Muslim community now began moving to a more confrontational stance. The Bradford Council of Mosques started a campaign against a local head teacher who had written an article in a noted right-wing journal attacking established educational views on multicultural and anti-racist education. In the following controversy, which attracted national attention for several months, the Muslim leadership had the support and cooperation of anti-racist groups within and to the left of the Labour Party. The campaign was ultimately successful in leading to a negotiated early retirement for the head teacher.

This was the first major public campaigning victory of any Muslim community in Britain, but it had also frightened significant parts of white society. Not long after the Muslim success in Bradford, one began to witness groups of white parents taking measures to prevent 'Asian takeovers' of traditionally white schools. For purely demographic reasons, this was a process which had obviously been going on for years, but now it suddenly became critical, symbolised in the campaign during 1988 of a group of parents in Dewsbury to insist that their children were allocated places in a 'white' school rather than an 'Asian' school.

Inevitably, the national debate was strongly influenced by the preference of the media for stories with excitement and controversy. As a result, the comparative success of the Muslim leadership and city council in Birmingham in reaching a form of cooperation has largely escaped attention. After starting with one of the worst reputations in dealing with ethnic minorities in Britain, the city entered into a major change of course during the 1970s. In 1983, the newly founded Muslim Liaison Committee presented a set of concerns regarding how schools ought to deal with their Muslim pupils. These concerns included

facilities for prayer, proper Muslim dress and diet, and respect for Muslim perspectives in the school curriculum, particularly in RE, drama, music and sex education. The reaction of the city council was to set up a joint working party of experts rather than politicians. Three years later, the result was a set of official education authority guidelines issued to all schools advising them on how to meet the religious and cultural needs of pupils. It was remarkable that the discussions had not included the demand for Muslim voluntary aided schools. This appears partly to have been because there was not a consensus within the Muslim Liaison Committee that this was required. But it was also because many among the Muslim leadership were concerned to try to obtain as much cooperation as possible from the city within the school system and therefore to the benefit of as many as possible of the Muslim pupils, where a separate system would only have benefited a minority. Another factor was that Birmingham had retained about six secondary girls' schools, mainly in response to the demand of Muslim and other minorities, so that that particular pressure was less than elsewhere. The city council was also well aware that if it did not meet Muslim demands to some extent, it would be encouraging more extreme demands for voluntary aided schools.

Although the Education Reform Act and the political and educational debate around it had an agenda far wider than the issue of this discussion, some parts of it were strongly influenced by the increasing polarisation on ethnic and religious issues outlined above. While the Act left the old provisions regarding voluntary aided schools alone, the provisions for religious education and school worship became a major debating point while the bill was being considered in the House of Lords. The government had intended to leave the existing provisions untouched, but a group of lords wanted to reintroduce the Christian nature of traditional religious education. The pressure was such that the government had to give in and, after consultations led by the Bishop of London, new clauses on RE and school worship were accepted. These now require a mainly or broadly Christian content in both fields, with some space admitted for other world faiths. Schools which have a community for which such a pattern is not appropriate can apply for exemption to a local Standing Advisory Committee on Religious Education, set up to reflect the educational and religious interests of the local community.

The Education Reform Act also further strengthened the role of parents and the local community in running schools, even to the extent of handing over control of large parts of the individual school budget to the board of governors. As a result, by the end of the 1980s, a number of schools around the country had boards of governors with a substantial proportion of Muslim members, sometimes chaired by a Muslim parent. The additional facility granted to schools to opt out of local authority control and instead receive funding directly from central government has given many schools a road towards local control

and autonomy which previously could only have been achieved by obtaining voluntary aided status. So it was soon suggested that the Islamiah School might apply for such 'grant-maintained' status when this became possible for private schools from April 1994.

In the event, it was to be another four years before such an application was successful. By the end of 1996, Islamiah had again applied for public funding, on this occasion as a grant-maintained school. The application went forward with the support of the local education authority, the official education inspectorate and the civil servants of the Department of Education. But the Secretary of State, in whose hands the final decision rested, turned down the application, as he turned down several others which came in with equally strong support, making it clear in the process that he was opposed to Muslim schools. When the new Labour government came to power in May 1997, it brought with it a policy which had already admitted the legitimacy of Muslim schools for several years. In January 1998, the first two Muslim schools were granted official status, namely the Islamiah in Brent and the Al-Furqan in Birmingham. More recently, a further nine schools have also been granted public status. There remain some 167 Islamic independent schools operating privately, some of which are in the process of seeking public approval. Some 2,000 Islamic educational institutes and mosques provide Islamic confessional training to approximately 250,000 Muslim children. Education is often free, but parents are encouraged to donate money if they can afford it, and teachers are often volunteers or possibly paid imams. It is an impressive ongoing educational feat.