Transcript

Muslim Networks and Movements in Western Europe

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Professor Peter Mandaville:

Thank you very much, Claire. Thank you to you and your colleagues here at Chatham House for your hospitality and for partnering with us to bring this event forward.

What we have for you today is a report that we have just released, which you have in your hand, which provides profiles, short case studies if you will, of seven of the major Muslim movements that have a presence in Europe today.

I'd like to point out at the beginning that this project never aimed to be comprehensive in terms of providing an analysis of every single Muslim group or organisation that you're going to find in Europe. Rather, the idea was to take the longest established, most significant broad networks and movements, whose origins lie in the Muslim majority world, but who over the last few decades have established a presence in Europe.

And to tell, in a sense, the story of that transplantation, that adaptation. What has happened to their agenda, their visions, their activities as they've adapted to the very different circumstances and conditions that they've found in Europe.

The groups that we cover here are projected behind me on the slides. What I'm really going to do in my presentation is give a sort of very short, potted summary of these movements. Many of you will know quite a lot, or at least something of some of them. Some of them may be new to quite a few of you.

Then I also want to draw out and identify what we have taken to be some of the major analytical themes that come out of the research that we've done.

Very briefly a word on the research and the nature of it, the methodology, if you will. Those of you who know Pew will know that it's mainly known for its incredibly rich public opinion polling and survey work, both in the United States but also globally through its Global Attitudes project.

This is not that kind of study. Pew also identifies certain kinds of timely themes, occasionally undertakes what we might call somewhat more qualitative work. And this particular study very much falls into that category.

What we did essentially was to commission from 12 leading scholars, the vast majority of whom are based in Europe, in-depth case studies of these groups and movements. These are scholars, by the way, who have been studying these movements in many cases for a couple of decades. Often long before there was a lot of discussion or scrutiny of them in the media and public discussion.

They wrote in-depth case studies, which by the way will be published later next year as a sort of full edited volume. And then based on these studies and working alongside a wonderful set of colleagues at Pew, we assembled and distilled that material into the report that you have before you today.

Our geographic scope is confined to Western Europe, I should add. The slide you have before you is derived from Pew's own recent study of Muslim demography. We are essentially talking about the EU15 plus Norway and Switzerland in our coverage. The vast majority of examples that we've drawn on and studied do relate to the sort of three large contexts of the United Kingdom, Germany and France. This slide and the associated demographic, if you're interested, is available on Pew's website.

So why this report now? What is, if you will, the value added of this kind of effort? Without pretending that the groups and movements that we've looked at here are being studied and approached for the very first time. Indeed, that's not the case because a great many of them have received considerable analysis and scrutiny in recent years.

To our knowledge, this is the first attempt to, say, something like a comprehensive mapping of the landscape and fuller terrain of Muslim movements and that works in Europe. Part of what we're trying to do is to draw the attention of a broad readership of the report to, not only specific groups and movements, but indeed the relationships between them.

The idea being that you only really get a full understanding of some of these groups by understanding the broader landscape and terrain that they inhabit, particularly in terms of the nature of their relationships with other Muslim groups and movements in the milieu that they inhabit. The idea that some of the things they do, some of the things they say, are shaped by the relationships they have and the ways they position themselves vis a vis other Muslim groups and movements.

Part of the idea is also that while a good many of these groups, particularly those that fall in the sort of radical jihadi category have received a lot of attention. Perhaps not unfair to say fairly obsessive attention of late. Some of the groups that we deal with here are not known necessarily to a broad readership. We thought there was some value to be had from putting them all together the same space.

The second point here is really one that is about deliberately making a fairly simplistic point that I think is going to be fairly obvious to most of you in this room, which is to say that the story or an account of the presence of Muslim movements and networks in Europe is not simply a story about radicalisation.

It's not simply a story about terrorism, although that conversation tends to, for obvious reasons, dominate much of the public discussion of these issues.

Rather, we thought there would be value in precisely laying out and putting before an audience this sort of broader landscape. Not to suggest that the radicalisation terrorism issues are not important, but to actually say that one can develop a better understanding of the radicalisation phenomena by looking at those groups in relationship to those who inhabit Muslim public space behind them.

So very briefly now, maximum one minute each as we go through them. We look at the Fethullah Gülen movement, largely in educational initiatives based on and driven by the followers of the Turkish reformer scholar, educational entrepreneur, Fethullah Gülen. Present for several decades now, his followers have initiated and established 1,000 or more schools across many countries all over the world, from South America to East Asia. And indeed certainly here in Europe.

The group also has any number of affiliated institutions and bodies in Europe. Schools that they've established, particularly the large presence of these schools in Germany as we'll see from the slide here, which gives you a rough breakdown of the presence of the schools in Europe.

As well as a number of affiliated research and outreach institutions, the group has certainly been the subject of any number of controversies. Some of this relating to the question of whether there is some sort of political agenda that lies behind what is outwardly largely an educational approach, an emphasis on inter-cultural dialogue.

Those of you who are familiar with the sensitivities around secularism in Turkey, the current debates about the government and the role of the Gülen movement in the current Turkish political scene will immediately know what this sort of controversy has been about.

We also then look at the Muslim Brotherhood, and in roughly the same category, this is if you will the Islamist category, the Jama'at-i Islami groups whose origins of course lie in the Middle East and South Asia respectively. They've been on the scene and evolved considerably over a number of decades.

What's been very interesting to us in terms of looking at this phenomenon in Europe is precisely the question of how these groups have adapted and changed over the course of the multiple generations found within Europe's Muslim communities. The original transplanted organisations, successor

groups that came out of them, departing somewhat but preserving elements of the original flavour and ideologies of these groups, attempts to adapt it and of course the persistent concerns and scrutiny that has plagued these groups as this history is played out.

Groups that were marked originally by the label of 'Islamist', with all that that entailed in terms of the political ideology of the groups, and then the question of whether and how this agenda has adapted. A good many of these groups certainly have played a role in encouraging Muslims to get politically involved in the societies in which they live.

In other cases there have been concerns raised about their impact on issues such as social cohesion. And nagging concerns in some regards about continued ties to political violence. The slide here from a protest in which the Muslim Association of Britain, essentially the British group most closely operating in the mould of the Brotherhood, organised in the run-up to the Iraq War.

This is the very interesting coalition that was struck between the Muslim Association of Britain and the Stop the War coalition in the run-up to the Iraq War and then several successive protests that came out of it.

Perhaps the group that is least known about in terms of details that we cover in the report are the large transnational largely Saudi funded Dawah organisations, the Muslim World League and the World Association of Muslim Youth. Again, they've been around for some decades now.

Largely identified with efforts by Saudi Arabia to promote the rather conservative Wahhabi brand of Islam. And which played an important role from the 1970s and 80s onward in terms of providing support and funding for the establishment of any number of Muslim organisations, mosques, publication efforts here in Europe.

These two groups are engaged in a wide range of activities, some of which are listed here. On many occasions, their work and activities have overlapped with some of the other groups that we deal with in the movement, most notably, the Muslim Brotherhood.

This is perhaps a moment to point to one of the bigger issues that we try and tackle here in the report. We think that there's value in trying to lay out these different strands and pathways of social movement and network activity, precisely because there is often a tendency to lump together groups which will at times collaborate and work together with each other, even though their ultimate agendas and visions may diverge in the large picture.

We also offer up the possibility that some of these groups may be waning in terms of their influence. Those who fall within the sort of transnational Dawah category, precisely because the flavour of Islam, the sort of Salafi Wahhabi variant that they provided access to is now available quite directly to those who wish to access any number of websites associated with prominent international Salafi scholars.

We of course pay some attention to the impact and role of radical Islamists, jihadi groups. Perhaps that segment of the report that has dominated the coverage of these issues in Europe. We do make the distinction in our work between violent and non-violent radical groups. So on the one hand, cells that are affiliated with broader global jihadi groups, such as Al-Qaeda, sort of self-started, individual militants who are inspired by the narrative of Osama Bin Laden and the sort of Al-Qaeda brand operation.

Then we also give some attention to non-violent radical groups. Most notably the group Hizb ut-Tahrir, which will of course be familiar to a great many of you in this room. Abu Hamza al-Masri, who needs no introduction to this audience, here from earlier this year Hizb ut-Tahrir protest about the on-going US presence in Pakistan and Afghanistan.

We also look at, and these last two categories I should add are ones that are maybe a little bit counter-intuitive when one thinks of what an Islamic movement is. We also give some attention in the report to traditional Sufi orders. These, of course, are groups that have been around in many regards for centuries. We consider them to be important because they do define particular social structures. Solidarity networks, ways of connecting and bringing the relevance of religion into everyday life.

One of the issues that we give attention to in the report is particularly the question of the debate that has gone on in recent years about where does Sufism and Sufi groups fit into the counter-radicalisation agenda. There was a time in the sort of heady days of 2005 when there was a lot of talk in the air about the idea that Sufi groups are nice, cuddly Muslims, that the government is worried about radicalisation should embrace because they're going to serve as an antidote to the radicals.

Again, when you drill down and gain a better understanding of some of the Sufi groups, here for example is an example of a figure located in the UK, Jer Fazila Siddiqi, who is interestingly simultaneously the sheikh, the head of a particular Sufi order, and simultaneously he's been one of the figures at the forefront of the movement that seeks to build lines of connectivity between Sharia law, Islamic arbitration councils, and the British civil courts.

He was also a figure who was a moving force behind the large protests in 2006 against the Danish cartoon crisis. In short, the idea that Sufism is the sort of cuddly apolitical thing does not necessarily match with the reality.

We look at the Tablighi Jamaat. Again, a group that's not necessarily widely known. By some estimates, the largest Muslim movement in the world, whose annual congregations in South Asia are literally attended by millions. They have a large presence in Europe, particularly here in the UK, in Yorkshire, West Dewsbury. Also in France, also in Spain.

A group the vast majority of whose members are really focused on issues of personal religiosity, piety. But a group that's also been the subject of some recent controversy in respect to their plans to build a, what was kind of styled as the mega-mosque here in London, as well as nagging concerns that some elements of this group, particularly its leadership in certain parts of South Asia, do have ties to the Taliban and Al-Qaeda.

Finally, we have looked at some of the networks that have been built around particularly significant and salient religious scholars. Scholars who work primarily in a sort of jurisprudential mode, offering legal opinions, who pronounce the issues of the day and who seek to organise, again in the realm of legality, the ways in which European Muslims approach and deal with the challenges thrown up to them by the specific issues they encounter. These are, of course, figures such as Yusuf al-Qaradawi, the figure behind the European Council for Fatwa and Research based in Dublin.

We look at groups such as the al-Khoei Foundation, based here in London. And we also kind of raise this question of whether we're seeing the rise of a sort of new set of competitors who don't necessarily carry the same sort of formal credentials as religious scholars, but who have emerged in recent years, particularly through new media channels. Satellite television, the internet, Facebook, as competitors to formal religious scholarship by sort of packaging variants of popular self-help Islam.

Here we give a little bit of attention to the Egyptian televangelist, Amr Khaled, based now in the UK. And the recently controversial Mumbai-based popular preacher, Zakir Naik, who many of you will know was banned from the UK earlier this year. There's Al-Adawi, Amr Khaled, and Zakir Naik.

Very briefly, and I just have a couple of slides to go through, before I turn over to my colleagues, as you can see when we lay this all out before you, you see a very diverse array of agendas and primary realms of activity associated with these movements. From education to the dispensation of fatwas, to sort of broad emphasis on religious observance, to lobbying and advocacy, to

outright revolutionary politics. A wide range of activity that we're talking about here.

One of the issues that appeared to us fairly quickly is the fact that, and this is borne out by recent sociological studies that have been done, that many of these movements are not particularly large in terms of formal membership. People are not necessarily card-carrying members, if you will, of the Muslim Brotherhood, or card-carrying members of the Tablighi Jamaat.

Indeed, their influence doesn't work according to the standard patterns of organisational membership. A lot of these groups have, despite low levels of formal membership, have often had fairly high levels of influence in terms of shaping the debate, shaping the public discussion of these sorts of issues.

Groups such as the Muslim Brotherhood and Hizb ut-Tahrir are particularly significant here, because they have tended to emphasise the need for Muslim communities to engage geopolitical issues, to have something to say about the sort of struggles and conflicts that Muslims around the world have faced. So they have done a lot of the work of organising the debate and the discussions in public space.

We're also telling a story of agendas originally sculpted in relation to the circumstances of the Muslim majority world, sometimes in the very early post-colonial periods, that have adapted to varying degrees in the process of transplantation to Europe.

Again, we see different ways that this plays out. In the case of the Tablighi Jamaat, the core focus on personal piety is actually very portable. It travels very well. It travels very easily and it's not surprising that this group is literally found anywhere in the world that you find Muslims, you always find some presence of the Tablighi Jamaat. The focus, again, is on this sort of pietistic orientation.

The Muslim Brotherhood, of course, a group founded around the agenda of the Islamisation of public space, the establishment of Sharia-based, states based on Islamic law. This is an agenda that has undergone some movement, some reconsideration to varying degrees. The whole question of what it means to be a member of the Brotherhood is a political context defined by the Western liberal state has of course been the subject of enormous controversy within this movement itself.

So around this issue you can see any number of offshoot organisations and factions emerging that have wanted to take that project in very different sorts of directions.

I think most interesting, at least to me, in terms of the work I've done has been the question of generational differences. What has happened to these groups as a second and then third generation of Muslims born and raised in Europe has sought to define their relationship to these groups, to understand what the relevance of these groups might be to the issues that they face on a day-to-day basis.

It's not been lost on us that some of these groups are marked by certain ethnic and sectarian characteristics that often speak to the circumstances of their original founding. And something that's been interesting in the younger generation are some initial moves, I think, to try and move behind, move beyond the ethnic and sectarian boundaries that have sometimes separated these groups.

I think there also has to be posed a set of questions about the extent to which these groups will continue to be relevant in the longer and medium term. In the 1960s, the 70s, 80s, the periods when these groups first appeared in Europe, many times they were the only groups in town.

They were the groups that organised Muslim space, if you will. That's no longer the case. There are now any number of home-grown European Muslim organisations out there that are speaking directly to the specific concerns that young people have. The agendas of some of these groups simply are, I think, meaningless.

They're largely irrelevant to the number of young Muslims who are offered a wide range of alternative visions, understandings of religion and agendas around social activism and the manifestation of religiosity in public space by new voices and competitors to old guard movements that they found in new media spaces.

And then finally, the question of the relationship between government engagement and these movements. A very complex set of issues here, and this presentation could have easily focused on this issue. I'll flag a few and hope that we might in our discussion get into these in a little bit more detail.

So the question of, when we're talking about engagement, what does that mean? If government is to engage with these groups, one doesn't engage for the sake of engagement. One engages to some end. What sorts of endpoints do both government groups and the Muslim movements we're talking about see of value in that relationship.

The question of the extent to which good government, the sort of reaching out, helping hand of government, what impact does that have on the

credibility and legitimacy of groups whose activities and discourse government would like to foster? The fact that a great many of these groups and movements are largely unknown. There isn't a lot of detailed information here. Government agencies often working in a relative information vacuum and having to rely on often very superficial understanding of these movements, their histories and origins.

Of course, the fact that a good many of these groups are ambiguous in terms of what they're about, what their ultimate agendas are, and it's not simply a question of groups with secret agendas hiding agendas. It's as much a question of the fact that within these groups, you find a great many of different agendas.

The fact that it becomes very easy, for example, to conflate the ideas and agenda of a particular prominent individual who happens to be associated with that group as a whole, and it's just simply not always accurate to do so.

So that, again, in a very sort of shorthand form gives you a sense of the major themes that have come out of this report. You have a copy of it before you. It's also just gone live 40 minutes ago on Pew's website, www.pewforum.org, that I hope you'll also visit for the many excellent and varied resources around these issues that you'll find. So with that, thank you very much.

Dilwar Hussain:

Thank you to Pew and to Chatham House for arranging this event and producing this report. I think one of the sort of holy grails of Muslims, if you don't mind me mixing my religious metaphors, is to be understood as they see themselves. And this seems to be quite a remarkably elusive pursuit.

But in that context, I think this report is a very helpful step forward, because it tries to put forward the complexity, some of the fine texture that we see within Muslim movements and organisations, networks, groups.

And really we have a serious problem of vocabulary when we start talking about Islamic networks. We call them denominations, are they sort of like Catholics and Protestants? And then like Methodists and Presbyterians? Or are there more sort of subtle theological influences? Are they movements based on political causes? Or are they religious movements? And so on and so forth.

So we are dealing with a different religion, and therefore inevitably different paradigms in our language will have to be constructed and thought of. Just to follow the question analogy further, perhaps we live in an age of obsession

with categorisation, and we might want to blame Aristotle for that, although the poor man's not here.

But saying that somebody is a Methodist, somebody is a Presbyterian, somebody is an Anglican, is important in terms of for us to get to grips of some of the, what are people about? What are they aiming for? And that helps us go beyond the broad generality of the much broader term Christian.

And this is where, I think, some of the very unhelpful lumping together of Muslim organisations and networks, quite lazy sort of research or academic work, or journalism, good Muslim, bad Muslim, creating these very simple dichotomies that we can find very easy to understand in terms of the public parlance but really don't help the cause of analysis. We've seen some of this.

And I think what this report does is, even by separating out, say for example, salifism, the Tablighi Jamaat, categories like the Muslim Brotherhood and Jamaat-e-Islami , the radical Islamist groups that you mentioned, even that is a very helpful step forward, often in some analyses, we've had them all seamed together in one melting pot. And you don't really know whether you're talking about Erdogan from the AKP, or Osama Bin Laden from Jihad, Inc. Without knowing the difference between this whole very broad range of different opinions, we can't really have a sense of a conversation.

We have every right to criticise whoever we want to criticise. If we want to criticise Hizb ut-Tahrir, we want to criticise the Muslim Brotherhood or we want to criticise the AKP, everybody has the right to do that. But let's at least use the right categories and the right phraseology and the right academic tools and not just use blunt ones.

We've also seen some conflation, I think, of general conservative attitudes. I'm reminded because of the Pope's visit to think of Catholic conservative attitudes. But the conflation of conservative attitudes with violence, terrorism, radicalism.

And sometimes, again, we've slipped on saying, 'Well, so and so looks very conservative and therefore must be very religious. Therefore must be very extreme and therefore is very dangerous.' And that sliding scale is also a very dangerous one. This is what has brought us to where we are, in terms of our discussions and debates around the niqab, around the hijab, around minarets in mosques. And so on and so forth.

Very unfortunately, I think, because what we've done with this fairly messy debate around Islam is confuse things to the extent that we actually, if security is our primary concern, we actually risk not keeping our eye on the

ball. If we're watching the wrong balls in the air as they're all being juggled, we actually risk not watching the ones that are really dangerous. For security's concern itself, it's important that our analysis is as sharp, clear and very robust.

So for all these reasons, Peter, very much welcome the findings of the report. I think, as I say, it's an important step in the right direction. I hope we can keep going in that direction and I hope there is room to add more and more finesse as we find more research, more and more analysis that will differentiate even further groups, organisations, networks and movements.

A piece of work we did while I was advisor at the Institute for Strategic Dialogue, we convene a network of European policy planners, and a paper that we presented there is trying to achieve very similar things, looking at the ways in which we analyse Muslim movements, networks, organisations. And trying to bring in this sort of finesse and this complexity.

It's not easy in the public discourse to inject complexity, and I think that's one of our great burdens and our great tasks. That's my first point.

Secondly, I think it also, from what I've seen of the report, it captures some of the important dynamics of change and evolution within this host of bodies and organisations. As a natural process of engagement with modernity, call it integration or acculturation or whatever, all of this language can be debated and so on.

But as an actual process of change after 30, 40, 50 years of being present here in a European environment, these movements and organisations have begun to adapt. They've adapted some of their agendas. They've adapted some of their theological positions. They've adapted some of their cultural positions and outlooks.

And it's very important to capture that. Sometimes that gets lost from our analysis. When we talk of, say, the Tablighi Jamaat, Tablighi Jamaat today is not the same as the Tablighi Jamaat of 50 years ago. Just as the Anglican Church is not the same today as it was 10, 15 years ago.

So this also is a very important dynamic of the report. We could look at a number of levels. I'll just maybe flag up one or two. But if we look at mentions of, say, things like gender relations, political vision, social activism from a communitarian base to a wider base of societal engagement, we can see change and adaptation in all of these areas.

It may be that we now need new categories. So, for example, where we have Islamism, we might now need to think of, say, post-Islamism. The evolution,

the migration of groups that are changing their political agendas beyond what we already know and acknowledge.

Another key important dynamic of this change, and you alluded to this at the end when you talked about the individual preachers and the use of the internet and new media, is the way in which this adaptation is creating even theological, it's having a feedback effect into Islamic self and creating new ways of religious authority. New ways of managing religious authority, new manifestations of religious authority.

So someone like Amr Khaled has I don't know how many, 20,000 people on his Facebook page or something like that. Or reaches X million or whatever through their television broadcast or internet broadcasts.

This is a whole new way of doing religion. It's often a one-way absolvatory process. It's not the old, to paraphrase Star Trek, 'It's religion too, but not as we know it.' It's Islam, but not as we know it. It's a whole new way of interacting between the questioner and the one who is supplying the answer.

The age-old interaction of the individual going to their local imam, of the individual going to their Sheikh or their peer, and having nuanced almost very very specifically constructed answers for a given situation, for a given circumstance, for a given complexity, that is almost flying out of the window in an era of generalised answers available on the internet in a way that we can almost go and do it ourselves.

The appearance of Sheikh Google and so on, all of these positive and negative developments on the internet are having quite a profound impact on the way that Muslims themselves process Islam.

My final point is just perhaps a word of caution. Not about the report itself but about the subject. I think the report does pick up on this, as well. Two sub-points. One, that individuals are, I think, just as important as movements. The threat that these organisations, these networks is such that you will find if you go the Deobandi movement or the Tablighi movement or a Sufi order, you will find people who have very liberal voices on one end, and you'll find people who have quite harsh extreme voices perhaps at the other end.

It's very difficult for us. Depending on who we speak to, I'll tell you want time we might have a different sense of what that movement or what that organisation is about. In a religion that doesn't have the very clearly demarcated orders of religious hierarchy and religious order, this is all the more important.

Secondly, within this final point, remember that the vast majority of people, as the report mentions, don't belong to organisations. They don't belong to organised religion in the same way as, for example, all Christians are part of a parish somewhere. They have a right, for example, in this country to go to their local church and belong to their local church and part of a diocese instruction.

Muslims don't have to opt-in to a mosque. They don't have to opt-in to an organisation. They don't have to belong to a movement. They can be Muslims completely in and of themselves in the privacy of their own homes without connecting in this way.

Indeed, the vast majority of people, growing up in this country, at most they have some very vague, loose connection with a family heritage or a connection with a peer or a Sufi order. Others may go Tabligh, while being part of that same Sufi order. While in the political realm they may participate in the activity of the anti-war march by the Muslim Brotherhood. And then largely speaking they are fairly secular or non-committal in terms of their religious expression.

This complexity does exist. And so boxing the people and categorising people into nice, neat frameworks, of course makes life interesting for people like me, because we can analyse. But that's not always the reality of the lived experience of Muslims. That complexity is very important. For many people, even religion itself may not be a, it may be more of a cultural relevance than it is of a serious theological relevance.

My suspicion is that for many people growing up in this country, that is their reality of Islam. They probably grew up in a family that was loosely attached to Islam, or at least in terms of the rituals of Islam. With possibly at the same time quite a lot of pride in their Islamic heritage and their Islamic identity and past.

And probably because of 9/11, or because of the Rushdi affair in terms of people of my generation, with 7/7... people around them start to ask them, 'What is this Islam stuff all about?' And that is what made Islam relevant. And then they started going to internet sites and reading books and so on and so forth.

So, for many people that chaotic process of finding out about their religion is probably more real than going up and going to, in a regimented fashion going to study circles and camps and conferences and lectures. And becoming indoctrinated in the positions of a movement or an organisation or network.

So I've probably gone on for too long so I'll stop there.

Dr Maha Azzam:

Thank you very much, Claire. I also very much welcome the report. I think it's comprehensive and as Dilwar has said, it delineates the distinctiveness of the various groups. I think it's very important to stress the variety, the vast mosaic of groups that call themselves Islamic in one way or another, that exist in Europe.

I think we are living a post-Islamist period. And insofar as second and third generation Muslims, the vast majority of them, see themselves as citizens of European countries, and want to be recognised as such primarily. But with respect for their religion and the freedom to practice it, whether that expresses itself in terms of wearing the veil or the niqab, to be able to build the mosque wherever they choose, as long as they're doing that within the law.

The issue is, and this is I think where the conversation, this is the conversation starter for me, is that it is about the place of these groups in European societies. And how these societies and governments and peoples are still having to deal with what they see as an immigration issue. And where issues of racism are still rife. I think it is not the prettiest side of the conversation, but it is a part of the conversation that we need to address.

I think also that the more integration there is on the part of Muslims, the more there will be political demands. Not vice versa. I think when groups become integrated and they are taxpayers, they feel they have a right to have a say in foreign policy. This is something that isn't greeted well, either in this country or elsewhere.

I think Muslims in general have a better deal in the United Kingdom than they do elsewhere in Europe. And they have political allies when it comes to issues like Iraq, or the Palestine question and so on as we've seen in the demonstrations you've pointed to.

I think this is key in some ways making them acceptable, at least as a part of the political spectrum in this country. And there is a growing realisation on the part of different groups that there is a need for greater tolerance and things have evolved. They have got better.

But every time that an extreme jihadi group makes a statement or commits terrorism, that kind of equilibrium or improvement in relations goes out of the window. We move one step back. This is why also this report is very, very

important. The fact that it does clarify the difference between, perhaps not to this audience, but to a wider audience, the difference between the non-violent groups and the fact that many of these groups don't espouse violence, actually reject it.

I would labour the point a little bit more, and say that the danger is that by saying that some of these groups, like the Muslim Brotherhood or others, where there may be some elements among them in some part of the world that have been associated with violence tends to tarnish the rest. It should not diminish the fact that these groups, as a whole and in their majority, reject violence and have gone out of their way to say so.

Often, as with the case recently with the Koran burning issue, I was being interviewed and again I felt the onus was on the Muslims to make statements about the fact that they won't resort to violence. In a sense, the tables were turned again. In a sense, you have the Ulama and you have leaders of various groups and so on, pleading and saying, 'We mustn't resort to violence.'

And yet the media was still picking out the few that wanted to protest in a violent way. But the vast majority across the Muslim world were saying, 'This is not going to affect our faith. But this is not good for community relations. This is not disrespectful of our religion.' Ultimately, the main group that was going to suffer from the incident of the burning of the Koran going forward were American Muslims. So in a sense, I think there ought to be more work and more clarification about the jihadis, and those termed jihadis, those groups that want to resort to violence.

I would in a sense say that they have, at the core of some of these home-grown terrorists that have committed acts of violence, in Madrid or in this country, at the core of their ideology and I think there is a very strong ideological element, there is a core faith. But they have grafted onto that faith an ideology of violence and terrorism. And the only way to understand their actions is not in religious terms, but in secular terms.

In a sense, what complicates the issue is the use of the word 'Islam' and the resort to the theology of Islam by all these groups. It makes us feel that there is a common bond. The common bond is that all these people want to resort and return to some kind of correct understanding of Islam. That is the common bond. I think it's something you mentioned, which is actually very important.

You said that the existence of these various groups, all of them, or perhaps you didn't, have different agendas. But the most important aspect, I think, of

for example the activities of the Muslim Brotherhood, whether it be in Egypt or whether in this country, is to pull Muslims back to an understanding of Islam as law and as principles and tenants. So that we, the community of Muslims in this country, don't just become associated with Islam ethnically or culturally.

The work of the Tablighi, the work of different Salafi groups, in their variety is saying, 'Look, this is not just about ethnicity. This is about values and principles.' It is like the struggle of various churches. It is a da'wa. Not only to non-Muslims, but to Muslims, second and third generations to maintain their religious faith.

Now the more they maintain that religious faith, particularly in a conservative interpretation of it, the more those around them seem distressed by it. It's not only those who are distressed by it are the non-Muslims, but it is those Muslims with a secular agenda as well. And in a sense that is the battle. The battle is an internal one, as well as those with non-Muslims.

There needs to be, I think, a greater understanding that the struggle is primarily an internal one. For Muslims living in the West, and also in Muslim majority countries, to be good citizens, to live ultimately under regimes that are non-authoritarian, but to have the right to have these different groups vying for a better understanding of the religion and trying to incorporate that in the daily lives of people.

I think that is much of the agenda of many of these groups in their variety. I think I'll stop there.

Question 1:

I'm the Media Co-ordinator at the Embassy of Sudan. Thanks for a very impressive dissertation from all the panellists and the chair. Could I make two points, please? The first is that, although in their countries of origin and also in Western Europe, these organisations are religious, actually underneath they are an expression of social problems, social conflicts, injustices, complaints about conditions of living.

Or, for example in Egypt when the Muslim Brotherhood was established in 1928. It was also a national liberation movement, against the occupation of the Suez Canal. So this is a very important dimension.

My second point in Europe, they come with two sorts of luggage. The first one of them, actually distort Islam when they speak against Islam, it's contradictory to democracy. Democracy is not Islamic, this sort of thing.

But also, they come with very positive luggage. For example, in the question of standing up against drinking and drugs on young people. And helping young people away from gangs, for example. There are examples of some of the Muslim communities here, for example, the Somali and Sudanese communities who have contributed greatly to these. Even the police recognise that, thank you very much.

Question 2:

I'm a Cambridge-based scholar. Thank you for your presentation. I have just one question. Could you shed light on your methodology, including your questions, please.

Question 3:

I used to be a Member of Parliament. I'm struck by the fact that very many of the problems that occur in Europe at the moment in relation to Muslim communities is actually to do with the misperceptions of the Muslim community by the non-Muslim community. I wonder whether any of you have got any suggestions of how to get this very rational analysis that we've got before us now out there in a form in which the general public might actually have a bit more of an understanding of what is on this. Really what British Muslims are really about. Which might actually diffuse some of the problems that are occurring.

Chair:

Can I cheekily add to that, do the majority population actually want to understand? I'm struck by the numbers of times you see headlines in the news saying, 'What is it about Islam that makes young men blow themselves up?' When this has happened time and again, and it's been explained, it's not Islam that is motivating them. And yet the same thing happens again. It's almost a voluntary desire not to understand that strikes me. If you could encompass that. Should we start certainly on the methodology and then on the other questions?

Professor Peter Mandaville:

Thank you, Claire. I'll first thank our colleague from the Embassy of Sudan for adding those, I think, very lucid and relevant points of analysis to our discussion. Particularly the point that you made about the fact that we tend to

allow the Islam part of these movements to dominate our understanding of them.

We quickly rush to questions of theology, when in fact we often gain a better understanding of the origins of these movements, the factors that animate and drive them by looking at the underlying social, political, economic issues that define the context in which they've been born and risen. So thank you for that.

To our colleague from Cambridge, you asked about the methodology underlying the study. Unlike much of Pew's work, which is very much public opinion and survey work, defined and driven by the latest methodologies in that field, this effort was methodologically a far more modest attempt to provide a mapping exercise.

The idea was that we identified what we took to be the longest enduring and more significant broad movements in the Muslim world. Those that originated primarily in the Muslim majority world, and had since developed some presence in Europe to understand the key aspects of their agenda, the circumstances of their founding, the key leaders within these groups and the sorts of activities that they've been engaged in in Europe.

And then to offer some analysis of the impact of these movements, without pretending that we could say anything definitive, but some broad analysis of their impact in two main areas. First of all, with regard to issues of social integration, often the language of social cohesion is used more commonly here. And then also the question of the impact on the more contemporary issue of radicalisation.

As I mentioned, we commissioned studies from some of the leading scholars of these groups, many of whom are anthropologists, and sociologists and use the methodologies that you would expect to be associated with those fields. So full studies will be available to you in a book coming out later this year.

Ms Starkey, I think very briefly you put your finger on an element of what is specifically the problem. Claire's follow-up point about whether people actually really do want to understand this phenomenon... Unfortunately, and I see this a lot in my own country right now, there's increasingly a lot of political stakes that have been invested in very wilfully not developing a better understanding.

And when that becomes a political football of that sort, it's a very dangerous situation. Maha pointed to the phenomenon of when these issues arise like the Koran burning, there are any number of prominent Muslim figures who are

precisely saying, 'Look, we need to have these kinds of responses to these issues. These people saying these things, doing these things, do not represent the teachings of Islam.'

And yet the media tends to... And this is in part the nature of the media. The media likes what makes a good picture. Civilised people, in rather boring settings, saying rational things doesn't make for good television. Things blowing up makes for good television. People burning things makes for good television. And that unfortunately is I think a large part of the problem.

In that sense, the media has some role in this. And so really, I think we're at a point where we need to, with some urgency, find creative ways to bring and enter mainstream educational spaces an understanding of not just of Islam, but of the diversity of the communities that live in the societies around us.

I think to turn it into an agenda where we need to teach young Britons, young French kids, about Islam, I think in some ways would reinforce the exceptionalism. There's something about them that means we have to learn about them. Rather, I think we're at a time when we're ripe for the reinvigoration of the agenda of multiculturalism. Not necessarily the exact version of it that was touted in the 1990s, but one that speaks to the wide range of communities that increasingly define the contemporary European scene.

Question 4:

Just quickly on the social aspect. I think that, in terms of the positive baggage that some of these groups bring with them, I think that's very true. I think in terms of the young, the idea that Islam focuses on not drinking, on being against drugs, on creating a particular kind of individual that follows certain laws and regulations.

These are things that other religious traditions have. But I'm saying that, in a sense, it can be a positive baggage. For many, it gives direction. It allows many younger generation to pursue education and to go further. So there is a strong positive side.

In terms of these groups, as you've alluded to, in terms of the Muslim majority countries, they are often at the forefront of resisting authoritarian regimes. It's something that we need to remember, whether it's the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, or other groups. They are the ones that question authority, that want free and fair elections. And the social agenda is a very important part of the package.

But that social agenda is the one that's often reviled in the West, because of its conservatism, because of the perception of how Islam treats women and so on. But that's where, in a sense, there needs to be more education, precisely not just on the basis of multiculturalism but also a greater understanding of that religion on these specific issues. So that there is less ignorance as to these very specific issues.

Question 5:

I'd like to speak up on point on better understanding. I know this is the million dollar question. I don't think there are easy answers to this, at least not that I've constructed. I think deep within our misunderstanding of Islam is actually really an anxiety of who we are as Europeans ourselves. There's a really deep search for meaning.

What does it mean to be British? What does it mean to be European? What does it mean to believe in the values of the Enlightenment today? And I think often we will, as any society, we will project our debates unto others, where others become the crucible through which we have our debates and discussions.

I think a lot of our anxieties are being projected onto Muslims. We are using Muslims as a barometer of liberal values. Can we tolerate mosques? Can we tolerate clothing of this type or that type? Can we tolerate beards? What length?

We're testing out the terrain, but we're using what has become a convenient community to scapegoat. But that's one side of the picture. I think Muslims do have to carry significant blame themselves for not being able to step up to the plate and provide better answers, to provide better more nuanced positions and to be able to articulate their position in a more coherent way. I think there is a real issue of fault on that level as well.

But bear in mind some of the challenges. You have obviously the internal dynamics of the Muslim community, class differences and so on. Different positions that we're starting from. You also have a general issue within society. We are not very literate of any religion anymore, Christianity let alone Islam. How much do we understand about Christianity nowadays in society?

We're talking about an added layer of religious literacy. It's very difficult for the ordinary public mind to take on. Religion is not an interesting issue. Well, it's interesting for the wrong reasons. It's not interesting for the right reasons. While on some levels, things like inter-faith dialogue and so on may be really

helpful and do reach some sectors, but there are very limited sectors of our society.

I'm not very optimistic, I'll be honest. I'm not very optimistic about the short-term future. Although I'm a generally very optimistic person. But I think this is going to be a very long-term education issue. And a very diversified strategy is needed. I think so far focussing on religious and theological aspects of Islam is not enough. We have to talk about the cultural and so on.

We need sports personalities, we need people on EastEnders. We need people in pop groups. These are the sorts of people that will normalise Islam. That's what we need. We need a normalisation of Islam, for the ordinary person, so that ordinary people on the street can relate to characters. We have a few. Stand-up comedians, laughing at ourselves, absolutely. I think that's the direction we need to go in.

Finally, along with that we'll need strong political leadership in the country. Sometimes you have to be able to put a break on some debates for the sake of social cohesion and the integrity and frankly dignity in a society. Someone has to be able to stand up and say, 'Enough is enough. We're not going to do that.' That takes very strong, brave political leadership, which I think has been sorely lacking, both here and increasingly on the other side of the pond as well.

And it also needs community leadership. And I think we need better leadership within our communities. My final point is that I'm convinced none of that will actually work unless we do a lot of soul searching, we as Muslims, around what does Islam actually mean to us. If you look across the world, you go to Asia, to China, parts of Africa, you see a localised brand of Islam. An Islam that feels at home in those places.

You see mosques that look like pagodas, you see people with different forms of dress and culture and food. The question is what does a European Islam look like? What does it feel like? We're yet to answer that question. I think without us, and this has to come from our own volition, not from pressure from outside.

At our own interest level, we have to think, 'What does a European Islam look like? What does Islam look like and feel like when it grows up here and becomes indigenous here?' That's when it will become relatable to the people around us. Until we get to that stage, we're actually dealing with a real significant barrier of communication. We're talking different languages. We're not even talking to each other, we're talking at each other.

Question 6:

I'm from the Austrian Embassy. It's really interesting, throughout this debate I was going to pose the question about the European lung exactly, and you've posed it. I was particularly struck by the point about education and the role and importance of education, and the normalisation of Islam. Just pointing out the example of my own country, in Austria we've tried to get together a conference of European imams to try and stimulate a debate on what Islam means in a European context, what Muslims mean living in a secular state in a constitutional framework.

And the role of education, for example for Islamic teachings in schools. Getting imams trained in Austria, rather than in Turkey where the majority of the Muslim population stems from. All these sort of initiatives. There are simple conclusions like training imams more in Austria, but the realisation was it's very much just the beginning.

My question to the panel therefore would be, what is the scope? What is the potential for an Islam rooted in a European identity by second, third generation? And what can be good ways? Education is one, certainly, of getting there step by step.

Question 7:

I'm a member of Chatham House and a fellow of the Institute for Commonwealth Studies at the University of London. There seem to be two rather surprising omissions from the descriptions, given the report. Both of two institutions, Islamic institutions which have a huge international presence. One, the Ismailis, which you mentioned in your presentation but I can't see mentioned in the report.

The other the Ahmadis which have been excluded in Pakistan by a very controversial legal judgement as being non-Muslims. Is that one you accept?

Question 8:

I'm working for the Dutch Embassy. I have a question. We were talking about Islam as a religion here, and in the Netherlands actually the debate very much started not as a religious debate but as a question of integration. So my question is, could you elaborate a little bit on this specific aspect of the integration of Muslim immigrants? Our societies and maybe even a role that these Muslim organisations can play in this process.

Question 9:

I think someone made most of the points I wanted to say, but I believe there are genuine issues to do with the development, raising of standards, all issues to do basically with development of the third world, which you see... This is terribly confused with terrorism and association of Islam with terrorism. So the media are only hearing, mixes all these points, and increases...

At the same time, some of these extreme groups love this kind of thing because by definition, they see themselves as representing Islam. I think, to be honest with you, we have the duty both as Muslims. I don't think we've seen enough Muslims who come out and admit that within our midst there are people who resort to terrorism in the name of our religion and we all keep quiet about it.

This is why everybody else thinks this is Islam. Because there's not enough voices, I mean there are a few there. There are not enough. And this is quite natural, because communities who feel they are targeted, they're victims of racism, they tend to not want to claim they're 30 million in the public. I think we need to break this deadlock. Unless we do that, I think no amount of comedians or people in the media will really change the image of Islam in the West.

Question 10:

I'm from the Coexist Foundation, tackling some of the issues that Dilwar mentioned on religious literacy, I help people understand what it means to be Jewish or Christian or Muslim in the world today. I applaud this, I think it's a fantastic report and I look forward to going through it in more detail. But I'm intrigued by the challenge you throw down to, in a sense, reopen this multiculturalism agenda.

I find it a useful sort of immersion intelligence exercise to transpose Christian networks and movements in Western Europe and again Jewish networks and movements in Western Europe. And whether there is a time that you can imagine that Pew might be exploring this. That there's a widespread assumption that the fastest growing religion in the world today is Islam. But there is a counterargument coming from data that Pew have themselves put out, that Pentecostalism is a huge resurgent force.

I'm just intrigued to know whether this agenda is something that you feel that Pew might be exploring in future, or whether this in a sense fits uncomfortably because we in Europe sort of know where we are, but this Muslim issue is the one that is troubling us.

Just finally, Maha came out with a comment, that Muslims with a secular agenda. Again, would we generally... is that not an oxymoron? Would we talk about Christians with a secular agenda? Or Jewish people with a secular agenda? I don't think we would, but there's this tenacity of Islam that somehow can't sit comfortably with that secularism. I'm intrigued to know whether Maha can explore that for us.

Dr Maha Azzam:

I think that believing Muslims, practising Muslims, would emphasise the aspect of khuluq, the best way of trying to translate it is the aspect of behaviour, of example of a Muslim in terms of their behaviour according to Islamic tenets and so on.

If I were to look at the Sufis, the Tablighis, the Muslim Brotherhood, at the core of any of the teachings of these groups and perhaps that's what they hold in common, is the issue of khuluq. The Muslim, in a European community or in the United States or in a Muslim majority country is by example the da'wa for his religion by the way he or she behaves. Again, this exists in other religious traditions.

I think that, in a sense, indirectly perhaps answers the question about the differentiation between a Muslim who adheres to certain theological principles and teachings and a secular Muslim, who perhaps will then diverge from that or feel uncomfortable with certain aspects of those teachings.

Just very quickly on European Islam. Can we see one day a European Islam or Muslims feeling comfortable as European Muslims? Yes, I believe that. I think it's a matter of time. I think we have an Indian Islam, we have an Indonesian Islam. Islam arrived in these countries and became majority religions. But even if it remains a minority, it is a matter of time.

The Jews became integrated in various European societies and I think it is an issue of time, an issue of understanding and the issue of politics makes the whole question very flawed. The Jews in Europe in the 20s and 30s were connected with communism. So in a sense, we need also to look at the history of other diasporas and other communities and religious groups to perhaps understand what's happening to Muslims today.

Dilwar Hussain:

Thank you very much, I really enjoyed the discussion so far. There's a question about the scope for an Islam rooted in Europe, and also about

integration. Because we don't have that much time, I'll refer you to three internet sources and three pieces of on-going work. One, in terms of the work on Islam, there's a very interesting process that began at Cambridge University. And a report that was published last year, called contextualising Islam in Britain.

This was facilitated by the government, but actually it was a group of independent scholars, academics, intellectuals from the Muslim communities, hosted by Cambridge Centre for Islamic Studies, you can download the report from their site. A very diverse group of Muslim activists and scholars, as I say, got together to try and think about some of the, let's say some of the thorny issues around... some of the controversial, problematic issues around living here in Britain as a religious minority.

That sort of process gives me hope that if people are able to confront these sorts of questions head-on, there may be a grievance, some disagreements and we may agree to disagree but as long as that process is happening, there's some hope. That process is important. It will take intellectual endeavours to be able to achieve this normalised Islam or whatever we call it. It's not going to be a passive process, it's going to be an active process. It will need an active process.

The second piece of work is, if I refer you to the Institute for Strategic Dialogue, strategicdialogue.org, and there is a fair bit of work that we're doing there on imam training, that subject that you mentioned there. Some of that is covered and I know some of the people here in the room have been involved in one or two phases of consultation around that process.

Finally, the Open Society Institute, particularly on the issue of integration. If you look at the At Home in Europe programme of work, taken on by the Open Society Institute, I think that will give you, they've commissioned a set of quite extensive piece of research across 11 cities looking at the situation of Muslims in those 11 cities across the EU.

And these are very detailed. I think the most detailed studies of Muslim communities in Europe so far. Looking at policy concerns, they're not theoretical subjects but looking at actual live policy issues that challenge Muslim communities. The dataset is very robust and was based on quite a rigorous process of research.

So that's my summary, just flagging up these three pieces of work or on-going projects. I think they hopefully counterbalance the pessimism. There's some hope for all of us. Thank you.

Professor Peter Mandaville:

Huge searching questions and one minute. I think I've demonstrated my own abysmal khuluq by daring to mention the dirty 'm word', multiculturalism. Let me clarify by throwing that back on the table. I am not speaking about multiculturalism, the normative vision, the project that we were all supposedly reaching for in the 1990s.

I'm thinking of multiculturalism more as an analytical paradigm and one that speaks more to the issues that Dilwar raised about the level at which the debate about Islam and Muslims in Europe today is also a debate about the future of Europe. The possibilities and limits of the liberal state in the face of diversity. I think it does also track back to some of the issues that Maha reminded us to bear in mind relating to immigration, racism and to keep us not so fixed on religion, religion, religion.

The role of these movements in integration. The report, for each of the groups we treat in the report, we do try and say something about the relative impact with regard to that question. It's not a categorical analysis that said, 'These groups have positive impacts and these groups have negative impacts, because there simply are no black and white answers of that sort to be given. We've tried to say something about where each of them falls.

The question about the absence in the report of references to groups such as the Ismaili and the Ahmadiyya. Again, it helps us to clarify your question a little bit about the scope of the report. The groups that you mentioned are certainly relevant, important, and the last thing we're doing with this report is in any sense pronouncing upon who is a Muslim and who is not a Muslim.

Rather, those groups representing something closer to sectarian denominations simply didn't fit the scope of social movements in the sense that we defined the report. One could arguably say that a couple of the groups that we have in the report don't fit the classic definition of social movements, and I'd be happy to talk with you in more detail about why we selected the groups we did.

Finally, what is the scope and potential for Islam rooted in Europe, one that's relevant to the second and third generation. The thing is, that Islam is already in formation. It's not so publicly visible, but the figures who are its architects, its authors, are hard at work. They have some difficulty today in publicly articulating or having a particularly high public profile, in part because of the persistence of some of the groups that we deal with in the report in maintaining a certain hegemony over the public articulation of Islam.

The thing is, that work is already in motion. I think the sociology is on the side of those who would be articulating this new Islam. That doesn't say, and I don't want to be heard here to be saying that, just give it a little bit of time. It will out, because there are counter-factual drivers at work that will continue to make this alternative Islam, if you will, difficult. It will make its birthing not a particularly easy process.

But it is there, and as generational differences that we draw attention to in the report play out over time, I think we're actually going to be seeing the emergence of an understanding of Islam that certainly bears some connections to the sorts of visions that define some of the movements we talk about. But it really does reach towards something like what Dilwar has referred to as an indigenous European Islam.