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Are Muslims the new Jews? Comparing Islamophobia and Anti-Semitism in Britain and Europe.

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It has become increasingly common in recent years to read or hear hostility towards Muslims and Islam compared with antipathy towards Jews and Judaism. But how valid is the comparison? Is it helpful to understanding either Islamophobia or anti-semitism? In this paper I will begin with some examples of this trend taken from Britain and Europe. I will then argue that while the comparison is superficially attractive it breaks down on closer examination. In my view it is not only inappropriate: it is positively dangerous. I will show how attempts to construct an equivalence between these two hatreds can lead to false conclusions about how best to deal with them.

In January 2006, Yasmin Alibhai-Brown, a columnist for the *Independent* and a prominent secular Muslim, criticised the Muslim Council of Britain (MCB) for its decision to boycott of the official Holocaust Memorial Day. This decision was in line with the Council's since the inauguration of the annual event. Alibhai-Brown reasoned that Muslims should participate in the Day because non-Jews were victims of Nazi persecution and because remembering Nazism 'reminds us of how thin is the crust of European civilization, and that it can be thrown off by the slightest provocation or none at all'. She had no doubt where the perceived provocation was coming from. 'Today the Jews of Europe are Muslims'. They faced the same kind of hatred that confronted Jews in the 1930s. 'By remembering the holocaust past victims, we remind ourselves of what could happen in the future.'ⁱ

Several months later, the columnist India Knight, writing in the *Sunday Times*, laid into Jack Straw MP, the leader of the House of Commons, after he said that Muslim women wearing the 'niqab', the full veil, were in effect making a 'statement of separateness and difference'. She wondered if Jack Straw would have dared suggest that nuns divest themselves of their habits? What

was the problem with a woman covering her hair? The lesson she drew from the controversy was that 'It's open season on Islam – Muslims are the new Jews.'ⁱⁱ

Soon after this intervention Ken Livingstone, Mayor of London, ruffled feathers when he presented a report on the life of Muslims in the city. It showed that they suffered from extensive discrimination in housing and employment, and were more likely to suffer religiously motivated crimes. At the press conference where the report was launched Livingstone also condemned the way Muslims are portrayed in the media, especially in connection with the 'war on terror'. 'The entire debate', he said, 'has been lopsided as though somehow it is the Muslim's fault. That echoes Hitler and Goebbels and all the others who said it was the Jews' fault'.ⁱⁱⁱ

At first, the president of the MCB, Dr Muhammed Abdel Bari, appeared to distance himself from Livingstone's contentious parallel. But the following month when Dr Bari was addressing a meeting of MPs he made exactly the same point. He criticised government ministers for 'unfairly targeting' Muslims in the context of the war on terror and asked rhetorically, 'What is the degree of xenophobia that tipped Germany in the 1930s towards a murderous ethnic and cultural racism?' When he was asked by a journalist to comment on the implicit comparison Dr Bari said 'We know what happened in Nazi Germany and we have to be on guard against entire communities being demonised due to the actions of a minority'.^{iv}

A few months later a similar claim was made by Dr Mohammad Naseem, chairman of the Birmingham Central Mosque, after several Muslims were arrested by the police in connection with an alleged terrorist plot. He told the press that Britain was becoming a 'police state' and compared the police raids to the persecution of the Jews in Nazi Germany.^v

Dr Bari returned to the 1930s comparison after Jonathan Evans, the head of MI5, the security intelligence agency responsible for anti-terrorism, issued a starkly-worded admonition against the danger of extremism in the Muslim

population. Speaking to the *Daily Telegraph* on 10 November 2007, he complained about the endless negative depiction of Muslims in the media and warned that 'Every society has to be really careful so the situation doesn't lead us to a time when people's minds can be poisoned as they were in the 1930s.' Bari's words were reported more bluntly on the BBC news. The headline proclaimed that the head of the MCB had 'warned the UK must avoid becoming like Nazi Germany'. (It should be noted that the Council issued a rebuttal and pointed out that this was not exactly what Dr Bari had said.)^{vi}

Whether or not Muslim leaders were directly comparing Britain under PM Gordon Brown to Germany under Chancellor Adolph Hitler the implication was clear. There was, at the very least, a comparison with Europe in the 1930s when anti-semitism was rampant and the foundations were being laid for the Nazi programme to annihilate the Jews. Although it has riled Jews and non-Jews alike the analogy has proved irresistible. On Christmas Day 2007 the Muslim Public Affairs Committee of the UK published a report on its website about a fatal attack on an Asian man in Bolton, which police suspected was racially motivated. The report was headlined, 'We Are Truly The New Jews'.^{vii}

Similar comparisons have been made in Europe. In the wake of the 9/11 attacks, the Nobel prize winning German novelist warned that the climate of hostility towards Muslims in Germany threatened to trigger a second Kristallnacht.^{viii}

Indeed, the comparison between Islamophobia and anti-semitism, and the assertion that they are more or less equivalent, has become almost doctrinaire within the EU and other European intergovernmental organisations.

In early 2002, the EU Monitoring Centre of Racism and Xenophobia (EUMC) called on its national 'focal points' to report on the year-long upsurge of attacks on Jewish communities across Europe. The data was analysed and introduced by Werner Bergmann and Juliane Wetzel of the Centre for the Study of Antisemitism at the Technical University of Berlin. They concluded

that the wave of attacks were committed 'above all either by right-wing extremists or radical Islamists or young Muslims mostly of Arab descent'. The report connected the actions of young Muslims to events in the Middle East, particularly the al-Aqsa intifada and the Israeli response to it. Bergmann and Wetzel concluded that 'In our opinion one cannot deny that there exists a close link between the increase of anti-semitism and the escalation of the Middle East conflict, whereas factors which usually determine the frequency of anti-Semitic incidents in the respective countries, such as the strength and the degree of mobilisation of extremist far-right parties and groups can generate, have not played the decisive role in the reporting period.'^{ix}

However, the EUMC declined to publish the report on the grounds that the methodology was suspect. Instead, it commissioned Alexander Pollak of Vienna University, the EUMC manager of research, to provide a 'critical appraisal' of the data. The revised report was finally released in 2004. It stated that contrary to the 'shift in public perception' of the typical perpetrator from the extreme rightwing skinhead type to a disaffected young Muslim, the country-by-country reports 'suggest a more complex picture than that'. It concluded that while there was a correlation between events in the Middle East and spikes in anti-Jewish activity, due to the unreliability of the reporting mechanisms 'it is problematic to make general statements with regard to the perpetrators of antisemitic acts'.^x

Critics of the EUMC, including the ADL in the United States, claimed that the conclusions of the original EUMC report were suppressed because it pointed the finger at the left and at Muslim communities.^{xi} This accusation gained traction because the EUMC, a creature of the EU, was heavily invested in the belief that prejudice against Muslims and anti-Jewish feeling are subsets of a generic racism. This conviction underpinned the European Commission's major project in 2002-3, 'The Fight Against Anti-Semitism and Islamophobia: Bringing Community's Together'. During one of the round table discussions that were the vehicle for this initiative Robert Purkiss, chair of the EUMC Management Board said: 'Our conception of European Identity are significant drivers of anti-Semitism and Islamophobia. One of the similarities between

anti-Semitism and Islamophobia is their historical relationship to a Europe perceived as exclusively Christian. Jews have of course suffered the most unspeakable crimes by European Christians. But it is true that *all* other other religions, including Judaism and Islam, have been excised from the prevailing understanding of Europe's identity as Christian and white. Both Islam and Judaism have long served as Europe's "other", as a symbol for a distinct culture, religion and ethnicity.^{xii}

Although several contributors to the round table dissented from this stance and insisted on the separation of anti-Semitism from Islamophobia, the EUMC representatives presented a united front. Professor Ed Van Thijn, a member of the EUMC board of management, insisted 'We have a clear cut definition of racism in place. We all know that anti-semitic but also Islamophobic expressions of racist cultures are subcultures: that's the difference with the pre-war period. In the 'pre-war' period the Jews were the enemy. Today there are a number of enemies. We have to fight racism in all its aspects and there is a mutual interest to fight anti-semitism but also Islamophobia together.'^{xiii}

In its public pronouncements on anti-semitism since 2002 the European Union has consistently enfolded anti-semitism within the more generic categories of racism and xenophobia. For example, on 15 June 2006, the European Parliament passed a resolution condemning the increase of racist and homophobic violence in Europe which noted, inter alia, the rise in anti-Jewish attacks. The resolution also noted recommendations to establish mechanisms to monitor and combat anti-semitism, but went on to call on member states to launch campaigns to promote cultural diversity and lead the fight against racism and other forms of intolerance.^{xiv}

The same conflation is apparent in the statements and the initiatives of the Council of Europe, acting through the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI). In March 2005, ECRI adopted a report on racist, anti-semitic *and* xenophobic discourse in the political sphere. 'According to the report, immigrants and refugees - especially those from Muslim countries - are the primary targets of politicians exploiting feelings of insecurity in an

increasingly complex and multicultural world. “Most worryingly, the theory of a so-called clash of civilisations is gaining ground. At the same time, anti-Semitism continues to be encouraged either openly or in a coded manner by certain political leaders and parties.” ECRI considers this increasing use of racist, anti-Semitic and xenophobic language and ideas in political life - including by mainstream political parties – to be a worrying development which calls for urgent and concerted action.^{xv}

The Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) consistently packages anti-semitism in with condemnations of racism and xenophobia. As a result of lobbying by Jewish NGOs alarmed by the surge in anti-Jewish incidents across Europe, in December 2002 the council of ministers of the OSCE passed a resolution ‘reaffirming its concern about manifestations of aggressive nationalism, racism, chauvinism, xenophobia, anti-Semitism and violent extremism, wherever they may occur’ and decreed a meeting to discuss anti-semitism. In June 2003, a conference was convened in Vienna, to consider measures to combat anti-semitism. It led to a resolution of the OSCE parliamentary assembly urging action to combat anti-semitism *and* racism through uniform monitoring. A second conference dedicated to anti-semitism led to the Berlin Declaration against ‘all acts motivated by anti-Semitism or other forms of religious or racial hatred’ and calling on participating states to take the requisite counter-measures.^{xvi}

(It should be noted that during 2004 and 2005, NGOs and experts met under the auspices of the OSCE to hammer out a definition of anti-semitism that would enable targeted monitoring to take place. They also worked on guidelines for education to counter anti-semitism. These were prepared in collaboration with Yad Vashem, and issued last year by the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights.^{xvii})

How far, though, does the implied or explicit symmetry between anti-semitism and Islamophobia that is so marked in European discourse stand up to

scrutiny?

In an important critique of the European position, Matti Bunzl, professor of anthropology and history at University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, argues that despite superficial likenesses anti-Semitism and Islamophobia have discrete historical genealogies and function in very different ways. Anti-Semitism has far older antecedents than antagonism to Islam. For nearly two millennia the Jews had a central place in Europe's Christian culture in a way that Muslims never did. Moreover, anti-Semitism took its most virulent form under highly specific conditions as part of the reaction against modernity that kicked in during the late 19th century. This phase culminated in the genocidal fantasy of creating racially pure nation states in the mid 20th century.^{xviii}

Turning to the current situation, Bunzl rejects both the 'alarmist' school who detect a 'new anti-semitism' and the 'deniers' who play down manifestations of hostility towards the Jews. He acknowledges that something nasty is stirring in the guise of anti-Zionism, in sections of the left and the anti-globalization movement, and within some sections of certain Muslim communities. But he argues that the conditions that made anti-semitism so pervasive and so lethal are gone: Europe is secular and the nation state has had its day. Even the far right has abandoned it. Parties such as the Front National in France, the Vlaams Block in Belgium, and the Austrian Freedom Party have disavowed Nazi ideology and court Jewish voters on the grounds that their chief target is now Europe's Muslim populations and Muslims are also feared by Jews. Thus Bunzl asserts that 'Whereas traditional anti-semitism has run its historical course with a supercession of the nation-state, Islamophobia is rapidly emerging as the defining condition of the new Europe.'^{xix}

Furthermore, Bunzl identifies an unprecedented shift in antipathies. Contemporary anti-semitism, such as it is, has a very different function and meaning to traditional forms of Jew-hatred. Historically it was associated with the far right which attacked the Jews in order to purify the nation of alien elements; but young Muslims who assault Jews verbally and physically do not

aspire to this goal. They assail Jews because of events in the Middle East and because they feel excluded from European society, the privileges of which seem embodied by the Jews. On the other hand, Muslims have replaced Jews as the prime enemy of the far right and even centre right parties. Whereas Jews are valued Europeans, indeed considered the European archetype, Muslims are the target of immigration controls and security measures. There is not a single significant party, even on the far right, that espouses anti-semitism; but most seek to bar Muslims from Europe and to diminish the salience of the 15m already there. Europeans of all political stripes debate the loyalty and assimilability of Muslims, whether they can be 'good Europeans', in a way that was once the case for Jews but which is now utterly unthinkable in their case. Indeed, the protection of Jews and the memorialisation of the Holocaust, have become defining features of the European Union and European identity; the blandishments against Muslims and their social exclusion has become another. In its most vivid form, Europe defines itself as a Judeo-Christian entity and the most militant expression of this identity is the rejection of Turkish aspirations of EU membership.^{xx}

While there is much of value in Bunzl's differentiation between these two hatreds, I would suggest that his analysis is flawed in three important respects. First, he misconstrues the historical origins and variations of anti-Semitism and Islamophobia. Second, he underplays the difference between responses to accurate perceptions of menace as against reactions to fantasies of a threat. Third, he substantially distorts the current state of relations between faiths and ethnicities in Europe, downplaying anti-Semitism and exaggerating Islamophobia.

Bunzl maintains that 'Islamophobia emerged quite recently. ... It is a phenomena of the late 20th and early 21st centuries.' This is an extraordinary statement. Islam has been Europe's "Other" since the 8th century. In the odes that celebrated the turning back of the Muslim armies at the battle of Tours (732) and Roncevaux (778), Muslims were depicted in diabolical terms. In *La Chanson de Roland* the demonisation of Islam is quite explicit. Dante placed Muhammad in the circle of hell reserved for heretics. This antithetical

relationship was perpetuated by the Crusades. In the chivalric romances of the middle ages knights routinely rescued damsels from lascivious Saracens. During the renaissance European writers and artists were fascinated by the opulence of the East and the erotic possibilities of the seraglio. The English playwrights Marlowe and Shakespeare depicted the Saracen, Moor, Turk, and 'Blackamoor' in less than positive terms.^{xxi}

The 18th century saw the popularity of *101 Arabian Nights*, which spawned an industry of imitators. Byron, Coleridge, Disraeli all explored the Muslim East in fact and fantasy. Edward Said's analysis of 19th century orientalism is sufficiently well-known not to require exposition here. Even if one criticises his method and rejects his conclusions (particularly the specious notion that orientalism bifurcated the Arab and the Jew), he brought into the limelight a library of texts that stereotyped Islam, Muslims and the Arab world.^{xxii}

However, the now classic taxonomies of orientalism are premised on representations of Islam generated during a specific and arguably atypical period in the relations of power between East and West, Christendom and the Muslim worlds. Said and his followers tend to focus on the period during which Muslim societies were economically prostrate, militarily weak, and vulnerable to the penetration by European interests that led eventually to invasion and colonial domination. Yet throughout previous centuries the boot was on the other foot; Europeans were justifiably afraid of Muslim imperialism, colonisation, and conversion. As Fred Halliday writes, 'with the Ottoman advances of the 15th and 16th centuries, a further chapter of anti-Muslimism was written: one can, indeed, suggest that it was this experience above all which shaped European attitudes.' Of course, European states also traded with Muslim powers and enjoyed cordial diplomatic relations with them, even alliances. But the template of conflict was reinforced by the experience of the First World War and the anti-colonial struggles of Muslim peoples, especially after 1945. Since then, Europe's international relations with Arab and Muslim states have been characterised by ambiguities: sometimes friendly, sometimes antagonistic. This ambiguity has been reflected in popular representations and public perceptions.^{xxiii}

This see-saw power relationship is frequently ignored in the dissection of Islamophobia, rooted as it is in the assumption that the analysis of orientalism is correct. Yet it is of crucial, if obvious, importance for understanding a key difference between historically rooted antipathies towards Islam and hatred of Jews. The Jews never threatened Christendom (except in the realms of fantasy). The Jews never constituted a rival military or economic force. There is, of course, a myth of Jewish power but even this is of recent provenance; and the mythical 'rise of the Jews' itself only gained traction thanks to a long pre-history of powerlessness.^{xxiv}

This point can be vividly illustrated by drawing on the work of the English historian Linda Colley (who was once my supervisor at Cambridge and held a distinguished chair at Yale). In her book *Captives. Britain, Empire and the World 1600-1850*, Colley inverts the power relationship which underpins the Saidian critique of orientalism. She recalls that from the 1600s to the 1750s, European traders in the Mediterranean and off the coast of north west Africa went in terror of 'Barbary pirates' and corsairs. Every year throughout this period, thousands of English, Welsh, Irish and Scottish (later British) merchants, seamen, marines and soldiers were captured and enslaved by Muslims. Until the late 18th century the marauding fleets based in Morocco, Algiers, Tripoli, Tunis were quite capable of taking on the naval forces dispatched by individual European states. In 1668 England seized Tangiers and attempted to build it into a major colony. But the English could not maintain their foothold in North Africa against pressure from the Ottoman Turks. In 1684 the British withdrew in ignominy, leaving hundreds of enslaved unfortunates behind them.^{xxv}

Colley makes the striking point that for almost two centuries Europeans were the victims of Muslim forces. The history of collective vulnerability and defeat, of individual torture, rape and death, was retold in dozens of captive narratives (as influential as slave narratives in mid 19th century America). It was the subject of immensely popular entertainments on the stage. As a result, to British men and women the Muslim world did not conjure up images

of decadence, idleness, or subjugation; on the contrary, 'North African Islamic society stood for tyranny, brutality, poverty and loss of freedom.' Nor was Islamic society always the 'Other' that confirmed European scientific and cultural superiority. Europe had extensive diplomatic and commercial relations with the Ottoman Empire through which Europeans confronted the sophistication of urban Islamic society. During the 17th and 18th centuries Europeans looked on Muslim cities with awe and wonder; they seemed more beautiful, cosmopolitan and efficient than their European equivalents. While Europe was torn apart by religious war, and one regime after another was toppled in bloody civil strife, Muslim civilization looked enviously stable and tolerant.^{xxvi}

Bunzl is therefore mistaken to reduce Islamophobia to a function of modernity and to depict it as a feature of efforts to define a united Europe. Many of the features of Islamophobia that he identifies as European are in fact to be found in the attitude to Muslims and Islam in other countries including the USA and India.^{xxvii} The relationship between Europe and Islamic societies has been ongoing for centuries. Over this long span it was not solely mediated by orientalism. Indeed, the period charted by Said appears more of an aberration than the norm. Would it be too fanciful to suggest that the renewed confrontation with armed Muslims evokes, at some level, the terror of the Ottomans and the Barbary pirates? Is it too far-fetched to suggest that the taking of hostages, first in Teheran in 1979-80, then in the Lebanon during the years of war between 1975 and 1990, and more recently in Iraq, Palestine and Iran echoed the activities of Muslims in previous eras? The folk memory of capture and ransom has, after all, been kept alive in the retelling of stories such as *Robin Hood: Prince of Thieves*. The image of treacherous, violent Muslims informs popular recapitulations of the wars fought by Europe's colonial powers against Muslims: the French in North Africa, the British in the Sudan, India, and on the North West Frontier. What European school kid did not grow up with *Beau Geste* or Kipling?^{xxviii}

If attitudes towards Islam may be inflected by history, popular memory, and media stereotypes what is the effect of more recent events? Fred Halliday has

comprehensively dismantled the notion of an 'Islamic threat' to the West, but he willingly concedes that just because the menace of a monolithic Islam is grotesquely exaggerated does not mean that some Islamists do not wish harm to those they perceive as enemies (including other Muslims). A cadre of militants does subscribe to the claims made against them: they do claim the existence of a united Muslim world, they do seek to supplant Christianity and Judaism with Islam, they do dismiss the west as 'corrupt', they do attack secularism and eschew democracy. In that sense, he write we are 'in purely ideological terms, faced with a phenomenon that is quite unlike those other stereotypical hostilities anti-communism and anti-Semitism'.^{xxix}

Islamophobia is incommensurable with anti-semitism because Jews as Jews never espoused the attitudes ascribed to them by anti-semites. They never threatened any state or society as Jews or in the name of Judaism. Islamophobia may be an inappropriate, unreasonable and provocative reaction to a grossly inflated 'threat' but the danger of terrorism by Islamists is real and there are several conflicts in the world in which Islamic militants are at war, in the name of Islam. Nothing can justify lumping all Muslims together, let alone blaming them for the actions of a tiny minority that follow certain beliefs derived from particular interpretations of Islam; but denying the grounds for fear of Islam does not equate it with groundless anti-semitism.

Let us now examine Bunzl's claim that that Muslims face more peril than Jews do, both quantitatively and qualitatively and his assertion that close investigation reveals 'the thorough insignificance at the current time of the modern variant of anti-semitism' while Islamophobia is 'a genuine political issue, part of a wide-open debate on the future of the Muslim presence in Europe'.^{xxx}

To be sure, there is a mass of polling data that shows hostility to Muslims in various guises and under many headings. In one of the most authoritative collations of this data for the UK, covering the years 1988-2006, Clive Field

has revealed that ‘There appears to be an increasing perception that Muslims in Britain are slow to integrate into mainstream society, feel only a qualified sense of patriotism and are prone to espouse anti-Western values that lead many to condone so-called Islamic terrorism.’^{xxxix}

Here are some examples of Field is talking about (I refer you to the article for the details of how the statistics, which come from a wide range of polling organisations, were gathered).

In the wake of the 2003 invasion of Iraq, 75% of polled Britons saw Islam as a significant threat while 30% agreed that Islam was more prone to violence. The suicide bombings in London on 7 July 2005 were a ‘defining moment’ in the radicalisation of attitudes towards Muslims in Britain. In the aftermath, 46% saw Islam as a threat to democracy, 24% believed Islam was incompatible with democracy, 60% that the bombers hated Western values. 20% held negative views of Islam and 10% believed that Muslims felt no sense of loyalty towards Britain and would condone further terrorist acts. It was therefore no surprise that 60% of Britons favoured intelligence agencies and security measures being focussed on Muslims; that 52% agreed that it was acceptable to limit freedom of speech to prevent the spread of Islamic radicalism; that 45% favoured a ban on alleged Islamist organisations; that 80% backed the deportation of foreign imams who expressed sympathy for terrorists.^{xxxii}

The furore in 2006 over the Danish cartoons and the controversy about wearing the *niqab*, the full veil, accentuated all these negatives. Of those polled 59% agreed with Jack Straw that the *niqab* should be banned in most cases; 70% believed that Muslims needed to do more to integrate; 44% were against recognising Muslim religious festivals in the work place or allowing Muslims time off to worship; and, ironically perhaps, 51% saw Muslims as intolerant. Most thought Muslims had overreacted about the cartoons. By now 20% of British people considered that young British Muslims endorsed terrorism and 30% that they were alienated from British society.^{xxxiii}

Field observes that: 'Islamophobic views in Britain would appear easily to outstrip anti-semitic sentiments in terms of frequency (more than double the size of the hard core), intensity and overtness.' Whereas two fifths of people in polls in 2004 and 2005 agreed that Jews had a dual loyalty, 56% 'thought Muslims put faith above country'. Remarkably, Field found that British concern about Islam and Muslims was **less** pronounced than in France, Germany, the Netherlands and Spain.^{xxxiv}

This would all appear to support Bunzl's claim that Islamophobia is on the march, a clear and present danger that has outstripped the menace of anti-semitism. But now look at the country-by-country results of the authoritative EUMC investigation on initial manifestations of Islamophobia after 9/11 in the EU:^{xxxv}

Austria 'Violent physical attack was very rare'^{xxxvi}

Belgium 'no physical assaults on Muslim communities'^{xxxvii}

Finland 'Few identifiable changes in acts of aggression... Overall, actions and reactions were almost entirely positive'^{xxxviii}

France 'a rise in everyday tension' 'Incidents that received press coverage appeared to be low in number'^{xxxix}

Germany 'Physical attacks were quite rare'^{xl}

Greece 'No direct physical or personal verbal attacks were reported towards Muslims' 'national feeling was split equally between anti-Americanism and anti-Muslim attitudes'^{xli}

Ireland 'little reaction to the events of September 11'^{xlii}

Italy 'a lack of any reprisals against Muslims or other ethnic minorities'^{xliii}

Netherlands 'verbal abuse and hostile treatment were the most prevalent'^{xliv}

Portugal 'The overall picture was one of reconciliation between Muslims and non-Muslims.'^{xlv}

Spain 'Initially no incidents of aggression or hostility or any change in attitude'^{xlvi}

Sweden 'Some violent incidents ... A rise in anti-Americanism and anti-Semitic sentiment was also acknowledged'^{xlvii}

UK 'A significant rise in attacks on Muslims was reported across a range of media Numbers of incidents of violent assault, verbal abuse and attacks on

property were noted, some of which were very serious.^{xlviii}

So, at the moment when emotions were running highest and you would most expect an outburst of pogrom-like rage (of the sort predicted by Günter Grass) there were 'relatively low levels of physical violence' across Europe. Where violence did occur, notably in Holland, Spain, Sweden and the UK it tended to strike at all visible ethnic minorities and to be an accentuation of pre-existing xenophobia, anti-asylum seeker feeling more specifically.^{xlix}

The report does also point to a rise in instances of arson, attacks on buildings and sacred places, and above all a torrent of negative, frequently stereotypical comment in the media. In Spain this seems to have led to a second wave anti-Muslim feeling that was more vicious. But it failed, literally, to catch fire in the way that anti-Jewish feeling has metastasized in similar historical circumstances. Above all, hardly any front line politicians said a word against Islam. The Italian PM Silvio Berlusconi was the exception when he said that 'Western culture is superior to Muslim culture'. Every other mainstream politician called for calm and worked to ameliorate relations with their Muslim communities.¹

Indeed, despite the advance of anti-Islamic parties in several European countries, throughout the EU individual governments redoubled their efforts to protect and ameliorate Muslim populations. In Britain this culminated in the passage of the Racial and Religious Hatred Act 2006, a law to criminalise the incitement to hatred on the grounds of religious belief. The legislation was bitterly opposed by a wide coalition of interests but was forced through Parliament by Tony's Blair's administration as a sign of its determination to speak to Muslim calls for protection on a par with that afforded to Jews and other groups denoted as 'races'. Earlier this year, the Archbishop of Canterbury suggested that Muslims should have the right to take certain civil matters before *sharia* courts. So, despite a string of terrorist incidents in the UK committed by British- or foreign-born Muslims, the government has balanced tough anti-terrorist security measures with steps to protect the Muslim population. In a similar vein calls on Muslims to make greater efforts

to integrate have been matched by assurances that they are valued as citizens and that their declared religious, cultural and economic needs are being recognised. Even in France successive governments have adopted a mixed strategy. In 2002 the government mandated the creation of a centralised representation for Muslims on the model of the *consistoire* and later enforced the ban on the wearing of the *hijab* in schools (along with other visible garb with religious significance). The French police have taken tough measures against disaffected Muslim youth. Yet the government has also announced programmes to improve social conditions, educational and employment opportunities in the benighted suburbs, the *banlieux*.

There is a significant contrast between this record and patterns of hostility towards Jews between 2000 and 2006. Much of what I have to say will be familiar to you, but it bears retelling. The first noticeable 'spike' in the volume and intensity of attacks on Jews came in 2000-2001. The centre of gravity was France: there was a spate of attacks on property and persons, including fire bombings and physical assaults.

There was a further 'spike' following 9/11, the invasion of Afghanistan, and the IDF incursion into the West Bank and Gaza Strip. In the Netherlands pro-Palestinian Muslim demonstrators chanted ' Hamas, Hamas, all Jews to the gas'. In Germany, in April 2002, a Muslim-born former Green MEP Jamal Karsli applied to join the right wing FDP and was welcomed by one of its leaders Jürgen Möllemann, despite his comments about the 'Nazi methods' used by the IDF and his criticism of the 'very big Zionist lobby'. Indeed, Möllemann derisively attributed the criticism of Karsli to Zionists who defended the Israeli government and warned that such protests would bring anti-semitism. During 2003 opposition to the US-UK led invasion of Iraq added fuel to anti-Jewish tendencies. Many Muslims, sections of the left, and the anti-globalization movement attributed the war to a neo-con lobby in Washington that was identified as overwhelmingly Jewish, aided by PM Blair who was depicted as under the thumb of a Jewish cabal, to make the world safe for Israel. Anti-war movement, anti-Americanism, anti-globalisation converged in attacks on Israel.ⁱⁱ

The volume and intensity of anti-Jewish incidents, measured by anybody's standards, reached a dramatic peak in 2004. In France, violence against Jews rose from 503 to 590 cases; major violent incidents jumped from 64 to 96. The French government moved to shut down a Hizbollah TV station al Mansar which had been broadcasting programmes in Arabic conveying the message of the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*. In Britain there was a 42% rise in anti-Jewish incidents, with 50 violent and 84 other serious incidents. These were the worst figures since 1984. In April 2004, a Jewish family returning from synagogue in north east London on a Saturday afternoon were assaulted by a gang of white youths; in June 2004 a *yeshiva bocher* was stabbed in the lung by a young Muslim man in Antwerp. The daubing of swastikas on synagogues, head stones in cemeteries, holocaust memorials extended from the English Channel to the Urals.^{lii}

There was a fall in the levels of anti-Jewish activity in 2005, although the Stephen Roth Centre in Tel Aviv noted that this was still the highest they had recorded since 1989. In May five petrol bombs were thrown at a synagogue in a Brussels suburb; in December 2005 in London a Jew in the Orthodox district of Stamford Hill was beaten up. However, the annual report of the Centre speculated that the remission might have been due to the 60th anniversary events marking the end of the Second World War and the liberation of the camps. It also suggested that counter measures were having an effect, about which more later. But there were other non-violent if no less ominous developments. Notably, the emergence of a movement in UK universities to boycott HEIs in Israel. The debates around the boycott in teacher unions and student unions were often marked by harsh language and poisoned the atmosphere in many places. On campuses with large numbers of Muslim students Jewish students felt intimidated and vulnerable: there were many cases of abuse.^{liii}

In 2006 recorded anti-Jewish incidents saw another spike. This time it was related to the IDF bombing of Gaza and offensive against Hizbollah in Lebanon. The bombing of Beirut received massive media coverage and

triggered demonstrations, mainly by young Muslims, all over Europe. Once again, France offered the most dramatic and tragic illustration of a Europe-wide trend. On 21 January 2006 the dead body of Illan Halami, a Jew of North African origin was found in a Paris suburb. The police investigation revealed that he had been kidnapped and tortured by a gang of young Muslims who believed that as a Jew he must be rich. This may have been a criminal incident but it built on the stereotyping of Jews. In Norway the main Oslo synagogue was fired at from a car. It transpired that the gunmen were part of an Islamist cell that was planning a devastating attack on a Jewish target using gas cylinders and explosives.^{liv}

In Britain a 12 year old Jewish girl was seriously assaulted on a bus travelling through north London. Jasmine Kranat was attacked on a summer Saturday afternoon when she was with a friend. A group of nine black and Asian youths forced them into a corner and asked: "Are you Jewish?" Jasmine's friend was wearing a crucifix - and was untouched. Jasmine replied "I'm English", which was the wrong answer. She was punched in the face until she lost consciousness; her attackers then stamped on her head and chest as she lay on the floor.^{lv}

During 2007 the escalation of anti-Jewish violence and attacks on property slowed or reversed and there were some positive developments.^{lvi} In May 2007 the new Universities and Colleges Union in England passed a resolution to embark on a boycott of Israeli universities.^{lvii} This was overturned by a legal ruling 6 months later. However, an ADL survey (of 500 respondents) in Austria, Belgium, Hungary, Switzerland, Netherlands and the UK revealed that 35-60% of people believed that Jews are more loyal to Israel than the country they live in; and that they have too much power; while over 40% thought that Jews talk too much about the Holocaust; and one fifth blame Jews for the death of Christ! Every negative index registered a rise as compared to 2005.^{lviii}

So it would appear that anti-Jewish sentiment has intensified dramatically since 2000. This evidence is surely sufficient to raise a question mark against

Bunzl's assertion that research has 'revealed the thorough insignificance at the current time of the modern variant of anti-semitism'. It may be his contention that Islamophobia differs from anti-semitism chiefly because Islamophobia is political, institutionalised, and central to a European identity, while no party disputes the presence of Jews in Europe and even on the far right Jews are regarded as 'good European's. However, in view of the data I have just summarised, rather than confirming the normalisation of the Jewish presence, Bunzl's position seems to me to indicate a normalisation of Jew-hatred, an acceptance that, mainly because of Zionism and Israel, this is what Jews must expect to live with.

I want to conclude with some final reflections on the ineptness of comparing Islamophobia and anti-semitism, despite the seductive parallels between the experience of Jewish immigrants in Europe and that of Muslims – not least in terms of the response to prejudice and political mobilisation. Maleiha Malik, a leading academic human rights lawyer, recently observed that in Britain between the 1880s and the 1930s it was the Jews who were regarded as the self-segregated adherents of an obscurantist, narrow, and intolerant faith. East European Jewish immigrants were depicted as a threat to the country's morals, its health, and public safety. In the public mind Russian Jews were associated with anarchist terrorism and political subversion at the turn of the century, while large numbers were involved in the Communist Party in the 1930s, drawing the wrath of the far right. On this basis, she concluded that 'There are recurring patterns in British society that racialize Jews and Muslims, which we need to understand if we are to develop an effective strategy for national security.'^{lix}

Now, it is correct that Jewish immigrants across Europe were drawn into trades union activity in the late 19th century and remained stalwarts in many labour unions until the years after World War Two. There were Jewish anarchists and social revolutionaries who committed acts of violence, especially in Britain in the 1910s. Many Jews were attracted to Bolshevism

after the 1917 Russian Revolution. Jews were prominent in the leadership of communist parties across Europe (and many were murdered for this reason). The identification of Jews with Bolshevism by conservatives and the far right, often informed by the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, fuelled a vicious anti-semitism that, in turn, drove Jews into the arms of the left. A significant proportion of disaffected, deracinated young Jews opted for Jewish nationalism and became Zionists, of various political hues.^{lx}

But the radicalisation of young Jews and their leftward gravitation or Zionist activism had many positive consequences. It was quite unlike the radicalisation and Islamicization of Muslim youth. Precisely because Jews were reacting to prejudice from the right, they found allies on the left. Because National Socialism was anti-semitic, anti-fascists were doctrinally opposed to anti-semitism. Participation in internationalist, socialist and anti-fascist organisations connected Jews with a vast collectivity. Involvement in trades unions was, in a similar fashion, a step in the direction of acculturation and integration.^{lxi}

The key to this process of inclusion was adherence to a secular ideology. Jewish immigrants and their 'native-born' children espoused ideologies that transcended religion and ethnicity, enfolding them in larger communities. Even Zionism was not simply a form of separatism: left and right wing Jewish nationalists were able to make common cause with others who shared their political orientation. Emigrants to Palestine moved country but did not cut themselves off from the world.

The most graphic expression of this outward facing rebellion against anti-semitism was Jewish participation in the International Brigades during the Spanish Civil War. Contrast their experience to the trajectory of angry, alienated young Muslims who have traveled to Pakistan, Afghanistan and Iraq to train for jihad and to fight the west. They have connected with the *umma*, the Muslim people, but they have severed any ties with the rest of society. Their rebellion has, literally, led them into a global ghetto. Their isolation is

assuaged only by the fantasy of the caliphate and the conversion of mankind to Islam.^{lxii}

This may not be more of a fantasy than the dream of world revolution and international fraternity cherished by Jewish radicals, but for a key period the aspirations of Jewish socialism had tangible and benign consequences. In a politically bi-polar world, Jewish leftism as a form of resistance to anti-semitism brought with it allies and alliances. Ironically, when Jews abandoned the left in a steadily increasing proportion after the 1950s, their shift to social democracy or free-market liberalism also brought allies. By pointing to the persecution of Jews in the USSR and Soviet support for Israel's enemies they once again were able to mobilise support against anti-Jewish movements.^{lxiii}

There have been attempts in Europe to create a politics that unites Muslims with the mainstream of politics. The most successful of these has been the Respect party in Britain. The party grew out of the Stop the War Movement which was itself a coalition of Muslim organisations, pro-Palestinian groups, and the far left. The Socialist Workers Party provided its leading cadres and organisational spine. In the general election of 2005 and the local elections of 2006 Respect made a respectable showing. It has one MP, George Galloway, and eleven councilors in east London. But in November 2007 the party split. Galloway wanted to emancipate himself from the Trotskyist element while the left objected to depiction of the party as 'Muslim.'^{lxiv}

The fate of Respect exemplifies the divergence between Jewish and Muslim histories. Unlike the historical patterns of Jewish opposition to anti-semitism the contemporary resistance to Islamophobia risks increasing the isolation of Muslims. Islamic-based militancy rubs against the grain of left wing movements and challenges the sympathies of civil and human rights organisations. At its most extreme, it activates cultural stereotypes of an armed, expansionist, imperialist Islam that once terrorised and enslaved Europeans. Jews, even after the creation of Israel, have been able to capitalise on their historic weakness and powerlessness. By contrast, Muslim

minorities in Europe operate in the shadow of regional superpowers and nuclear armed states such as Iran and Pakistan.

Muslims may experience poverty, social exclusion and disempowerment in Europe but unlike Jewish immigrants who had no homeland, they are associated with powerful sovereign entities. When Muslims in Denmark were offended by cartoons depicting the Prophet they made contact with Muslims in other countries and appealed for help to the governments of Muslim countries. They eventually triggered an international wave of protests. There is simply no parallel for this in the history of anti-semitism or the resistance to it. At certain times the Jewish Diaspora pretended to function as a unified and potent global force but this was always an act of legerdemain. The alleged 'power' of the Jews in one country or another could never have been a substitute for an armed, sovereign state. Muslim migration, the emergence of Muslim powers and globalisation has utterly transformed the dynamic between this minority ethnic-faith group and the wider community.^{lxv}

Finally, many, perhaps a majority, Muslims do not want to be like the Jews. Throughout Europe, the Jews are held up as the model of an integrated ethnic-faith group. But polls indicate that a significant proportion of Muslims are unwilling to make the adaptations that Jews have made.^{lxvi}

In the UK, 10% of Muslims think that integration has gone too far and 30% respond to blandishments to go further by saying that the way things are is just right. Half want Muslims schools (like Jews), but 30% don't want to live next door to a non-Muslim. Whereas a prayer for the Royal family is recited each shabbat in every UK synagogue, 25% of Muslims do not identify with the British flag; 15% do not feel part of British society; and 47% would prefer to live in an Islamic society. 60% claim it is more important to be Muslim than British and 80% say they are Muslim first, British second. No less than 86% would only fight to defend Muslim interests and 40% would not respect British law if it clashed with the precepts of their faith. Hence, nearly 30% want to live under *sharia* law. Half of polled Muslims reject an oath of allegiance to Britain.^{lxvii}

To suggest that Muslims are like Jews and so should follow the Jewish path is, therefore, likely to aggravate relations with the Jewish communities. It is like playing good cop, bad cop. The Jew may be the good cop, as against hard-line secularists and advocates of complete assimilation, but is still a cop.

Muslims are not the new Jews. Islamophobia is quite distinct from anti-semitism. Both are at historically high levels in Europe. But to cope with them requires quite separate strategies, tailored to the specific histories and contexts relevant to each. To do otherwise is to court disaster.

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^v Cameron to meet mosque leaders at http://www.dailymail.co.uk/pages/live/articles/news/news.html?in_article_id=433881&in_page_id=1770; Cameron criticises Nazi remark at http://www.dailymail.co.uk/pages/live/articles/news/news.html?in_article_id=433883&in_page_id=1770.

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^{vii} http://www.mpacuk.org/index2.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=4269&pop=1&page=0&item=34

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^{xiii} *The Fight Against Anti-Semitism and Islamophobia*, p. 18.

^{xiv} Human Rights First, *Antisemitism. 2007 Hate Crimes Survey* (New York, 2007), p. 23;

^{xv} ECRI Press Release, 16 March 2005 at http://www.coe.int/t/e/human_rights/ecri/1-ecri/5-current_events/39-eng_16_03_2005.asp#TopOfPage

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^{xviii} Matti Bunzl, *Anti-Semitism and Islamophobia: Hatreds Old and New in Europe* (Chicago, 2007), pp. 11-13.

^{xix} Bunzl, *Anti-Semitism and Islamophobia*, pp. 1-4, 13-14.

^{xx} Bunzl, *Anti-Semitism and Islamophobia*, pp. 26-7, 30-36.

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^{xxvi} Colley, *Captives*, pp. 99-103, 107-10, 129-30.

^{xxvii} Fred Halliday, 'Anti-Muslimism and Contemporary Politics: One Ideology or many?' in *Islam and the Myth of Confrontation*, pp. 165-77.

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^{xxxix} *Summary report on Islamophobia*, p. 17.

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^{xli} *Summary report on Islamophobia*, p. 19.

^{xlii} *Summary report on Islamophobia*, p. 20.

^{xliiii} *Summary report on Islamophobia*, p. 21.

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^{xlvi} *Summary report on Islamophobia*, p. 25.

^{xlvii} *Summary report on Islamophobia*, p. 27.

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