Islamism and violent *jihad*: a response from critical multiculturalism

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Abstract

This paper sets out the author's effort to improve upon British multiculturalism by developing the discourse of 'critical multiculturalism'. It explains how this approach can be utilised to provide a response to the threats posed by the violent *jihadi* strand within Islamism. This response includes acknowledging the West's role in creating the conditions in which this tendency has advanced its position. It includes reference to controversies within wider currents of Islam over homosexuality and the status of women. It argues that diverse beliefs and practices need to be negotiated in a context of many-sided cultural change in British society understood as a 'community of communities', where democracy is enhanced, equal rights fully established, and economic inequality is severely reduced.

By way of introduction

Many thanks to Dr Ali-Reza Bhojani of the Al-Mahdi Institute for the invitation to talk with you today.[1] Perhaps I should start by explaining how I get to be here. My life-long interest, as a researcher, teacher and political organiser, is in the migration to Britain, and settlement here, of the Caribbean, African and South Asian populations living in the countries colonised by the British during its period of Empire. Thus I'm here as a sociologist and activist. My interest was inspired by my teenage friendship with a third generation Trinidadian-British boy, and by our mutual passion for black civil rights in the USA and South Africa. I'm going to refer to those Muslims who have been attracted to the violent *jihadi* schism of Islam, so I want to state, right away, that, at the age of 15, my friend and I both agreed that, as soon as we left

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[1] This paper has been slightly amended in light of comments made by some of the Al-Mahdi students who attended my talk on 15th October 2014

school, we would go to South Africa to join the armed wing of the African National Congress. We were ready to fight and if necessary die to overthrow apartheid. Instead, we went to university to study sociology. I think we made the right decision. My passion transferred to the political movements in Leeds in the early 1970s where Caribbean and South Asian people were struggling for equal rights and justice. But I had supported the Black Panthers in the USA, who carried guns and very occasionally fired them. In the mid-1970s I joined a revolutionary organisation that never advocated violence, but we did say that we understood why people in Ireland, Latin America, Angola, South Africa, Western Europe and even in England did engage in violent confrontation with agents of their governments, including bombings and assassinations. Please don't get me wrong: I am not going to attempt to justify those actions. I say this because it provides the context for my major argument today. This is that we need to understand, to empathise and to talk with people who engage in political action which we oppose. In referring to these violent *jihadis* as 'political' I'm alluding to another point I want to make, which is that these people have actually turned away from their religion and towards politics, specifically a Western style of politics, despite their claim to be implementing a 'pure' form of Islam.

My final introductory remark is to explain how I became interested in Islam and the lives of Muslims. Again, it started with a friend, in the late 1970s - the young man who ran the corner shop in the multicultural, inner-city area in which I lived. He was a Pathan, and he explained to me the history of the North West Frontier of the British Empire. He was very proud of his father, who had shot his rifle at Russians, Pakistanis and Brits. In the 1980s was lucky enough to work (at the Harehills and Chapeltown Law Centre in Leeds) with a few other British Muslims, of Pakistani and Kashmiri background, and my work brought me into contact with quite a few Bangladeshis, both intellectuals and workers. I learned more from all of them. The demonstrations against Salman Rushdie's *Satanic Verses* broke out around me at the end of the 1980s, so that added to my interest in Islamic politics and religion. In the early 1990s my attention turned towards those young Brits, white and African-Caribbean, who were converting to Islam. I noted the first attacks by Al-Qaeda at the end of the 1990s, and after 9/11 (2001) I was just one

of many who knew that we were entering a new era of conflict in which significant words like 'crusade' were being used. When the 7/7 (2005) bombers were revealed to have been from Leeds, my interest ratcheted up even more. Finally, when I retired from university life, I took a consultancy post, from 2010-13, aiming to increase the range and depth of teaching about Muslims and Islam in Higher Education social science courses. That's when I first met our colleague Dr Ali-Reza. I mention all this so that you can draw the correct conclusion: I am not a real expert in this field. I am simply a close, sociological observer of Muslims, and a diligent reader of history, theology, literature, sociology, psychology and international politics which illuminate Islam and the lives of Muslims worldwide. Because I am not an expert, and I learn best through conversation, I sincerely look forward to being corrected and improved by you in the discussion period.

Critical Multiculturalism (CMC)

What I aim to do today is demonstrate how a new discourse that I call 'critical multiculturalism' can assist us in making social, cultural and political progress at a time when the Muslims are being confronted by, at best, ignorance and at worst hostility, in varying degrees of violence, by non Muslims particularly, but not exclusively, in the Middle East. I also want to suggest how this discourse might help Muslims tackle the increasingly sharp differences amongst Muslims. I've indicated above that my main message is about dialogue, but I will soon make it clear that even more challenging issues, such as equality, are also crucially required if we are to have real progress.

I need a minute or two to explain why I have conjured up this discourse. You will probably remember that, just before the atrocities of 9/11, in the Spring of 2001, British Muslims in four northern English towns engaged in what the media called 'riots' or even 'race riots'. Urgent reports were written about three of those towns (my friends in Leeds decided to keep quiet about our 'riots' so we never got a report). Then a kind of overview report came out, known as the Cantle Report, which turned into a government programme called community cohesion. (My thoughts about these 'riots', the reports and community cohesion are in Farrar (2003).) I have argued that 'riots' should be re-conceptualised as 'violent urban protest' in Farrar (2009). When

London was bombed on 7/7 2005, community cohesion was soon afterwards usurped by the programme called Preventing Violent Extremism. The background noise, ever since 2001, that Muslims were something of a problem, somehow linked to their defective modes of settlement in the UK, turned into a crescendo of criticism of the long-standing, and until then widely applauded, discourse of multiculturalism. Multiculturalism, with its vague but well-intentioned 'celebration of diversity', had become almost hegemonic in the UK during the 1990s. Until this strong criticism broke out I had always thought that multiculturalism was a rather soggy policy with a practice rightly lampooned as 'saris, samosas and steel-bands'. I thought it was altogether soft on racism and unable to address structural inequality. Nevertheless, it had helped make Britain a more tolerant place, where racism was the preserve of a relatively small minority. However, faced with senior figures doing their best to dismantle the undoubted achievements of multiculturalism, I began to defend it, but argued that it needed radical improvement. (My main contribution on multiculturalism and its contestations is in Farrar (2012a). I defend 'critical multiculturalism' against its alternative 'interculturalism' in Farrar (2012b).)

My proposal is for a new discourse, called critical multiculturalism partly because it is actually critical of the liberal multiculturalism of the past forty years, and partly to signify its allegiance with the radical discourse called critical theory. Critical multiculturalism's key components are these:

1) Britain as a 'community of communities': Critical multiculturalism (CMC) supports for Bhikhu Parekh's version of Britain as a 'community of communities', where difference is respected;

2) Integration as a two-way process: CMC supports Tariq Modood's notion of 'two-way integration', where the identities of all ethnic groups (including those that are white-skinned) undergo processes of change as the overarching national community emerges;

3) The *negotiation* of diversity: CMC recognises that these two features entail a *negotiation* of diversity, rather than the uncritical *celebration* of diversity advocated by some liberal multiculturalists. Critical multiculturalists, for in-

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stance, would support homosexual rights, reject any type of coercion of women, and promote the sexual and geographical mixing of ethnic groups. They do so while recognising that many committed believers in the Abrahamic tradition oppose those values. Despite those disagreements, CMC would oppose the UK coalition government's refusal (in David Cameron's 2011 speech) even to talk to political Islamists. Instead, they would promote dialogue and debate - negotiation - on all points of difference between and among all ethnic groups;

4) <u>Full rights, enshrined in law</u>: CMC adopts of a strong position on full legal rights for all ethnic minorities, and advocates strict implementation of equal treatment regardless of ethnicity (supporting Will Kymlicka here). CMC relentlessly opposes discrimination in any form;

5) <u>Active civic engagement in a devolved democracy</u>: CMC argues that effective processes of integration depend upon a radical version of democracy. Integration has to be on the basis of political equality, as well as every other dimension of equality. Citizenship needs to be encouraged in the strong form of active civic engagement. It must be possible for most members of every ethnic group to be fully and meaningfully engaged in the civic life of the nation. This will become much more likely when effective political power to be transferred from the centre to the localities;

6) <u>Economic and cultural equality</u>: CMC recognises that economic discrimination is as important as cultural discrimination in the generation of disadvantage; thus critical multiculturalism advocates economic equality as well as legal and cultural equality.

I want now to insert the different strands of Islamic belief and the divergent social and political trajectories of Muslims into this discussion. As I've indicated, I've believed ever since the fatwa was issued against Salman Rushdie in 1989 that the West's inability to comprehend and fully accept Muslim communities, both those living inside Western nations and those without, is a social, cultural and political problem of monumental proportions. My own interest in multiculturalism began, as I said,

with my affection for my black British friend which soon spilled over into a love of the culture. I was massively impressed by the music, art, literature, poetry and film that peoples of African, Caribbean and South Asian heritage had produced. Since the 1970s particularly there has been an explosion in popularity of the art forms that have emanated from African-Americans and British-African-Caribbeans. The combination of the common root of Christianity, Africans' success in soccer, and the popular embrace of black culture help explain the advances in multiculturalism in Britain from the early 1970s to the early 2000s. I am certainly not presenting a deficit model of culture when I suggest that, with the emergence of the violent jihadis at the end of the 1990s, it was inevitable that tendencies to exclude and marginalise Muslims in the UK, and in the West, would go into overdrive partly because those points of attraction for white people to black people were not so easy to find in their relations with Muslims. Nevertheless, up to that point, Muslims in the UK had been positioned as a relatively benign 'other'. It's useful to note that, in this period, 1970 to the late 1990s, Muslims were normally subsumed within the wider category of 'Asian'. As such, they were presented in popular discourse in the 1970s, 80s and 90s as hard-working, law-abiding, family-centred and - crucially - docile. They were 'other', but not a threatening 'other'. Their 'otherness' seemed irreducible because their religious practice was mysterious (few distinguished Hinduism, Sikhism and Islam) and the class distinctions that were emerging (as Indian-origin families did better at school and in business than those from Pakistan and Bangladesh) were hardly noticed. During the demonstrations against the *Satanic Verses* in 1988 and 1989 the category 'Muslim' did appear in popular discourse, and this upsurge in political activity did upset the stereotype of 'Asians' as divorced from British civic life. So far, so good. But these demonstrations and the storm of commentary (often from otherwise liberal intellectuals) set in play a picture of Muslims as religiously orthodox, homogenous and hostile to what the West calls 'free speech'. There should be no underestimation of the negative impact this commentary had on relations between Muslims and non-Muslims in the UK. It got much worse, however, when 'the Muslim' was fixed as an entirely distinct category from 'the Asian' after the devastation of the Twin Towers and the Pen-

tagon in 2001. It's at this point that Muslims became a focus of fierce antipathy in contemporary Western discourse.

British multiculturalism, however, showed its strengths even in that difficult period. The deficits in British knowledge are many. In everyday life very few people understand Islam as an Abrahamic religion of The Book. In the the pitiful teaching of history in British schools, representation of the Crusades utterly distorted 'our' understanding of Islam and its cultures. Absolutely no-one, for instance, was taught in a British school that Islamic civilisation during the period of the Crusades was vastly superior to the cultures of the European nations invading the Middle East. Nevertheless, senior political figures such as Tony Blair were able to point to some positives when they reacted both to 9/11 and 7/7 with very strong claims about the virtues of Islamic belief, its common strands with Christianity and Judaism, correctly making the point that the problem was not with 'Muslims', nor 'Islam', but with a small, violent, minority strand within Islam.[2] Such views were reflected in the serious media, especially the BBC, who went on to make educational programmes about the Middle East which broadly confirmed the 'birth of civilisation' trope and the high achievements of Islamic scholarship. While the media also gave prominence to the - admittedly shocking - statistic that (in 2006) 13% of British Muslims thought of the London bombers as 'martyrs',[3] embedded multiculturalism, combined with political leadership and even limited policies such as community cohesion, staved off the worst imaginable consequences for British Muslims of Al-Qaeda's terrorism. There is no

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[2] 'The Crusades' is an important myth (in Roland Barthes' sense) in the West's discourse on Islam and the Middle East. It is significant that George W Bush used that term, conjuring up that myth, in his initial justification for the invasion of Iraq in 2003, but then refrained from repeating it. I remain convinced that a one-time hero of the British Army, Colonel Tim Collins, used the term in a speech to his troops just before they headed into battle against the Iraqis, glowingly reported by the Daily Mirror in March 2003. I remember reading the speech and being outraged by his use reference. The speech is widely available, and appears in his book *The Rules of Engagement* (2006), without The Crusades being mentioned. I intend to find the print copy of the The Mirror (19 or 20 March 2003) to check my memory - and the possible white-washing of the speech. See here for more on Tim Collins, including the famous speech as now presented http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tim_Collins_(British_Army_officer) Accessed 9.10.14

[3] The Populus survey which produced this result was widely quoted. The statistic in the same poll that 87% of British Muslims disagreed with the statement that the bombers were acting in accordance with Islamic beliefs was not quoted. See http://www.populus.co.uk/the-times-itv-news-muslim-77-poll-050706.html Accessed 9.10.14

room for complacency. In 2006, 79% of British Muslims had experienced more abuse and hostility in the period after the 2005 bombings.[4] But I think it remains true to say that, while Islamophobia has increased, its forms have not been as extreme as might have been expected, thanks to the underlying multiculturalist settlement in the UK.[5]

Applying CMC to Islamic belief and practice

There is a long way to go if we are to really achieve a truly effective settlement among the various ethnicities and religions in the UK, and I turn now to demonstrating how a discourse of critical multiculturalism will help us to make real progress. I'm going to examine each of the components of CMC and relate them to the problems we face. I'm going to concentrate on what I'm calling the 'violent jihadi' stream in Islam, while contrasting that with the other strands of Islamic belief and practice.

1) Britain as a 'community of communities'

When Professors Bikhu Parekh, Stuart Hall and others (Runnymede Trust, 2000) came up with the notion that Britain is best thought of as a 'community of communities', Jack Straw, Labour's Home Secretary at the time, welcomed it on the BBC's Today programme and rejected it a few hours later on The World at One. The idea

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[4] http://www.populus.co.uk/the-times-itv-news-muslim-77-poll-050706.html Accessed 9.10.14

[5] The 2006 Populus poll included the statistics that 33% of the general population had 'close Muslim friends', while 87% of British Muslims had close friends who were 'non-Muslim'. These stats are not widely circulated.

was shot down in what we now can see as an early assault on an implicit assumption within multiculturalism that diverse ethnic groups formed viable communities of their own which can, and should, live harmoniously with other communities. What the critics missed was that the authors placed this within an overarching concept of Britain as one community which could, and should, embrace all its constituent parts. (Ironically, the same people who attacked this idea then adopted the same notion when the made their argument that Scotland was a community which should be happy to stay within the communities called England, Wales and Northern Ireland.) How might this apply to the issues that arise when Muslims live as a minority within Britain? They could simply be seen as one of the communities within the bigger community. But that is to over-simplify. Firstly, we observe that British Muslims do not, in fact, form one single community. This is recognised when Blair, Cameron and others have stressed that the violent jihadis are, at best, a tiny minority among British Muslims, and at worst, outwith the Muslim community as they would like it to be constructed. Secondly, there are many sub-communities within the putative community of Muslims in Britain. As everyone here knows, they can initially be divided theologically into Sunni, Shi'i and Sufi. But we should note the small, but socially significant, group who described themselves a 'culturally Muslim' but not at all, or not particularly, religious. (My Jewish atheist friends would use a similar notion. I too would acknowledge my own cultural roots in Christianity, while not being religious.) Thirdly, we would note that, among the believers, there are several strands within each of the three main schools of Islam. The usefulness of the Parekh/Hall understanding of Britain as a community formed of lots of different types of sub-communities is that it reminds us that these differences only become problematic if one or more of the sub-communities reject, in principle, the view that all are worthy of our respect.

2) Integration as a two-way process

Professor Tariq Modood (2007) has rightly pointed out that multiculturalism has hitherto failed to place enough stress on the obligation upon the various components of the national community to change their own understandings and practices in rela-

tion to the other communities that form part of the nation. Very crudely, in Modood's multiculturalism, white Brits have to change their ideas and their practices in relation to their brown and black fellows. But this important contribution also implies that people of black (African heritage) and brown (South Asian heritage) need to adjust in relation to each other, just as the white Brits of Norse, Anglo-Saxon and French heritage must adjust their culture in relation to the white Euro-Brits of Eastern and Southern European heritage. All communities, in short, have to change in order to interact more fruitfully with each other. Changes among the non-Muslim British cultures might include learning from South Asian Brits how to restore family solidarity. Some British atheists need to re-examine their entrenched hostility to religion and recognise the profound role it has played, particularly among minority ethnic groups, in holding inner-city neighbourhoods together during periods of intense racism and economic crisis.[6]

'Cultural adjustment' does not necessarily involve radical change within each group, but it does require people to learn enough about each other's cultures to inspire respect for each culture, a willingness to continually enlarge their learning about other cultures, and what Ali-Reza Bhojani calls 'epistemic humility': acceptance that the foundations of our various systems of knowledge are open to interrogation and might need to change.[7]

3) The negotiation of diversity

We need to become much more mature as a society about the need to discuss - even argue about - the cultural differences that exist among and between the communities that form the British isles. One reason, I think, that multiculturalism made such progress here is that people, everyday people, realised quite soon that the differences amongst us were not insuperable. This is partly because so many cultural groups share

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[6] I'm grateful for the criticism of the version of this paper I read at the Al-Mahdi Institute for only providing examples of where Muslim culture needed to change. The over-riding message of this paper is that all cultural groups need to change. So I have inserted these examples of where the predominantly white cultural groups need to shift.

[7] The points in the last sentence were among those made in the discussion after I delivered this paper.

the Abrahamic faiths as the foundations of their culture, and in essence those faiths subscribe to very similar values. While religious practices vary in detail, and there are serious theological differences, those human values as demonstrated in how people live their family lives, and as neighbours, soon came to be seen as very similar to the settled, largely white, Brits. I dare to generalise wildly when I say that South Asian British citizens impressed many of their white and black neighbours with their diligence and dedication to family life, as well as their sheer hard work in making ends meet. And the more perceptive national commentators noticed this, and commented positively. These observations helped to counter ever-present racism. When the theology and cultural history came to be examined by those of us non-Muslims interested in what used to be called 'race relations' it became clear that, among the Muslims, the groups that Tariq Ramadan calls salafist traditionalists and literalists were just one among many tendencies within Islam. While both of those groups do seem rigid and incapable of engaging in interpretation (despite the irony that, in refusing interpretation, they are actually making an interpretation), the fact that so many other sections of Muslims are flexible and able to think dynamically within and between the various theological frameworks provides a clear basis for what I recommend as the <u>negotiation</u> between and among the communities. But, to repeat, this does require the embracing of change, by everyone.

As soon as I make more controversial statements, such as implying above that critical multiculturalism suggests (for instance) that Shi'i need to make changes to adjust to Sunnis and Sufis, and vice-versa, we see how hard a task we are setting ourselves. Just as Protestants find it very hard to make any significant adjustments in relation to Catholics, and the African-heritage churches, coming out of the Pentecostal and Baptists traditions, find it hard to change in relation to the other Christian traditions, it is perhaps too much to ask Muslims to bend, particularly when faced with such hostility from parts of the non-Muslim world. 'Epistemic humility' is rare among committed deists, just as it is among atheists. But changing the shape of our structures of knowledge and our cultures is required of us all, in critical multiculturalism's view. Above, I mentioned issues that must be negotiated that divide many communities of faith, such as homosexual rights (especially gay marriage) and the status of women within the

faith's hierarchy. The Church of England (C of E) has for years been wracked with division on these issues and for a while it looked as though the African C of E would break with the white C of E on these matters. But it looks to me, as an outsider, that the Church of England's approach to these intense differences of view has been a model of negotiation, based on respectful, long-term dialogue. Some consensus has recently been established, with the leadership somehow avoiding the schism with their African cousins. There will have to be an equally prolonged and difficult debate between those (of all religions and none) who support gay rights and those Muslims who regard homosexuality as *haram*. Already lines of accommodation have emerged, most promising of which is that it is only for God to judge the homosexual, not me.

Another pressing issue for negotiation is the status of women living in Western society. This is a huge issue which divides not only people within each faith group, but divides the unbelievers as well. No longer does a simple 'pro' or 'anti' feminist split summarise the situation. There's no time to discuss this fully here, but one point to make in the context of negotiating difference, which must always entail a search for points of agreement, is that feminists who campaign against the objectification and demeaning sexualisation of women might find they have more in common than they suspect with Muslim women who cover themselves not as an act of subjection to men, but in order to enhance their autonomy. Kecia Ali (2006) makes clear that Islam's position on women's status can be seen, in her interpretation, to be quite compatible with the recently established (and still contested) relative equality between men and women in the UK. The fact that she concludes Islam places women as ontologically equal to men, but, in the last instance as socially less favoured than men, and perhaps, ultimately secondary to men, will only trouble people like me, who seek complete equality between the genders. But lots of non-Muslim British women and men would settle for an 'equal but socially different' positioning of women. The representation of Islam as a religion in which women are utterly subservient to men is clearly an extreme example of the orientalist discourse that has sullied East-West relations.

The issue of equal treatment for women and gays is controversial when Muslims connect with recent changes in British attitudes. How much more difficult it is to deal with issues of difference which are quite literally life-threatening. An answer to

the question of what to do in relation to the doctrines of violence that have emerged in recent years within Islam has to start with a brief analysis of the roots of that violent tendency. I've tried to explain elsewhere that we are witnessing an atavistic, rigid interpretation of Islam attaching itself to a Western political methodology (Farrar 2012c). The turn to violence by some Muslims reflects the use of assassination and bombing by extremists in Europe and America of the far left and the far right, usually attached to a political party. Recently, we've seen how the violently political faction calling itself Islamic State has, in addition to aping Western methods of terror, adapted Hollywood production values to 21st Century Western social media tools, even mirroring Westerners' obsession with violent video games (Rose 2014). That the attraction to this tendency among Western Muslims has been enhanced by the acts of extreme violence perpetrated by the American and British governments, and their allies, on Afghanistan and Iraq is (at last) widely recognised even by those who supported those invasions and who turned a blind eye to the war crimes that took place. The West might even ask itself if its 100 year output of cinematic violence, enhanced by 60 years of violence on television, might have helped both perpetuate the adulation of machismo, and blur the boundaries between screen violence and physical blood, injury and death. This socio-political context has to form one of the major agenda items when the Islamists and the Western negotiators finally meet. In my view, little progress will be made until the West acknowledges its complicity in creating the terribly dangerous situation in which we find itself, and admits its mistakes.

The West has set the context for the recent emergence of the violent jihadi tendency. But to make real progress in the debate, there are matters internal to Islam which also need consideration. Islam, like the other religions of The Book, has internally differentiated itself several times, resulting in a variety of positions on all sorts of important ethical questions. One of these is the debate about the conditions under which violence is legitimate. The Prophet Muhammed's ethical prescriptions on warfare are rightly seen as the foundation of the Catholic Church's much later pronouncements on the conditions for a Just War. War must always be seen as the worst solution to the problems humans make for themselves, but if it has to be conducted, full implementation of the Islam-inspired Just War principles would ameliorate some

of its worst features. I'm sure that Muslims of all denominations are active in reminding the violent *jihadis* that they are breaking the rules of war laid down by the Prophet and enacted by the Vatican. War crimes by all sides in all the recent wars have to be acknowledged and judicially punished.

There is one specific argument within Islam which has to be addressed in this context. This is the doctrine of *takfir* developed by the Khaarijites in the 7th Century (CE). This ruling, as you know, justifies the killing by Muslims of other Muslims who do not follow their interpretation of Islam, on the grounds that those Muslims are *infidel*. Civilians may be murdered for the same reason. This doctrine was revived by the Wahhabis between 1803 and 1813 (CE), pursued by Takfir wa Hijira in Egypt in the 1970s, and, after much debate, adopted by Ayman al-Zawahiri and Osama bin Laden in Peshawar in the late 1980s (Farrar 2012c).[8] Once al-Qaeda adopted this doctrine, the door was open for the attacks on the USA in 2001, Madrid in 2004 and London in 2005, in which Muslims and non-Muslims with no status as soldiers were indiscriminately slaughtered and wounded. Now, along with a former US Attorney General, I regard George Bush Senior's aerial bombardment of Saddam Hussain's retreating army after it had been defeated in Kuwait in 1991 as a war crime: perhaps 10,000 soldiers who had surrendered and were therefore non-combatants were killed.[9] Something like *takfir* seems to have operated in the carpet bombing of German cities in 1944-5 and in the nuclear weapons used on Japanese cities in 1945. Al-Qaeda's actions are equally heinous. In debating violence as an instrument of politics, the criminal actions by Western powers have to be on the table for discussion. In this debate,

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[8] I note that the adoption of *takfir* by Jama'atu Ahlus-Sunnah Lidda'Awati Wal Jihad, known as Boko Haram, led to a split in that group in 2012, with a new group emerging called ANSARU, which rejected the doctrine. See Atta Barkindo's article (20.10.14) in The Conversation, available here http://tiny.cc/6dd1nx (Accessed 20.10.14).

[9] Wikipedia is the handiest source on this. It says the casualty figure could have been less than 10,000. I remember a news report at the time saying that 40,000 deaths were estimated. See http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Highway_of_Death Accessed 13.10.16

the faction of Muslims who defy all Just War principles has to be confronted.[10] Again, Muslims of all types, including the non-violent Salafis, are doing just that.[11]

Somehow my term 'the negotiation of diversity' doesn't capture the enormous challenge we have here. Immediately, Muslims and non-Muslims will say that it is morally impossible to negotiate with people whose methods include acts of terror. Currently, Islamic State (IS) have acquired pariah status for most of the world's population and their highly self-publicised beheadings have for once justified the term 'barbaric'. But, as Tony Blair's chief of staff has recently argued, in many of the periods of terrorism in the past 100 years, negotiation is exactly what has been undertaken (Powell 2014a). Hugh Gaitskell, leader of the Labour party in the 1960s, said: 'All terrorists, at the invitation of government, end up with drinks at the Dorchester'. Eliza Manningham-Buller, the former head of the British secret service, MI5, said: 'The divisions in Northern Ireland society, manifested in terrorism, could not be solved militarily'. All the counter-terrorism work could do, she added, was 'buy time for a political process' (cited in Powell 2014b). It is widely observed now, by both military and political leaders, that war from the air or on the ground, will not solve the underlying problems in Iraq and Syria. Not only must IS be drawn into negotiation, but so must the groups supporting al-Qaeda, as well as the political wing of the Free Syrian Army, along with the leadership of the Syrian, Iraqi and Iranian governments. When the threat is significant, well organised, and commands a high enough level of popular support, as all these key players do, negotiations have to be opened, even with those whose methods seem most repugnant. It may be that Westerners have a role as brokers in those negotiations. The chances of success get much higher when all sides reach a philosophical level in which they have common ground. All sides in the Middle East have roots in Islam, and Western negotiators are likely to include those with

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[10] At least the *takfiri* Muslims have laid down their shoddy theological justification. The Christian war-mongers commit these atrocities while claiming to adhere to their Just War principles.

[11] Lawrence Wright (2007) seems to suggest that Zawahiri and bin Laden's main rival in Peshawar in the 1980s, the charismatic . . . , who was the first to inspire non-Afghani Muslims to join the *jihad* against the Soviets, was assassinated precisely because he vociferously opposed *takfir*. I'm grateful for the comment in the discussion at the Al Mahdi Institute which stressed the Muslim opposition to *takfir*.

roots in the other religions of The Book. Common ground could be found, but other factors would have to be in place, including equality and democracy. I'm going to cover these other limbs of the CMC discourse more briefly.

4) Fully equal rights - equal treatment

One of the recruiting lines for potential jihadis brought up in Western nations is hypocrisy. The social and political values established in the revolutions in England in the 17th century, France and North America in the 18th, and then enhanced in the 20th century, include universal suffrage, democracy, the separation of judicial and political powers and parliamentary sovereignty, all supposedly guaranteeing fair and equal treatment, irrespective of social or ethnic status, within an ethically-founded legal system. Young Westerners are highly alert to the breaches in what are supposed to be basic rights established in their societies. The charge of hypocrisy - breaching the value of fair and equal treatment for all, said to be held most dear - has had real purchase amongst Muslims over the past twenty years or more. The list of what are seen as new crusades against Islam are worth listing, to remind ourselves of recent history:

- 1992-5: the Serbian assault on Muslims in the former Yugoslavia
- 1994-6, repeated 1999-2002: the Russians' violent suppression of Muslim claims in Chechnya
- 2002-14: the Americans turned their military might on their former allies in Afghanistan
- 1991, repeated 2003: the Western alliance invades Iraq.

The incarceration of large numbers of Muslims in Guantanamo Bay, without charge or trial; the vicious ill-treatment of prisoners in Al Ghraib prison; the killing of civilians by drones in the recent period - all these added weight to their charge that the hypocritical and maddeningly violent West was out to destroy Muslims and Islam. Muslims were seen to be relegated to somewhere below second class status by the Western alliance. There is some irony in the fact that those who actively turn to violent *jihad* subsequently reject the modern commitments to human rights and democracy that underpin their charge of hypocrisy. 'We don't need democracy, we don't need any com-

munism or anything like that, all we need is sharia', said Abu Abdullah al-Habbashi, from Britain, in a recent IS film (Rose 2014). It might be that this statement, probably subscribed to by many non-violent Salafis, is, in fact, an effort to come to terms with the failure of the West to put its high-flown values fully into practice. If you can't do them properly, let's abandon them altogether and put our trust in God, they seem to be saying. If this <u>is</u> their underlying position, there is much scope for discussion, particularly if the West admits its shortcomings. If we all want a society of justice, fairness and relative equality, we have much in common. The obvious debating point is how can we be sure that the person appointed to exemplify God's will, currently Abu Bakr al-Bhagdadi, in the self-declared Islamic State is up to the job? It has been argued that the Prophet's process of guiding the believers during his lifetime was a prototype of democracy, with much attention to the views of at least one woman. How just and fair is the Islamic State, we might ask?

5) Engaged democracy

CMC's principle that society is most inclusive, most dialogic, most tolerant and most fair when it has the most developed form of democracy might not cut much ice with the violent *jihadis*, who have no need for 'man-made' laws, as we have just seen. They might accept the point about the Prophet's original consultative system. But they could say that Islam has always prescribed a theocratic social system, and that accommodations within Islam to modern, Western systems make Muslim governments illegitimate wherever they appear. As Tariq Ramadan (2004 p. 159) has made clear, the arguments against democracy are well developed in what he calls the literalist and traditionalist schools of Islam, and are upheld to the full in what he calls the 'petromonarchies', particularly in Wahhabi Saudi Arabia. The argument then has to move beyond the simple points I made in the previous section onto the terrain of Islamic reform that Ramadan (2004) outlines. CMC cannot claim to be much help here, since this is largely a theological discussion, but I would suggest that the interpretation of Islam that Ramadan recommends would appear to sit easily within the CMC discourse.

6) Economic equality

The last in my building blocks for a new discourse of critical multiculturalism is economic equality. This has to be adopted with the same commitment most of us make to equality of esteem among ethnic groups and equality before the law. Economic equality is emphasised much less than it used to be in the West since neo-liberalism has become the dominant economic philosophy. Yet global economic inequality, and the drive by the strongest states to maintain their economic power, is one of the structural roots of the present international crisis, leading to the emergence of new, violent, non-state actors, such as al-Qaeda and Islamic State. Domestic economic inequality is one of the roots of the alienation felt by many young Muslims. (Since it is clear that the *jihadi* converts are not all poor, nor young, I would suggest that their alienation is far deeper than mere material deprivation.) I suspect that one of the attractive features of the imaginary state conjured up by the Salafis is the full implementation of *zakat* in a society where most people live on a similar economic level. After all, the critique of capitalism's propensity to widen the gap between rich and poor, and the rapid adoption of capitalist modernity by the Westernised elites in Egypt, despite its catastrophic effects on the nation's poor, was one of the driving forces in the building of the Muslim Brotherhood into a mass movement front eh 1920s onwards. Sayyid Qtub's work in what he saw as the glittering, materialistic and debauched United States between 1948 and 1950 converted him from a mild scholar of English literature into a fierce exponent of the Brotherhood's ideology. The powerful critique of capitalism that emanated from the Brotherhood is one of the reasons why Islamism, at least in its non-violent versions, has been sympathetically analysed as a critical force by some academics (Buck Morss 2003). It might not be clear exactly where Qutb stood on violence, but his work has been used in justification of violent *jihad*. The egalitarian strand in Salafi ideology is exemplified in one of the many telling stories related by Lawrence Wright in his definitive book on Al-Qaeda. Arriving in Afghanistan after their ejection from Sudan, the Taliban leadership offered a choice of accommodation for Osama bin-Laden and his entourage (including his wives and children). They could have either a fully equipped, modern compound of villas or a deserted farm,

with no facilities at all. Bin Laden took the latter, saying that they would prefer to live like the common people (Wright 2007).

My suggestion is that a more diverse and tolerant society requires a critique of capitalism, because of its legitimation of economic inequality. Capitalist societies, increasingly adopting the neo-liberal and least socialised economic model, are now of course as visible in the East as they are in the West, and they are developing in the global South too. Societies which approve of a hyper-rich class, which accumulates more and more income and wealth, while the middle groups are economically comfortable and the lower classes are trapped in relative poverty, are less happy, and less successful, than those which are more equal (Wilkinson and Pickett 2009). Unhappy societies are intolerant - not least of the ethnic groups which attempt to enter them in search of low-waged work - and unstable. Islam, taken seriously, like early Christianity, seems to me to offer a vision of more equal society, in which disparities of wealth are not so great. Neither Islam nor Christianity, however, seem entirely committed to the redistribution of wealth and, and the removal of excessive income inequality, which critical multiculturalism would suggest is needed.

Clearly, the Islamists have yet to be tested on their commitment to economic equality. Their ideological neighbours, the Wahabbis, are obviously committed to excesses in inequality which are the envy of their American friends. The mildly Islamist Turkish government is popular precisely because it has drawn more of its poorer people into its dynamic, pro-capitalist economy, which, over time, will increase inequality in income and wealth if unbridled by state intervention. Of course, current Western and Eastern elites are not going to approve of the egalitarian tendencies within Islamism, but, from the point of view of the critical multiculturalists, this does provide one point on which some agreement might emerge. Since dialogue is our goal, this gives us one small hope.

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