CONSTRUCTING AND DECONSTRUCTING ISLAM IN THE WESTERN STATE:
A COMPARATIVE LOOK AT THE POLITICIZATION OF RELIGION IN FRANCE,
GREAT BRITAIN, AND THE UNITED STATES, 1945-2008

VOLUME II

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PART II:
THE DECONSTRUCTION AND CONSTRUCTION OF ISLAM—A COMPARATIVE
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INSTITUTIONS

We left each national case in the first part of this dissertation with elites facing considerable incentives to politicize the presence of their domestic Muslim community. The second part of this dissertation takes this as its point of departure. This section tells a very different story than most of the scholarly literature on the response of political elites to a post-9/11 world. In the view of the conventional wisdom, political elites are deliberately politicizing immigrant- and Muslim-related public concerns to capitalize politically (see, for example, Abdo, 2007; Aldis and Herd, 2005; Bowen, 2007; Brynes and Katzenstein, 2006; Buonfino, 2005; Cesari and McLoughlin, 2005; Cesari, 2009; Esposito and Mogahed, 2008; EUMAP, 2002a; EUMC, 2007a; EUMC, 2007b; Freedman, 2004; Givens et al., 2009; Huysman, 2006; Meyer, 2009; Modood, 2005; Mogahed and Nyiri, 2007; Roy, 2004; Scott, 2005b; Scott, 2007; Silverman, 2007; Thomas, 2006). However, the evidence suggests that political elites were under extraordinary pressure to reconcile the competing goals of Muslim integration and security and, to that end, considerable political and policy contradictions cropped up. Scholars, I suggest, have not sufficiently been attentive to the costs facing political elites of the politicization of religion and the domestic Muslim community previously described in Part I. Indeed, the incentives pre-
sented to politicians and other elites is only half of the story if one wants to explain the contours of Muslim incorporation policies in the post-9/11 security environment.

In Part I, I traced the different political processes through which religion was constructed as a problem in the political realm. This section demonstrated how this process and problem construction explained the specific policy responses to Muslim incorporation and national security in my three cases. This is not a fairly uncontroversial thesis to put forth. Indeed, scholars have offered similar accounts of the post-9/11 environment, arguing that political elites have deliberately capitalized on the heightened security environment to stoke societal anxiety and pass restrictionist (and highly-discriminatory) policies toward immigrant and Muslim communities. This, however, is only a part of the story, albeit an important one to consider.

The common story told by scholars in the security studies literature as well as scholars studying Muslims in the West more generally regarding the post-9/11 period is that politicians have connected Muslims to security threats, raising the issue on both national and supranational agendas and linking it to other concerns about the survival and integrity of the nation-state. Many of these accounts argue that political elites deliberately connected issues of immigration, presence of ethnic and religious diversity, and conditions of insecurity in the Western state. And either implicitly, but more often the case, explicitly argue that this construction was due to incentives facing politicians.

According to this school of thought, certain benefits accrue to policy-makers in securitizing issues. In particular, securitizing an issue permits politicians to assert greater control over the agenda process and legitimate certain courses of action. Moreover,
through the simplification, related, and often more complicated, issues may either be ignored or successfully managed without wider public—or perhaps political—debate as it is not the central focus. This may aid politicians who are dealing with complicated issues by taking certain issues off the public’s radar and provide for a more consensual policy process.

Scholars have not addressed the considerable costs and pressures facing political elites. To a certain degree, elites faced a situation in which politicization worked almost too well. As was shown in Chapters 1 and 2, British and French politicians successfully connected the problem of terrorism to the presence of the domestic Muslim community. Nonetheless, a thorny problem faced the same political elites. Elites were required to construct a policy response to address the “problem” of the domestic Muslim community in terms of inadequate levels of integration and increased radicalization. To this end, elites in all three cases turned to partnerships with the Muslim community and the use of religious “tools.”

However, in constructing the problem in a certain way, elites circumscribed the policy prescriptions they could undertake. By successfully constructing religion as a “problem” in the political realm, it was difficult to use religion in the policy response. Thus, we see a situation in which the successful simplification of a policy problem opened up certain opportunities for political elites to pass restrictionist legislation in the political arena. However, by this very simplification, certain avenues were closed to politicians as well. In this case, the proposed use of religion as a government policy tool became controversial.
Indeed, Boswell (2007) soundly dismisses the notion that political elites faced unmitigated costs in securitizing immigration and terrorism in Europe after 9/11. One simply cannot assume that elites will politicize an issue. She argues that those scholars who assume the politicization of an issue often do not pay adequate attention to the costs and conflicts associated with such action. The framing of an issue as a security problem can create unfeasible expectations about the state’s capacity or conflict with the other political goals.

This is where the case study of the United States provides an important relief to the British and French cases. As I found in the American case, politicians faced incentives to depoliticize or dampen a connection of the domestic Muslim community to security concerns. Indeed, politicians, I suggest, walked a fine line between exploiting the heightened security concerns in the post-9/11 environment in order to pursue their own particular political agendas and risking considerable political backlash—in the form of lack of political trust and out-of-control societal fear, to name a few—if this politicization was too successful. More to the point, the evidence suggests that politicians were attuned to the costs of politicization and deliberately acted in order to mitigate these costs.

I found a similar situation in the British and French cases. I posit that elites were aware of and acted upon the perceived costs of politicization and undertook policy initiatives and strategies which can be broadly conceived of as a form of venue-shopping—and, particularly, a buffering strategy—to mitigate and/or circumvent these costs by shifting certain Muslim incorporation policies to the administrative realm. The shift in policy venue was a response by political actors to the political environment to cir-
cumvent key restraints posed by the political process—most notably in the increased po-
litical and societal scrutiny placed on government-Muslim partnerships. The shift in pol-
icy venue also was a response to capitalize on the benefits of the unique resources certain
Muslim partnerships could provide to government bureaucrats in terms of access and le-
gitimation. In the next chapter, I provide a detailed description of how British and French
elites used religious buffer institutions to insulate policy-making to depoliticize the very
issues that were the subject of increased public scrutiny.

What were the costs to politicizing religion? First and foremost, British and
French elites faced a key political conflict in terms of crafting an effective state policy
response. As was illustrated in Chapters 1 and 2, in formulating a response to the new
security environment, Western politicians faced fundamental questions regarding the na-
ture and source of the threat, including how to define the enemy, the goals of counter
radicalization programs, and the role of integration and shared values, to name a few. In
the political arena, these questions became contentious and became framed in which pur-
suing security was juxtaposed as competing against incorporating the domestic Muslim
community. Policy formulation in Britain and France, to a certain degree, became a zero-
sum game with regard to achieving the state’s security objectives and incorporating the
domestic Muslim community. In seeking a more robust counter-terrorism response, such
as in the case of mosque surveillance by state security personnel or increased forced de-
portations of foreign imams, the Western state risked further alienation and frustration
within the Muslim community. Moreover, as I demonstrated in Chapters 1 and 2, politi-
cal actors on both sides of the political Right and Left entered the political fray, increasing the salience of the issue.

In Great Britain and France, the issue of with whom to partner in the Muslim community became, perhaps, the most politically contentious issue within the political realm. Across cases, a common assessment was made by politicians: the need to enlist Muslim partners as allies to stem radicalization and facilitate the social and political incorporation of the Muslim community. Consequently, the question of which Muslims to ally with and which activities to support became very important political issues. What happened was that the politicization of religion described in Chapters 1 and 2 focused societal and political scrutiny on who were considered Muslim allies in the fight against terrorism and radicalization as well as which activities were deemed acceptable and which were dangerous.

The debate was fought most contentiously and publicly over the role of non-violent Islamists and provides an illustration of the highly circumscribed environment politicians faced during this period. Political Islamists were often singled out by security personnel and bureaucrats as effective partners in the fight to counter radicalization, especially among the youth. However, because the political process implicated issues of national identity and values, the use of political Islamists was often considered unsavory to key political factions on both the political Right and Left within the two states. As one security analyst describes the dilemma, the British and French governments faced the choice between decreasing the risk of radicalization by engaging Islamists as partners—and, thereby, increasing the chances of integrating the youth and other extrem-
ists—and increasing the prospects of long-term integration of their domestic Muslim community (Vidino, 2009). In the process of decreasing the risk of youth radicalization, Islamists were accused of disseminating an ideology which was at odds with prevailing secular and liberal values of the Western democratic state (Vidino, 2009).185

A significant majority of the scholarly and media attention has focused on the pressure upon Blair’s Labour government regarding certain counter-terrorism provisions, particularly the length of the detention period (see Chapter 1). However, there was also considerable pressure being placed on the Labour government at this time regarding its partnerships with the Muslim community. As discussed in Chapter 1, the British Labour government pursued partnerships with faith communities in the 2000s through the administrative realm. This partnership with faith communities, including the Muslim community, was not the source of considerable political, media, and societal scrutiny until after the 7/7 bombings.

There were often heated debates in the halls of Westminster concerning the Labour government’s choice of partners in the period following the July 2005 bombings. Within the halls of Westminster, the Labour government was questioned by politicians on both the political Right and Left regarding the government’s relationship with Muslim partners during almost every Parliamentary debate from 2005-2008 concerning counter-

185 Vidino (2009) describes the situation as Europe’s new security dilemma, with elites facing the difficult challenge of whom to engage among the many and, in many cases, competing Muslim organizations in their counterradicalization response. Relatedly, the issue of the particular balance to be struck between short-term counterradicalization goals and long-term goals of integration rose on the political agenda. In his Foreign Policy article (2009), Vidino argues that where actors fell on this second question regarding the balance between short-term and long-term goals helped to determine their position on the first.
terrorism strategies as well as debates over whether to abolish blasphemy protection and pass a bill to ban religious discrimination.186

During the debates, it was clear that the Labour government struggled with its policy position of engaging with the Muslim community widely—particularly concerned with characteristics of representativeness and “moderation—and marginalizing those voices it deemed unsuitable to a democratic liberal society. During one debate in the House of Commons, this tension was expressed in the following question by a Conservative member of Parliament: “Does the Home Secretary believe that people who hold [political Islamist views] are the right individuals to help us build the inclusive, tolerant, multi-faith society that everyone on the Conservative Benches wants to see?” (HC, Dec. 5, 2005, Column 593). The Home Minister, Charles Clarke, responded that the government was seeking out a “full debate” in order to effectively engage Muslim youth.187

The most notable political and societal debates were fought over the government’s informal working relationship with the Muslim Council of Britain (MCB). In his early tenure as Prime Minister, Tony Blair and other members of the Labour Party actively sought out an interlocutor with the Muslim community and, at this time, found in the MCB a willing partner. By the early 2000s, the New Labour government had accorded a

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186 See Parliamentary debates on November 21, 2005; December 5, 2005; January 31, 2006; June 20, 2006; November 7, 2006; December 12, 2006; December 18, 2006; April 17, 2007; and January 15, 2008.

187 In his response, Clarke responded that the government sought to engage widely and expounded the virtues of a “full debate”: “This is a major issue for the way in which we engage with the mainstream Muslim community following the events of July, and it is very important that we have the widest possible range of engagement. That does not mean tolerating and accepting views of the type that [Member of Parliament Gove] describes—I abhor them just as strongly as he does—but it does mean that we must have a very full debate, particularly relating to young people from the Muslim community, to ensure that we can contest the extremism in the most effective way” (HC, December 5, 2005, Column 593).
After the July 2005 bombings, the government was criticized over these connections. Criticism of the MCB concerned both its representative nature but also the organization’s connections to political Islam. During the debate over the Racial and Religious Hatred Bill in early 2006, the MCB was singled out during the House of Commons debate as being unrepresentative of the Muslim community in its support for the government’s bill (HC deb., January 31, 2006, c. 227). Later that year, on Nov. 7, 2006, the Secretary of State for DCLG, Ruth Kelly was forced to address concerns over the MCB and the organization’s decision to not take part in the Holocaust remembrance day (November 7, 2006, c. 714). The issue of the MCB was brought up several months later before the House of Commons. On April 17, 2007, Paul Goodman (Conservative MP) questioned the government’s relationship with certain Muslim organizations and their representativeness of the Muslim communities (HC deb., April 17, 2007, c. 28WH). Others charged the MCB and its leader at the time, Iqbal Sacranie, as being extreme. The issue of Sacranie’s statements regarding the Iranian fatwa against Salman Rushdie during the Rushdie Affair, in which Sacranie stated that “death was perhaps too easy” for Rushdie, were brought forth as evidence of his extremist views. The policy shift in 2007 to support “proactive leadership” against violence and extremism discussed in greater detail in the next chapter was widely interpreted as sidelining the MCB.

The government faced considerable political scrutiny over its support of specific partners and activities during the many years it took to pass the Racial and Religious Discrimination Bill discussed in Chapter 1. The opposition the government faced over this
particular bill—similar to both the tenor and level of opposition against the government in its pursuit of longer detention periods in counter-terrorism cases—was a result largely of the heightened security atmosphere. Indeed, the heightened security environment provided the occasion for politicians on both the Right and Left to criticize the Blair government over its orientation to the Muslim community. The Blair government was criticized for both for focusing exclusively on the Muslim community and not enough; for providing too much security and discrimination protection to the Muslim community and not providing enough; for protecting religion (most problematically, illiberal forms of religion) and eroding the foundation of a key British institution (the Church of England). The debates surrounding this particular bill in its various forms, particularly how to reconcile the liberal values of free speech with the protection of religion, demonstrate the significantly charged political atmosphere facing the Labour government. This provided incentives for Labour elites to depoliticize the issue of Muslim incorporation by moving it to the administrative realm.

French elites also faced the difficult question of whether to engage with political Islamists in order to craft a more effective state response to radicalization among the nation’s youth. In the case of France, the concern for political Islamists was more widespread, particularly as the political process successfully connected the influence of political Islam to the problems of the headscarf. As was delineated in Chapter 2 and as Bowen described in his research on the headscarf affairs in France, Islamism or Islamist were terms that carried many negative connotations in France, most commonly understood as a denial of the European notion of religion belonging properly to the private sphere (2007, 371).
156). “Worse,” he goes on to note, “Islamism is global and transnational, and thus particularly ill-equipped to become *citoyen*” (2007, 188).

Nevertheless, government officials courted political Islamist organizations. For example, during the height of the riots in the November 2005, Interior Minister Sarkozy called on religious interlocutors, including political Islamist organizations and leaders, to quell the conflagration. Indeed, he had ties to these organizations in his dealings with the creation of a national Muslim council, which included what some considered to be political Islamist groups. While predecessors had refused to include the *Union des Organisations Islamiques de France* (UOIF) in the arrangements for a national interlocutor on the grounds that the organization—and its ties to the Muslim Brotherhood—represented the very principles the French Republic rejected, Sarkozy took a more pragmatic stand, permitting the organization’s involvement. This pragmatic stand was inspired by a desire to create a more stable institution as well as a strategy to engage with political Islam in the hopes of moderating its effects.

The policy space was narrowed further according to broader concerns of not wanting to appear to intervene in religion. For British elites, and particularly Labour politicians, the concern with intervention largely centered on ensuring the electoral support of the Muslim community. This is not to say that concerns over the proper governmental role vis-a-vis religious institutions was not a core concern for many elites as well. In the French case, elites faced legal and political constraints in searching for solutions to address foreign funding and imam training. While politicians were prohibited from funding or otherwise supporting religious organizations and activities, the security situation
demanded greater state involvement. This posed dilemmas for elites. In particular, a heated political battle was waged around 2005 concerning issues of financing Islam and imam training.

The issue of creating a transparent Islam motivated then Interior Minister Nicolas Sarkozy to assert in 2002 that the French state should encourage a more public form of Islam, stating “What we should be afraid of is Islam gone astray…‘garage Islam’…‘basement Islam’…‘underground Islam.’ It is not the Islam of the mosques, open to the light of day” (qtd in U.S. State Department, 2007). As Interior Minister, Sarkozy called for the modification of the 1905 law separating church and state. In 2005—the year France celebrated the centennial anniversary of the 1905 law separating church and state and a year after the National Assembly passed the law to ban the headscarf in school—Sarkozy commissioned Jean-Pierre Machelon with addressing the issue of revising the church-state institution. The Machelon commission issued a report calling for a revision of the French law to permit local communities to finance the construction of places of worship. The basic conclusion of the report was that the Muslim community’s religious needs were not being met and that the French state needed to take action to rem-

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188 As Interior Minister and President, Sarkozy has been the most visible political supporter of government subsidies of mosque construction and imam training programs to encourage the integration of Islam and to fight foreign influence. The issue of foreign funding, particularly, was intricately linked to issues of transnational influence and a connection to Islamist terrorism. In an interview with *La Croix*, Sarkozy provided his general argument against foreign funding:

What good does it do to tell our Muslim compatriots that they have the same rights as anyone, if they have to pray in basements or garages? The great problems of terrorism take place in these basements and garages. Not in the Great Mosques of Lyons or Paris! I also want to cut Islam off from foreign influences, whether it’s the financing of mosques or the training of imams (*La Croix*, 2007).

As Interior Minister, Nicolas Sarkozy focused on the need for religion in France’s banlieues, which he would describe as “religious deserts” in December 2007. During his testimony before the Stasi Commission in October 2003, Sarkozy decried the lack of religious personnel in suburbs, drawing a connection to the problems in the French suburbs to a lack of religion rather than too much religion. Elsewhere, Sarkozy promoted religion as a “pacifying factor”—before the Stasi Commission he described it as “bringing light”—to France’s banlieues.
edy this situation not only as a matter of equity between the major religions in France but also as a matter of pragmatic state interest. It was, according to the report’s author, in the French state’s interests to support the practice of Islam on French soil to make it more governable.189

After the release of the report in October 2006, Interior Minister Nicolas Sarkozy supported its recommendations to modify the law of 1905.190 The report, however, was heavily criticized by the leftist Socialist Party and the Interior Minister’s own centre-right UMP (L’Union pour un mouvement populaire). The former Socialist Prime Minister—and presidential hopeful at the time—Laurent Fabius publicly stated his opposition to revising the 1905 law on the grounds that it was a fundamental principle of the Republic. He argued “there is no question of challenging the 1905 law that governs relations between state and religion…[We] must respect the religions, but do not mix the two” (Al-Husaini, 2006). Criticism from the UMP was also grounded in the principle of upholding laïcité. Le Figaro quoted UMP deputy Jacques Myard the day after the release of the report as saying state funding for places of worship would be “a major fault, a violation of the principle of secularism and a door open to any abuse” (Al-Husaini, 2006). In a political move to dampen the Sarkozy’s controversial moves, then-President Chirac issued a

189 To this end, the report called for an “enlarging of the social presence” of religions that could be facilitated by allowing religious organizations to integrate activities that were not strictly considered worship activities such as book selling and providing social events.

190 Commenting on the report in an interview with La Croix, Sarkozy focused on the aspect of equality between religions, suggesting that it was merely a matter of fairness (Al-Husaini, 2006). He argued, “It is not fair that the followers of faiths of recent expansion in our territory, Sunni Islam and evangelical Christianity, face difficulties in practicing their religion” (qtd in Al-Husaini, 2006). He then connected what he defined as fairness and equality among faith believers and radicalism, stating:

“What is important is that there is not in France to second-class citizens who are ‘less equal’ than others and that in turn folded in [se replieraient] to their community. A humiliated identity is an identity that is radicalized. To fight against fundamentalism and communalism, it is necessary that all those who have faith to live and practice in equality” (qtd in Al-Husaini, 2006).
statement that reinforced the principle of laïcité, underscoring how it was at the “core of the republic” and further supported the secular nature of the French government. The resistance forced Sarkozy to renounce his initial support.

French politicians worked within a highly sensitive political environment regarding its dealings with religion, providing incentives to set up structures to avoid scrutiny. Public opinion polls in France clearly illustrate the French public’s opposition to government intervention in religion, particularly if deemed favorable to the Islamic religion. An IFOP-La Croix poll conducted in November 2005 found 74% of the French public saying that the French government should keep the Law of 1905 as it was while 18% supported reforming certain aspects of the law; three years later, in March 2008, IFOP found similar levels of support for maintaining the 1905 arrangement (71% supported maintaining the current law and French policy and 21%, an increase of 3 percentage points, supported modifying the law) (IFOP, 2008a). In both polls, only 7% of the French general public supported abolishing the current arrangement of church-state separation. Indeed, while the issue of imam training was considered a strategic priority for French bureaucrats and security personnel, French politicians faced significant opposition among the general public according to polls taken during this time period. Refer back to Tables 9 and 10 in Chapter 2. Nearly 60% of French respondents in a CSA poll in 2003 were opposed to the creation of a national imam training program. In another poll following the Stasi Commission report as much as 58% of the general public believed that state support in terms of funding for imam training or mosque construction was a “bad idea.” This same poll found a similar percentage of the French public against accommodating Muslim religious
holidays as a part of the official state calendar. A full 64% of respondents of the CSA poll in February 2005 disapproved of permitting Muslims (or other religious observers such as Jews) to substitute one of their religious holidays for an officially recognized Christian holiday. Moreover, as will be described in further detail in the next chapter, the political competition between Sarkozy and rivals within his own political party further circumscribed a political compromise regarding these issues. This level of opposition—both among the general public and from the political Right and Left—helps explain why French elites viewed the administrative realm as a more conducive environment from which to craft policy solutions.

Thus, with the successful politicization, political elites faced a narrower policy space with which to pursue effective partnerships with the Muslim community. Creating buffer institutions was one strategy for politicians to circumvent the public political arena, particularly the highly contentious debates. For example, instead of debating the merits of particular Muslim partners in the halls of Parliament, buffer institutions facilitated relationships deemed critical to counter-terrorism forged outside of public scrutiny. By making certain policy actions “invisible” to critics, state actors could, for instance, form partnerships on a case-by-case basis rather than conforming to broad objectives laid forth through the political process. Thus, even if at the political level political Islamist groups were painted in wide brushstrokes as unacceptable partners, at the administrative level those with a greater knowledge of the different organizations, and particularly the nuanced political and theological positions these groups espoused, presented the opportunity for the government to form strategic alliances.
Another way the shift to the bureaucratic realm of religious buffer institutions served to circumvent contentious political issues was to decrease the number of political actors involved in policy formulation and implementation. By making policy “invisible,” certain actors, such as the far right but also actors within factions of the governing parties, simply could not offer competing policy prescriptions. Moreover, the administrative realm is only open to particular policy actors through specified channels and bureaucratic procedures. This has several implications. First, even if policy actions are not invisible—and, in practice, policy actions taken by the government are rarely invisible to all actors within the political system, and particularly in a highly sensitive area—policy channels decrease (or, conversely, increase) the influence of particular actors. Therefore, if policy critics do not have access or appropriate influence, their opinions will not necessarily be reflected to the same degree in forging policy objectives. Second, policy will be developed by a smaller subset of—as well significantly more like-minded—actors in the religious buffer institutions than in the political realm, increasing the likelihood of reaching a compromise. Thirdly, irrespective of the number of actors involved, a shift to the administrative realm allows for policy to be formulated and implemented by those with specific (and, often, more narrow) policy expertise.

Religious buffer institutions also served another important function with respect to the narrow policy space: to divorce Muslim integration issues from larger political questions. The controversy surrounding Muslim partnerships and political Islamists was salient in light of other political issues and state goals. In divorcing this from larger—often difficult and multifaceted policy problems—state actors could proceed forward ac-
cording to a set of more narrow policy objectives. One policy area from which divorcing
was particularly crucial involved the national debates surrounding the nation’s core val-
ues and principles. As detailed in previous chapters, the very definition of common na-
tional and liberal values was the subject of considerable political contention during this
time period. As a consequence of the lack of consensus, the formulation of integration
policy was made more difficult. In the British and French cases, politicians grappled
with what integration meant in theory as well as in practice. Thus, it was not only a ques-
tion over whether a particular partner helped the state achieve its interests but, more fun-
damentally, “what are these interests?” Buffer institutions, I suggest, helped governments
circumvent some of these thorny political questions. To a certain degree, this allowed
elites and bureaucrats within the institutions to address Muslim integration as an insulated
and coherent policy area.

As has been alluded to above, the use of Muslim partnerships and buffer institu-
tions was not only in pursuit of a negative goal—to deflect scrutiny or divorce is-
sues—but also to pursue a positive objective: to improve government policy through
greater effectiveness and efficiency. Particularly in the British case, religious buffer insti-
tutions facilitated the formation of partnerships with new Muslim actors, notably local
community actors rather than national organizations, who had specific resources to bring
to its “winning hearts and minds” counter radicalization program. In effect, the govern-
ment utilized the institutions to enlist and support those actors who had greater capacities
than government agents to implement state goals.
This can usefully be described as a principal-agent relationship in which the state, the principal, delegated part of policy elaboration and implementation to an agent, a religious buffer institution or more directly to different Muslim partners. The state faced a situation in which the agent had access to more information or particular qualities that it lacked, such as infrastructure, personnel, access, and trust. In particular, faith institutions were important for government policy delivery as they commanded significant levels of trust within the Muslim community, something which the state lacked among the target population. The government, in utilizing faith institutions, hoped to capitalize on this level of trust.

As in any other principal-agent relationship, the state as the principal also incurred costs associated with incomplete and asymmetric information as well as deviating preferences among the agent(s). French elites, more concerned with deflecting negative scrutiny than utilizing the religious buffer institutions as key policy delivery mechanisms, were particularly attuned to the costs of the principal-agent relationship.

That religion was required in the government’s toolkit was, I suggest, a function of the process that politicized religion. By constructing a particular aspect of religion as a problem for the Western state, many of the solutions required religion—in the form of “moderate” Muslim partnerships and a liberal, secular Islamic discourse—as a crucial tool in the response. Both the British and French governments turned to “religion”—a particular form in a particular context—as a resource in its “softer” security strategy to counter extremism and radicalization of its domestic Muslim population. In doing so, the government undertook a “selective de-secularization” of the state. That is to say, the dif-
ferent policy initiatives described in the next chapter have resulted in Western governments becoming more involved in religious affairs rather than a de-linking of state and religious spheres.
CHAPTER 4:

THE CREATION OF RELIGIOUS BUFFER INSTITUTIONS IN GREAT BRITAIN 
AND FRANCE

In this chapter, I demonstrate how the British and French governments also turned to “religion”—and more specifically, certain partners within the Muslim communities—as a resource to counter religious radicalization and to integrate the domestic Muslim community. In seeking out a softer security approach to counter radicalization, Western governments faced delicate political issues, including the questions of “Who are our partners?” and how the government could best amplify the voices of mainstream Muslims to provide a credible counter-narrative to extremism. The questions facing politicians were, at their core, concerns of policy delivery and effectiveness. However, most importantly, the question faced by policy-makers was how to reconcile often two competing agendas: security and integration.

This chapter describes the different policy tools governments utilized to implement a “softer security” strategy as well as to manage and channel a particular type of Islam within the Western state, focusing on how the British and French governments created new institutions, emphasized funding and research strands, and nurtured specific Muslim partnerships to legitimize certain actors and institutions. This chapter compares the policy instruments and strategies adopted by Western states. To date, insufficient at-
tention has been given to the actual administrative mechanisms and domestic political processes.

In the sections that follow, this chapter delineates and analyzes one specific policy solution the British and French governments adopted: the creation of religious buffer institutions as a form of venue-shopping. This form of venue-shopping was a strategic response by political elites to move certain policies—namely those relating to the incorporation of the domestic Muslim community—to a policy venue that was more conducive to state objectives. That politicians needed to shift venues was largely a function of the increased politicization of domestic security issues. The more Muslims became connected successfully by the far right and divided political Left to problems of terrorism, radicalization, everyday insecurity, and even community cohesion, the more restrictive the policy space became, providing politicians with less room to maneuver and craft an adequate response.

What occurred was a transfer away from the political realm—from legislators, courts, and political parties—to the administrative and bureaucratic realms. I argue that we should conceive of this response as a buffering or diffusing strategy. Similar to trends found by scholars in the area of immigration policy, there has been a degree of delegation and/or devolution—a transfer of functions away from the state—as a diffusing strategy (Lahav, 2000; Guiraudon, 2001). The British and French governments created institutions in order to shift the costs and liabilities of policy-making away from the central government. While the restrictive measures had the effect of raising the salience of religion in the political realm, the measures described below aimed to depoliticize religion. In
particular, politicians turned to religious buffer institutions to deflect attention away from highly-publicized and/or controversial issues with respect to their use of religion—most clearly represented in partnerships with Muslim leaders and organizations—as a resource in government policy implementation. A second broad goal of these measures was to develop a more effective and adaptable state policy response. The state increasingly delegated policy elaboration and implementation to what I term religious buffer institutions as a way to increase policy effectiveness and overall state capacity. The degree of delegation and the relative emphasis on the two goals, though, varied and is discussed in the concluding section.

1. The Making of “Moderate” and “British” Islam

1.1 Creation of Religious Buffer Institutions

Similar to the racial buffers created in the 1970s, the Blair government created formal bureaucratic institutions to deal with faith and the Muslim community, or “religious buffers.” Faith-related issues became the responsibility of bureaucrats rather than politicians in an effort to take religion out of politics, allowing the government to manage faith while also maintaining, at least ostensibly, that the government was not interfering with the domestic internal workings of Islam. The most important of these religious buffers are the Faith and Cohesion Unit\textsuperscript{191} and the Preventing Extremism Unit of the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG). These institutions were cre-

\footnote{\textsuperscript{191} This unit’s official title is the Race, Cohesion, and Faith Unit in the Department for Communities and Local Government. I have adopted a shorter title of this institution that was used most frequently during my interviews with DCLG representatives.}
ated to take charge of the Labour government’s policy commitment to faith communities (Faith and Cohesion Unit) and the Muslim community (Preventing Extremism Unit).

The creation of these institutions served two primary purposes. The first was pragmatic: as the Blair government’s faith policy shifted to working with more faith organizations, through the wider community cohesion framework and in its preventing extremism agenda discussed in Chapter 1, the government needed to create institutions that could effectively manage the new partnerships. In the British case, the shift in liabilities of certain activities to private actors—to non-profits, interfaith forums and councils, to women’s organizations, etc—was a part of a broader trend occurring in other policy areas. As a part of its “third way” politics, the New Labour government was concerned with greater inclusiveness and increased community participation (Furbey and Macey, 2003; Gilliat-Ray, 2004; Smith, 2004).192 This change in philosophy, emphasizing principles of equal worth, community, partnership, and social inclusion, motivated the government to reach out to the community, including faith communities, to address public policy concerns. As a part of this third way politics, one sees a shift to the local level as well.

These structures institutionalized government-faith partnerships as a permanent aspect of policy interaction rather than the preceding ad hoc initiatives. There were several advantages to institutionalizing government-faith partnerships, including pragmatic considerations of utilizing faith organizations for their space, people, and access for public service delivery. Previous government-faith partnerships, in addition to being ad hoc and for

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192 As Gilliat-Ray demonstrates in her research on faith in the New Labour government, social inclusion was an important commitment of Blair’s third way government philosophy, with speeches repeatedly emphasizing values such as “fairness,” “participation,” and “inclusion” (2004).
limited purposes, largely consisted of a single faith organization (or an interfaith forum that acted as a single faith structure). In seeking to partner with a greater number of organizations as well as those below the national level—in effect, by moving beyond the “usual suspects”—the government needed a permanent body that had the capacity to supervise the various partners with differing levels of need.

The second, and perhaps most important, purpose was to depoliticize or diffuse the Labour government’s faith policy. This was particularly important with regard to the policies directed toward the Muslim community. By creating a bureaucratic institution, the government was able to maneuver more widely as many of the decisions and outcomes were out of the scrutiny of the public eye, insulating both the government and, crucially, the Muslim organizations receiving support from the government from public scrutiny. Through the religious buffers, the Labour government delegated the management of certain events (namely those events which targeted the Muslim community or the Islamic religion specifically) to Muslim organizations in an effort to provide greater legitimacy as well as deflect criticism. For example, the government outsourced the management of the Scholars’ Roadshows, a program targeting Muslim youth through a series of national forums of Islamic scholars, through the provision of funding and logistical support to the Radical Middle Way, an independent organization formed after the July 2005 bombings. This degree of separation is important, particularly as the government was viewed suspiciously among Muslim youth. Given that the initiative’s goal was to develop an Islamic-based counter-narrative to the extremist message (a highly controversial subject within the Muslim community without the implications of government in-
volvement), the imprimatur of government involvement was a liability. In effect, delegation allowed for government objectives to be pursued through the backdoor, particularly as the government’s stamp is not found on event publications. This was the government’s goal; in practice, the insulation was far from perfect.

The newly-created Preventing Extremism Unit was charged with carrying forward the British government’s new strategy—“Winning Hearts and Minds”—an explicit policy shift in 2007 to engage with “moderate” and “mainstream” leaders and organizations (DCLG, 2007a). This new strategy included fundamental changes in the criteria used to disburse public funding for counter radicalization programs and partner with the Muslim community, resulting in important implications for the evolution of Islam within Britain. The policy changed to one in which the government sought to expand its contacts and partners within the Muslim community, seeking a “full debate,” rather than relying on the Muslim Council of Britain (MCB) and other national associations exclusively. Moreover, the new government policy explicitly sought to support “moderate” and “mainstream” Muslim organizations. Notably, funding was withheld from those groups which were deemed to promote values incompatible with British values.193 This policy shift to privileging particular liberal partners and activities was made more explicit in March 2009. At this time—and following criticism of its choice of Muslim community partners—the government’s counterterrorism strategy, entitled CONTEST 2, clearly stated that condemning violence was not enough for partners in the Muslim community. Muslim part-

193 The new government strategy laid out in “Preventing Violent Extremism—winning hearts and minds” and a series of case studies (DCLG, 2007b) includes what the government calls a fundamental “re-balancing” of its engagement with the Muslim community to support those who are providing “proactive leadership,” and, to support those groups who have been marginalized: women and young people (DCLG, 2007a, 9).
ners had to be for something expressed in other policy documents as “proactive leadership” (DCLG, 2007a). Consequently, the debate concerning multiculturalism and shared British values after the 2001 riots once again became central.194

In “rebalancing,” the Labour government shifted away from national “representative” bodies and shifted to the support of three types of activities and/or organizations: 1) interfaith; 2) women and youth; and 3) civic religious leadership. In particular, the government has supported those voices within the Muslim community who argue that British values are compatible with Islamic values. The effect was that the Blair government privileged those actors with a liberal Islamic viewpoint.

In shifting policy to religious buffer institutions—and charging them with developing criteria for the dispersal of funding, for example—British shared values were given form and content. With the “winning hearts and minds” and Contest 2 policy initiatives, the government shifted from viewing the faith community as an undifferentiated and unerring force for good in the civic sector, to a policy which separated and distinguished faith organizations and leaders according to a set of conditions. Moreover, the focus on shared values within this venue moved beyond the vague rhetorical references to tolerance, fair play, and democracy taking place in the public debates, to more specific values, particularly implicating illiberal elements within Islam. In this way, for instance, the shift

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194 At the beginning of the document, the government explicitly set forth its new criteria regarding partnerships with the Muslim community and its definition of extremism, stating, “As a part of this strategy... [w]e will also continue to challenge views which fall short of supporting violence and are within the law, but which reject and undermine our shared values and jeopardise community cohesion” (Home Department, 2009, 13).

Later in the document, the government underscored the importance of promoting shared values in the fight against the new terrorist threat:

The duty on all of us—Government, citizens and communities—is to challenge those who, for whatever reason or cause, reject the rights to which we are committed, scorn the institutions and values of our parliamentary democracy, dismiss the rule of law and promote intolerance and discrimination on the basis of race, faith, ethnicity, gender or sexuality (2009, 87).
in venue to religious buffer institutions, rather than divorcing policy issues that were competing in the political realm, served to resolve the apparent contradictions through concrete policy guidelines.

It is in the religious buffer institutions that the bulk of the policy work has been introduced and implemented. Let us take a closer look at the Preventing Extremism Unit to reflect upon the British government’s policy development toward its British Muslim communities. The Preventing Extremism Unit—housed within the Department of Communities and Local Government (formerly of the Home Office) as a separate institutional unit alongside the Race, Cohesion and Faith Directorate—was set up in December 2006 to implement the British government’s Prevent strand of the counter-terrorism strategy within the domestic context. Broadly, the unit is tasked with developing and implementing policies, largely through partnerships with the domestic Muslim community, to prevent radicalization.

As the government’s new Preventing Extremism Unit was placed under the institutional home of DCLG—the main department addressing issues relating to communities and the local context—one could argue that the government defined the problem more generally as a community cohesion issue. Indeed, civil servants within the Preventing Extremism Unit argued that the larger context of their work was to build community resilience, to support those structures and voices to address the issues within the Muslim community. However, this remit is, nonetheless, defined as a separate issue—in effect, serving to divorce the “Muslim issue” from other government concerns—as it was set apart in its own organizational unit. That is to say, it was not connected formally with the
Race, Faith and Cohesion Directorate which addresses the larger issues of racial and faith discrimination, deprivation, and community conflict. Therefore, the structure of the government’s response reflects an intention to divorce the issue of Muslim community incorporation and preventing extremism from larger policy problems of housing, education, and racial inequality. Exactly how separate this framework was becomes clear in its policy direction, directing its efforts explicitly toward the Muslim community.

The unit is comprised of professional government bureaucrats pulled from other established departments as well as individuals that were involved in the temporary Preventing Extremism Together working groups set up directly after the 7/7 bombings. The work, therefore, is implemented by government officials rather than a “representative” Muslim institution. Indeed, the institution nominally has only 3 “Muslim” faith advisors: one full-time Senior Faiths Advisor and two external advisors. These advisors were hired specifically for the purpose of providing information about the theological and political positions of various groups and to facilitate broader connections within the Muslim community. They are not representatives of the Muslim community but rather government bureaucrats with specialized knowledge of a particular policy area. This structure stands in contrast to the French model which relies on a representative institution intended to reflect the diversity of Islam within France.

A strength of the British model is that policy advice is centralized and streamlined rather than filtered through a representation process. However, there are several notable weaknesses to such a model, including the problem of how one, two, or even three persons can adequately present the viewpoints of the many different Muslim communities in
Britain. In order to address this dilemma and provide a degree of representation and a formal feedback mechanism to the community, the Preventing Extremism Unit and Whitehall established several specialized advisory committees such as the Young Muslim Advisory Group (YMAG). These committees, much like the French national Muslim council, do not have any formal policy-making authority.

1.2 Funding and Research

One of the most important practical functions the two religious buffer institutions provide for the government in its policy delivery is to act as the facilitator of its many funding programs. As a part of its softer security strategy, the government provided a significant degree of funding to the Muslim community and local authorities to tackle extremism. First, the government allocated more funding toward faith initiatives after the successful politicization of Muslim issues. Second, the additional funding overwhelmingly benefited Muslim organizations and interfaith forums. Third, the funding priorities, in addition to benefiting a particular constituency, also served particular policy objectives. Most importantly, faith organizations were required to demonstrate how their programs reduced the risk of extremism. This section provides an overview of the different funding initiatives as well as lays out evidence of how these initiatives have sought to steer the type of Islam practiced in Britain.

One of the primary funding streams is the Preventing Extremism Pathfinder Fund, launched by the DCLG in October 2006. The fund supports local authorities in developing programs of activity to tackle violent extremism at local level and has the Muslim community as its primary focus. For the 2007-2008 funding cycle, the DCLG allocated
over £6 million to support over 200 grass-root projects in over 70 priority local areas. The individual grant amount varied from £15,000 to cover two or three activities to upwards of £500,000 for large multi-authority programs (DCLG, 2008c, 46-47).

TABLE 4.1
PREVENTING VIOLENT EXTREMISM PATHFINDER FUNDING BY REGION:
2007-2008

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Local Authorities</th>
<th>Total regional PVE Funding (£)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>London</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>£2080377</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North West</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>£1205000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Midland</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>£800000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yorkshire and Humber</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>£550000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South East</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>£450000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East of England</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>£380000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Midlands</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>£300000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North East</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>£125000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South West</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>£80000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: DCLG, 2008c, 46

Table 1 shows the dispersal of funds by region, indicating that the greater London area received the most funding at over £2 million while areas such as the Northeast and Southwest—areas with a smaller Muslim population—received around £100,000.

195 The smallest amount spent on an individual project was £204. This allowed a local scholar to give Arabic lessons. The most generous grant was £74,334 that helped fund a large-scale project including cultural awareness and training events, community events, training, development of written material, a conference and a small grants programme (DCLG, 2008c, 46).
Moreover, the government has pledged greater funding in the future, with the expectation of funding £45 million between 2008-2011 (£12 million in 2008-09, £15 million in 2009-10, and £18 million in 2010-11).

These funds were used solely to support activities directed toward the Muslim community or to support Muslim community organizations themselves. Specific priorities included a focus on “empowering mainstream voices,” promoting “dialogue,” supporting theological teaching, and capacity building to “recognize and challenge violent extremism” (DCLG, 2007b).

The Preventing Violent Extremism Pathfinder Fund is complemented by several other funding streams, including the Community Leadership Fund, rolled out in June 2007 by the DCLG. This particular funding stream, with an initial allotment of £650,000, contained a more targeted mandate to support capacity-building within specific sectors of the Muslim community, notably women and youth. As Table 2 illustrates, this fund has provided support for arts-based workshops, the creation of websites to mentor converts to

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196 The Preventing Violent Extremism Pathfinder Fund guidelines explicitly state the funding criteria should be focused on at least one of the following categories: 1) the general population of Muslim communities to help them “build their resilience to violent extremist messages and to voice their condemnation of violent extremism,” 2) those most “at risk” for radicalization with “specific interventions to help individuals counter such messages,” and 3) those who justified or glorified violent extremist ideologies to prevent these ideologies from spreading among the general population (DCLG, 2008c, 35-36). To this end, a government review of the 2007/2008 funding cycle found that 61% of the projects targeted the Muslim community as the primary beneficiary group, and more than a fifth of the projects focused on individuals deemed to be “at risk” for extremism, either through direct interventions or more community-based activities (2008c, 6). Funded projects ranged from activities to include training and education, debates and discussion forums, leadership and management development exercises, sports and recreation, and arts and cultural events. According to the government audit, those projects which supported debates and discussions of violent extremism were the most commonly funded initiatives, comprising 54% of projects funded (DCLG, 2008c, 5).

197 Broadly, the fund supports activities that seek to: 1) build the capacity of organizations and communities; 2) support Muslim young people; 3) support Muslim women; 4) build the capacity of Muslim faith leaders; and 5) support local forums against extremism and Islamophobia. The average grant, according to government figures, is £75,000 for capacity-building, £50,000 for youth-related activities, £30,000 for activities focused on Muslim women, £30,000 for those projects focusing on Muslim faith leaders, and £10,000 for projects convening forums.
the Islamic religion, the promotion of Islamic Awareness Week, the provision of seed money to youth to design their own community projects, and the use of drama to provide voice to Muslim women’s issues.

TABLE 4.2
SELECT PROJECTS FUNDED OF COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP FUND: 2008-2009

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organization Funded</th>
<th>Project Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dervish Arts (West Midlands)</td>
<td>A project which aimed to build the organizational capacity of the Dervish Arts to market and deliver their arts based workshops with young people and Muslim women.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Islamic Society of Britain (London)</td>
<td>Government funding for developing the Islamic Awareness Week website with the purpose of promoting a positive understanding of Islam to other communities and facilitating moderated online discussion forums for young people.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sufi Muslim Council (North West)</td>
<td>Building the organisational capacity of the Sufi Muslim Council in order to work with the Muslim community to prevent radicalisation and build resilience.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Citizenship Foundation (London)</td>
<td>The project addressed issues around the alienation of Muslim youth by engaging them in Youth Engagement Groups. The objective of the groups was to encourage processes of critical, democratic enquiry in order to address their grievances and help them to engage with the challenges of violent extremism.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Young Muslims UK (London)</td>
<td>Government funds were to support local, regional, and national events by YMUK to promote positive alternative activities for Muslim youth.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kali (London)</td>
<td>Government funds supported the use of drama to create a platform for Muslim women to speak out.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: DCLG, 2009b

In its initial funding cycle, the fund supported 32 projects. This fund has increased to over £5.1 million for the 2010-2011 funding cycle; the increase was necessary, in part,
due to a doubling in applications from the first year. The increased funding is intended to diversify the community partners the government supports. The Challenge and Innovation Fund provides an additional £3.2 million to local government authorities to deliver “particularly challenging and innovative local projects” aimed at preventing extremism.

The religious buffer institutions have been the primary channel through which the British government funds faith organizations and activities. Through these institutions, the government interacted with particular faith groups and particular representatives, shaping what was “acceptable” and what was “unacceptable” religion in the public sphere. Through targeted funding objectives, the Blair government sought to differentiate among the type of institution receiving government funds as well as channel the type of activity and/or service these institutions provided. For example, many of the funding stipulations encouraged or mandated developing an interfaith component to the initiative. Several funding schemes contained a formal requirement that the organization partner with a local government authority in its service delivery, thereby ensuring greater government-faith interaction at the local level. Rather than funding any organization which promised to stem extremism, the British government formalized the process of funding and partnership. Moreover, there were often stringent government requirements including an extensive application procedure, end targets in the form of numbers and statistics, requirements for accountability, and a preference for short-term rather than long-term projects. Religious buffer institutions were crucial in implementing this level of formalization.
This focus on faith is also reflected in the research commissioned by the British government starting in the 1990s. With the increasing recognition that faith was a major component in British citizens’ lives, particularly for ethnic minority communities, the British government sought to understand the role of religion in relation to its major policy objectives. This resulted in a significant research agenda by the British government that both sought to assess and understand the relevance and salience of religion for individuals and communities as well as how faith could be utilized in the political and public domains. Indeed, as faith communities increasingly were recognized as important components in policy discussions about racial equality, community cohesion, social capital and neighborhood renewal as discussed in greater detail in Chapter 1, the government commissioned reports on how to more effectively engage with faith communities and, later, to assess its progress.

Since 1997, the Department for Communities and Government (DCLG) (and its predecessors) has produced upwards of 30 publications focusing on faith issues, including a recent initiative to map the diversity of the British Muslim community that has produced 15 separate reports.\textsuperscript{198} Table 3 provides a list of these publications. What the different reports in the table demonstrate is an active research agenda on the part of government bureaucrats to reflect upon policy problems both with regard to the Muslim communities themselves as well as government-faith interaction, offer targeted policy prescriptions, and evaluate implementation in order to enhance government service delivery.

\textsuperscript{198} This does not include reports in other government departments which look at faith/religion in connection to specific policy focus, such as the role of faith schools and faith education addressed by the Department for Education and Skills (DfES).
## TABLE 4.3

**PUBLICATIONS ON FAITH BY BRITISH RELIGIOUS BUFFER INSTITUTIONS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Select DCLG Publications on Faith</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Review of the Evidence Base on Faith Communities&quot; Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, 2006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Preventing Violent Extremism—Winning Hearts and Minds,” DCLG, Preventing Extremism Unit, 2007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Empowering Muslim Women: Case Studies,” DCLG, Preventing Extremism Unit, 2008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Key Communities, Key Resources: Engaging the capacity and capabilities of faith communities in Civil Resilience,” DCLG, RFCU, 2008</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
This level of reflection and evaluation, as well as the more general concern of utilizing faith as a resource, is not found in the French case.

As the need for a more responsive and targeted policy response toward the British Muslim community rose on the political agenda, the British government, through the buffer institutions of the DCLG, undertook an important research initiative in 2008 in order to more fully understand the domestic Muslim community and remedy this lack of policy knowledge. This initiative, the “Understanding Muslim Ethnic Communities,” sought to disaggregate the domestic Muslim community into various ethnic communities and produce reports on particular communities, including providing a portrayal of geographic dispersion and concentration, pre-migration histories, length of settlement in the UK, employment figures, educational attainment, and religious affiliations and patterns.

The “Understanding Muslim Communities” research initiative (DCLG, 2009c) illustrates how religious buffer institutions and the use of venue shopping in the British context has been used to address key deficiencies within the government’s response to the Muslim community—namely, in the area of knowledge of the different communities. By commissioning studies, government bureaucrats sought out information in order to target services more accurately and, thus, make state response more efficacious. To a certain extent, this particular initiative reflects the Government’s effort to move away from essentializing the Muslim community in its policy response at the administrative level.199 It provides an example of how a venue shift to the administrative realm provided the oppor-

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199 In commissioning this research, bureaucrats sought to understand more fully the nature and scope of the policy problem in order to guide policy implementation. This is important to underscore because this more comprehensive and sensitive understanding of the Muslim communities in Britain has not necessarily been reflected at the national political level. In Parliament and within the national debate, a less nuanced understanding largely still holds.
tunity to reflect more narrowly on the policy problem of the Muslim communities in Britain.

What it also reflects is a key weakness resulting from a shift in policy venue to the administrative realm. The nuanced policy sensitivity found among the religious buffer officials was not reflected in the political realm. This very concern was reflected by government bureaucrats of the Preventing Extremism Unit during the Forest Gate affair in June 2006. At the time when the institution was forming partnerships within the Muslim community, a high profile raid on suspected homegrown terrorists caused considerable protest within the British Muslim community and distrust of the government. Religious buffer bureaucrats expressed how the incident made partnering with the Muslim community more difficult as all government agencies and officials were viewed with greater suspicion.

1.3 Preferred Interlocutors

The solution in the battle of ideas and values, according to the government, was the creation of a distinctive British Islam, one which was moderate, civic-minded, and oriented to harnessing faith capital in a positive fashion. In defining the problem as one of “bad” or “illiberal” religion, the British leadership undertook a more assertive agenda of developing and then promoting a “fighting creed” in the form of a British Islam that embraced liberal values, particularly those of human rights, democracy, and gender equality. Partnership with the British Muslim community formed the cornerstone of this softer strategy. As noted above, when the Blair government moved to supporting different Muslim community partners in its new security strategy, the Preventing Extremism
Unit became the lead government department to manage these partnerships. This section will take a closer look at several of these government initiatives to support moderates and craft a British Islam, particularly those initiatives that supported a greater role for interfaith dialogue, engagement of women and youth within Islam, and training local imams and other Muslim civic society leaders in civic leadership.

1.3.1 Interfaith Activity

Given the Blair government’s previous commitment to interfaith work, it is perhaps not surprising that interfaith activities were an important component of the government’s promotion of moderates.\(^\text{200}\) This preference for interfaith structures stems from both practical and policy considerations. Foremost, the structure of interfaith fora, as one organization that has several different faith participants, enabled the government to work with faith communities through a single structure and not as disparate and heterogeneous groups. Moreover, from a practical standpoint, the government had already established a working relationship with interfaith organizations, specifically the Interfaith Network of the United Kingdom (IFNUK). In effect, the government was working with a known actor, one with an established relationship with the British government. Consequently, the

\(^\text{200}\) As early as 2002, the Local Government Authority (LGA) “Guidance on Community Cohesion” emphasized interfaith structures as models for engaging and partnering with faith communities, with the document stressing the importance of working at the inter-faith level rather than with specific faith communities. In 2003, as a part of the community cohesion panel review, the Faith Practitioners’ Group singled out interfaith activity as the principal goal for government engaging with faith communities. This emphasis on interfaith work was furthered by the work of the Commission on Integration and Cohesion, the independent task force charged with offering recommendations to the government on how to improve community cohesion in British society. Interfaith work was praised in the final report as responding to needs in such varied areas as community relations, conflict resolution and mediation, family and parenting skills, health work, improving language skills and support networks (Commission on Integration and Cohesion, 2007). By 2007, this preference for interfaith work was more formally included in the government’s framework, one of ten points in a government plan to build community cohesion and tackle extremism (DCLG, 2007d, 5).
problems of incomplete information and diverging preferences inherent to principal-agent relationships were mitigated.

Interfaith work was promoted by the Blair government as an essential component of cohesive communities, delivering a wide array of benefits such as creating trust and understanding, promoting cooperation and civic engagement, and supporting moderate religious positions that cross faith boundaries. Interfaith structures were seen as mechanisms of consultation and providing essential “bridging capital.” Beyond contributing to moderate dialogue and organizations, an important component of the “bridging” work that interfaith structures and activities provide was the facilitation and promotion of civic engagement (DCLG, 2007d). What is more, the mere process of finding and articulating shared values leads to common denominator, moderate positions. Taken together, interfaith organizations were natural allies in the government’s agenda to promote wider engagement by the Muslim community as well as emphasizing shared values.

This emphasis on interfaith work was made evident in the particular organizations and projects that the government funded through the Preventing Violent Extremism Pathfinder Fund. An analysis of the case studies highlighted in a 2007 government publication demonstrates that the government heavily supported interfaith activities (DCLG, 2007b). The British government’s preference for interfaith work is also reflected on

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201 In a consultation document on interfaith work, the government elaborated on how interfaith work created trust, understanding, and positive community results by allowing for “face-to-face” interaction and “side-by-side” collaboration on shared activities (DCLG, 2007d, 5). As interfaith structures and initiatives, by their nature, involve cross-cultural dialogue and cooperation, the Labour government, particularly bureaucrats within the DCLG, viewed interfaith activities as also promoting “mutual understanding and cooperation” (FCU, 2004a).

202 Many of the organizations that were funded in the 2007-2008 funding cycle were religious in nature or sought to develop an interfaith component to their service including Barking and Dagenham Islamic Awareness initiative, Black Country Imams initiative, and Birmingham Study Circles initiative.
the Faith and Cohesion Unit website, with a section on interfaith work prominently displayed. Moreover, this preference can be found in its ongoing partnership with the Interfaith Network for the UK (IFNUK).203

1.3.2 Supporting Women and Youth

The government’s preventing extremism initiatives have sought to support a “wide” and “diverse” spectrum of the Muslim community in an effort to marginalize what it views as a small faction of individuals espousing extremism and violence. To this end, the government has focused its efforts particularly upon Muslim youth and women. Indeed, an integral component of the government’s prevent counterterrorism response is the “battle of ideas” for the nation’s Muslim youth. The government has sought to develop the counter-narrative within Islam, fighting what is seen as the “wrong” interpretation of Islam with a moderate, civic-minded interpretation, one that explicitly rejects terrorism but, beyond this, seeks to instill British civic values. The focus on Muslim youth is particularly important given the demographic profile of the Muslim community in Britain. One-third of the Muslim population is under the age of 16 compared to 20% of the general British population; an additional 54% are under the age of 25 years and 70% are under the age of 35.

The Scholars’ Roadshow—the most widely known initiative of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office’s nation-wide “Empowering Voices of Mainstream British Muslims” program—has sought to target Muslim youth by developing programs to articulate

203 The national government is the primary funder of the IFNUK and, over the years, the organization has become an important actor in many of the government’s programs. The prominence of this partnership is illustrated on the Faith and Cohesion Unit’s main website page with a link to the organization’s own website, the only organization with which the government has done so (see http://communities.gov.uk/communities/racecohesionfaith/faith).
a counter-narrative to the extremist message, one that addresses the issues of living as a religious minority in democratic, modern Britain.\textsuperscript{204} This initiative has given British youth the opportunity to encounter Islamic scholars through a series of national forums of influential Muslim leaders.\textsuperscript{205} The general goal of the program is to bring in individuals in positions of authority to speak about issues of citizenship, identity, and radicalization, thereby providing the youth (and those within the Muslim community more generally) access to arguments to counter those put forth by extremists. This has been described by government bureaucrats as giving the youth “tools,” i.e. the arguments and concepts, to counter radicalization for themselves. Over a hundred events have been held across the UK since December 2005, reaching over 60,000 young people.

The scholars, both from Muslim-majority countries and the West, are generally among the new generation of Muslim scholars described by Peter Mandaville and others (Mandaville, 2003; Mandaville, 2004; Cesari, 2005; Roy, 2005).\textsuperscript{206} This new leadership stresses a more universalist interpretation of religion rather than the particularistic discourse and practice of leadership originating from the home country. The discourse that

\textsuperscript{204} The primary funding source of the Scholars’ Roadshow are the the Faith and Cohesion Unit of the DCLG and FCO’s Global Opportunities Fund, suggesting that governmental priorities will be reflected even if a governmental employee is not directly managing the day-to-day activities.

\textsuperscript{205} Underscoring the government’s focus on the Muslim community, the Islamic Issues Team within the FCO, created in 2004 to deal with such issues as helping British Muslims complete the hajj and more general diplomacy to Muslim-majority countries, took the lead on the domestic programs to tackle extremism. The FCO’s domestic focus is housed under a nation-wide “Empowering voices of mainstream British Muslims” program.

has emerged from the roadshows advocates for more active Muslim youth participation and engagement with wider society.

The topics that have been discussed and format of the events provide evidence of the type of Islam the British government would like youth to encounter. Topics have included British foreign policy, faith and citizenship, and the role of religion in the modern world. These topics illustrate the focus on reflecting upon and harmonizing the faith component of the youth’s identity and the reality of living out this faith in the West. The roadshows are also a medium through which youth can have access to scholars and Islamic teachings in English, suggesting several things. First, the fact that the speakers are prominent Islamic scholars from Britain or the elsewhere in the West demonstrates to the youth the compatibility of one’s Muslim identity and one’s Western identity, providing a living model that one can both have a British accent and be respected as an Islamic authority. Second, with events entitled “Does Islam need Reformation?”, “Why Europe Needs Islam,” “Living as Muslims in the 21st Century,” “Cultural Jihad: Making Islam Matter,” and “Confronting Anger and Rage,” the intended message of the forums is that there is an Islam that can speak directly to their lives and concerns in the West outside of the radical rejection espoused by extremists.

The British government also established a more direct forum to engage the nation’s youth in the Young Muslim Advisory Group (Y MAG). This group, first convened in October 2008, consists of 23 young Muslim adults (aged 17-26) who act as advisors to the British government, addressing the larger issue of how the government and larger
British society can engage Muslim youth and prevent radicalization. At the launch of the advisory group, Hazel Blears, Secretary for Communities and Local Government, described the initiative as an effort by the government to hear young British Muslim in their own voices. In March 2009, YMAG, under the auspices of the Preventing Extremism Unit and the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF), organized a national youth conference—opened to all youth—to discuss issues of preventing extremism as well as the broader concern of how to get youth more engaged in civic life. The group has also created a website to provide updates on its activities as well as solicit opinions directly from concerned Muslim youth.

While the British government focused on youth as a vulnerable population, it identified another segment of the Muslim community as positive and strong voices for moderation: women. Muslim women, in the eyes of government policy-makers, were key repositories of peace (see, for example, DCLG, 2008a). Women were particularly

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207 In particular, the advisory group offers advice on several key issues concerning youth: 1) the development and delivery of faith projects, including addressing issues of theology, 2) tackling extremist material on the internet, and 3) increasing the representation and participation of young Muslims in civic life.

208 The term peace was bandied about by politicians on both sides of the political spectrum during debates over the government’s role in counterradicalization and its support of specific constituencies within the Muslim community. This term was never given form beyond a general evocative quality of countering radical elements within the Muslim community. Government publications, moreover, did not define the term.
viewed by politicians and civil servants as forces for moderation as well as liberal reform within Islam.209

The government described its support as unlocking the potential of Muslim women, an untapped resource, viewing Muslim women as being “uniquely” placed to challenge extremism and radicalization within the community and as positive, peaceful forces. For example, a Cohesion and Faiths Unit publication, “Empowering Muslim Women,” stated that women:

have a unique viewpoint on the challenges faced by the communities they live in—whether that is the threat of violent extremism, anti-social behaviour, or young people feeling isolated and disengaged. They are also uniquely placed to solve these problems, challenging unacceptable behaviour and supporting those in need (DCLG, 2008a, 2).

According the publication, they “play a positive and important role in society and represent an untapped potential in the part they can play in preventing violent extremism in communities” (DCLG, 2008a, 6).

In order to harness the positive influence of Muslim women, the Preventing Extremism Unit developed two general policy initiatives. First, through various Preventing Extremism funding schemes, the government prioritized Muslim women’s organizations

209 For example, on April 17, 2007, Paul Goodmans MP brought up the issue of encouraging greater integration of the Muslim community and emphasized the important role of women: “Perhaps the best course that British citizens can take, whether they are Muslims or non-Muslims, is to wait for the fashion to change—as it will sooner or later—and in the meantime persistently and patiently make the case for our common inheritance: individual freedom, the equality of men and women, fundamental justice, and democratic government under the rule of law. I believe that the role of Muslim women, in particular, will be crucial to making that change.” (HC, April 17, 2007, Column 29 WH). During the same debate, Michael Gove MP, referring to the government’s objective of supporting “moderates,” specifically references Muslim women, noting “we cannot effectively champion the interests of moderate Muslims and of our pluralist, tolerant and liberal society, unless we show a determination to tackle extremism. It is the extremists who, in the past, have crowded out from the debate the moderate voices in the Muslim world. I am thinking particularly of the voices of female British Muslim citizens, which have been stilled and silenced as a result of extremists operating not just in mosques but more broadly in our society” (HC, April 17, 2007, c. 41WH).
and those organizations whose programs serve Muslim women as primary beneficiaries. Through the Preventing Extremism Unit’s Pathfinder Funds as well as the Faith Communities Capacity Building Fund (FCCBF), women’s organizations have accessed more than £6.5 million in resources. What is more, beyond a specific priority laid out after the PET working groups, the shift to smaller, local bodies as a consequence of the larger community cohesion agenda has benefited women’s organizations and issues.

The Labour government has also challenged the status of women within Islam itself through a more direct route. In the second case, the government has provided outside legitimation for those individuals and organizations challenging the status quo. In particular, the government has sought to create a direct channel from Muslim women representatives to the government, an acknowledgment that the government’s former reliance on national bodies, composed of male Muslim representatives, resulted in the “stifling” of women’s voices and concerns. The National Muslim Women’s Advisory Group (NMWAG), first proposed during the Preventing Extremism Together Working Groups in 2005, was formally launched in January 2008 under Prime Minister Gordon Brown to, in the words of the government, give voice to those “voices that often go unheard” (DCLG, 2008a, 2). The group is composed of 19 Muslim women who are intended to “represent the experience of Muslim women in Britain,” including those from different ethnic communities and traditions and those who hold professional positions. The forum acts as an advisory group on issues of education, employment, access to mosques, and more general cultural matters that affect Muslim women (for example, the issue of forced marriages).
A broader goal of the advisory group is to empower Muslim women to increase civic participation by acting as role models of engaged Muslim women.

Beyond the focus of integrating women within the structures of civil society and government, the British government has emphasized the lack of “full” participation within the faith community as a particular impediment for women—and, presumably, a factor in the community’s vulnerability to extremism. Government documents addressing the issue of women and faith consistently included recommendations for greater participation of women whether in interfaith fora (DCLG, 2007d) or in the mosque (DCLG, 2005). By supporting Muslim women through increased funding for their organizations and activities as well as creating a forum for Muslim women in which their concerns could be addressed without being filtered through a “Muslim representative,” the government sought to empower Muslim women within the British Muslim community, seeking to legitimize their efforts as well as place them in positions of power they would otherwise not be able to achieve. For example, a priority laid out in the “Winning Hearts and Minds” campaign was to organize a series of roundtable discussions with academics, theologians and community leaders to debate why women are denied access to mosque. This suggests a degree of government involvement in setting the agenda and steering the debate within Islam.

1.3.3 Civic Religious Leadership

The British government has also sought to develop the infrastructure to cultivate and train homegrown imams—what the government has termed “building faith capacity.” If countering religious radicalism lies in providing Muslims with the knowledge and
ideas with which to confront extremist groups, the solution centers on Muslim leadership. This has led policy-makers and bureaucrats within the religious buffer institutions to frame the solution in terms of addressing the quality of religious leadership through a better vetting of foreign imams and developing the infrastructure to cultivate and train homegrown imams. Moreover, the issue of the content of the counter-narrative needed to be addressed. This is a particularly sensitive area for the government to tread, as it has stressed repeatedly that it would not interfere with internal religious governance concerning, for example, how to train religious authorities. As such, the government has increased its involvement—under the cover of religious buffer institutions—in ensuring that imams have the proper understanding, skills, and capacities to engage with young people and present a version of Islam compatible with democratic and British values, a concern with providing a “legitimate” counter-narrative.

Several government initiatives have sought to tackle the “imam and mosque problem,” including restrictive immigration measures as well as the creation of a national advisory body to develop a standardized code of conduct for imams and mosques in Britain. On the security front, the British government began a more robust policy of seeking out and deporting radical imams. Moreover, the Faith and Cohesion Unit facilitated stricter requirements for ministers of religion from abroad.210 While requiring a certain level of

210 The unit initiated a consultation process to gage the faith community’s support of the controversial requirement, resulting in a recommendation to change immigration measures. The Blair government, subsequently, amended its immigration measures in August 2004, before the London bombings, to require all ministers of religion from abroad to obtain a certain level of competence of the English language. According to the rule change, individuals who apply for entry into the UK as a minister of religion must demonstrate competency in spoken English as a limited user (level 4 of International English Language Testing System). In 2006, the requirement became more stringent, requiring individuals to demonstrate pre-entry language acquisition in both written and spoken English as a competent user (level 6) (FCU, 2005).
language proficiency was fairly uncontroversial, the Blair government’s focus on vetting ministers according to “civic criteria” was much more so.211

The government has also turned its attention to improving standards of internal governance within Islam. To this end, the government has supported the creation of two bodies. In October 2007, the government disbursed over £600,000 in funding to create the Faith and Social Cohesion Unit (FSCU) within the Charity Commission. The remit of this particular entity is to work with mosques and Muslim organizations to register as charities and improve governing standards according to Commission guidelines.

A second body also became an important ally in the government’s agenda to promote civic religious leadership and improve governance within mosques. Originating from the PET working groups, the Mosque and Imams National Advisory Body (MINAB) was formally constituted in June 2006, composed of four representatives from four major Muslim organizations.212 While a Muslim community-led initiative, the government has provided funding as well as consultation to the body. After a national consultation process, MINAB developed a “code of conduct” which set out ten minimum standards for a more civic-oriented mosque, covering accreditation of imams for public institutions, governance and accounting standards for mosques, promotion of interfaith activity, and engagement with youth and women. The code of conduct closely resembles

211 After the 2005 bombings, the FCU initiated a second consultation process to assess tougher immigration requirements for foreign ministers of religion, namely in the form of testing an individual’s understanding of the British cultural context in the form of civic tests (FCU, 2005).

212 The four organizations are the Muslim Council of Britain, the Muslim Association of Britain, the British Muslim Forum, and Al-Khoei Foundation.
the government’s key concerns regarding imam training and mosque governance. By 2009, there were nearly 600 mosques and training institutes associated with MINAB, reflecting a degree of success with the initiative and a recognition by the Muslim community of a need for external legitimacy and scrutiny in the heightened security context.

Government support also has included working with other organizations and venues to increase the provision of training for faith leaders and to encourage citizenship education within the mosque environment. These efforts have included the launching of a review of training of Muslim faith leaders by the DCLG’s Faith and Cohesion Unit in 2007. The outcome of this independent review included the development of a Faith Community Development qualification administered through the Faith Community Development project (DCLG, 2009a). The qualification provides specifics on working as a voluntary body in the British context, including an overview of the legislation that pertains to both the voluntary sector and specific requirements for working with children (see Table 4).

The government has also established a theology board, known as the “Contextualizing Islam in Britain” project, under the auspice of Cambridge University. According to the project’s mandate, the board of 26 Muslim academics, theologians, and community repre-

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213 For instance, the code of conduct committed mosques to stricter vetting requirements of imams and religious leaders including a criminal record check. Moreover, there is a requirement that imams and other religious personnel “continuously update skills and techniques relevant to their work.”

214 The initial pilot phase was intended to develop an appropriate continuous professional development course for faith leaders and workers (not specifically tailored to a particular faith), develop the standards of accreditation for the course, and develop learning materials to be used in the courses. The resulting qualification includes units on diversity and faith, leadership development, community development, working with vulnerable people, equal opportunities requirements, and legal matters.
sentatives was to address some of the complex and sensitive issues surrounding Islam and extremism and the place of Muslims in the United Kingdom.

### TABLE 4.4

**BRITISH FAITH LEADER QUALIFICATION CURRICULUM**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Faith Leader Qualification Curriculum</th>
<th>Credits</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mandatory</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diversity and faith</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community development</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction to working with vulnerable people</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction to equal opportunities</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction to legal obligations for working in the voluntary and community sector</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Optional</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child protection</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working with vulnerable people</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working with children and young people</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organizational finance</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent research</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Between 2008-2009, the board debated a range of topics including secularism, democracy, Shariah law, human rights, citizenship, and the role of women. This led to the publication of the report “Contextualising Islam in Britain: Exploratory Perspectives” in October 2009. While both the government and the participants stressed the independence of
the project, the report and its conclusions largely support the government’s goal of developing a liberal British Islam. For instance, the report includes a discussion on how the British secular state provides a context conducive for the practice of Islam; redefines several Muslim terms, for example arguing that jihad properly understood meant “active citizenship”; and called for greater involvement of women.

Moreover, in an explicit move to promote the message that the Islamic faith and British citizenship are compatible, the government has actively supported the “Islam and Citizenship Education” program (ICE project). The project, funded by the DCLG as well as the Department for Children, Schools and Family (DCSF), developed a curriculum to be used in mosque schools to teach citizenship values and obligations to children (ages 7-14), placing emphasis on the need for “active citizenship” justified in Islamic terms. Table 5 presents a selection of the Stage 2 lessons and objectives which include sessions on “Being a British Muslim,” “Living in a Multifaith Society,” and “Equality Issues” (http://www.theiceproject.com/training-materials/key-stage-2). The lesson plans teach citizenship values alongside traditional Quranic lessons and use quotes from Islamic scripture. The stated objectives demonstrate how the Islamic principles are applied and show a compatibility with a liberal democratic society. Perhaps the clearest example of this is the unit on equality issues which clearly states that men and women are equal.

215 The Islamic authenticity of these materials was verified by an independent validation board of Muslim scholars.
### TABLE 4.5
ISLAM AND CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION PROJECT LESSON THEMES AND OBJECTIVES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Select Stage 2 Lesson Themes</th>
<th>Objectives</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Enquiry and Research</td>
<td>- To learn that Islam encourages questioning and seeking of correct information from a range of sources</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| The Masjid, the Madrasah, the Community | - To learn how we can contribute to the community through the madrasah  
- To learn that working closely together in the community is part of citizenship |
| Conflict in Society         | - To understand what conflict is and how people respond to it |
| Dealing with Conflict       | - To reinforce the idea that conflicts should be resolved peacefully  
- To understand that the term jihad means struggle  
- To understand that the greater jihad is the struggle to do good and to stay away from bad  
- To know that Islam condemns suicide absolutely |
| Community Cohesion          | - To learn what Community Cohesion means  
- To explore the Islamic teachings regarding living and working with others |
| Living in a Multifaith Society | - To learn that citizenship and Islam teaches respect and tolerance for people of all faiths and of no faith |
| Being a British Muslim      | - To understand that we can be Muslim and British  
- To understand that Islam recognises different nations and tribes  
- To understand that Islam teaches that no nation is better than another but the best are those who are righteous |
| Active Citizenship          | - To understand the nature of active citizenship  
- To learn that active citizenship is part of the Islamic way of life |
| Equality Issues: Roles of Men and Women | - To understand what Islam says about the role of men and women in the modern world  
- To learn that both men and women are equal citizens |

Source: [http://www.theiceproject.com/training-materials/key-stage-2](http://www.theiceproject.com/training-materials/key-stage-2)
The above are all examples of how the government has utilized buffer institutions to deflect attention from many initiatives that have targeted how the debate within Islam and the Muslim community has unfolded. At the official level of discourse, the government maintains a strict position of non-interference. Government politicians and bureaucrats argue the British state provides the platform and resources for moderate Muslim positions to emerge. However, the government’s own actions—in seeking to deflect attention from direct government involvement—suggest that its level of involvement in the form of providing logistical support and other forms of legitimation to certain voices such as women’s civil society organizations is not a neutral endeavor. Buffer institutions help facilitate this intervention outside of public scrutiny—primarily by serving as an intermediary, a literal barrier, between the Muslim community and other constituents and politicians.

2. The French Pursuit of an *Islam de France*

2.1 Creating a Religious Buffer Institution

As in the British case, the French government created and supported religious buffer institutions. The processes to create a Muslim interlocutor and establish programs to address foreign funding and imam training—although occurring during the same period and involving many of the same political actors—proceeded in a markedly different manner than the *affaires du foulard* which culminated in the law of 15 March 2004. The fact that this process was initiated and conducted outside party politics and largely under the radar of the French media and society is not unimportant. The CFCM was not created by an act of Parliament but rather it was proposed and brought forth by the administrative
efforts of the Interior Ministry. Indeed, the process of creating a national Muslim inter-
locutor proceeded without high-level government attention, taking place in the presence
of low-level government officials and outside high-profile government venues; there
would be no special commissions with well-known public figures or televised hearings.
The Interior Ministry created these institutions to deal with Muslim integration and faith-
related matters outside of party politics and public scrutiny. Indeed, these measures
needed to be outside of the political process in order to depoliticize the very issues of
government-faith affairs that were politicized during the headscarf affairs.

However, to the extent that the process was undertaken and pursued with a focus
on providing a simple, one-size-fits-all solution to more complex issues, the two proc-
esses display remarkable similarities. The process reflects a politically-expedient stra-
tegy—a form of venue-shopping—to address certain politically delicate or complicated is-
sues. While the British government utilized its religious buffer institutions to provide a
more flexible and effective policy response while at the same time deflecting criticism of
intervention, the main incentive for the French government in creating its own institu-
tions was to buffer (or deflect) the fallout in utilizing religion in its policy response. The
next sections provide a description of the religious buffer institutions created by French
state elites, focusing on both the form and function of the institutions as well as the proc-
esses from which they originated to understand the different political incentives surround-
ing their creation and use.

The French state created a Muslim interlocutor to shift the liabilities and exter-
nalities of dealing with the Muslim community—including issues of integration and
thorny church-state issues—outside of the state. In many ways, French elites benefited from the creation of a national interlocutor tasked with addressing issues of imam training, mosque construction, halal certification, coordination of the Aid slaughter, and Muslim chaplaincies. By creating a national Council, the state was outsourcing the responsibility—at least, ostensibly—of integrating the domestic Muslim community. To a certain degree, elites could point the finger at the national Council (CFCM) when calls for addressing greater mosque construction and proper imam training surfaced. It was no longer the French state’s problem but rather one of the Muslim community, to be resolved through the CFCM. In addition, the French state deflected criticisms of inequitable treatment against the French Muslim community. With the creation of the CFCM—no matter how ineffectual—the French Muslim community had an interlocutor on a par, at least symbolically, with other major religious groups in France.

A particular and significant cost French politicians sought to shield themselves from was the criticism of entanglement with religion. These efforts reflect a desire to keep religious issues off the public agenda. One of the most important functions of the CFCM, the Foundation, and the ICP imam training program was to make state intervention and direction “invisible.” The CFCM and the Foundation were intended to be the main gatekeepers—to act as intermediaries or buffers—for Muslim-related issues. By pursuing an administrative course rather than a political course, government officials hoped to dampen public—both political and societal—controversy. At the same time the political process was defining the French principle of laïcité in a highly restrictive manner—both for the individual religious person but, in important ways, for the French state
itself in terms of dealing with its “Muslim problem”—state officials within the Interior Ministry took actions that, if not violated this interpretation of laïcité, stretched its limits. Even if technically permitted, French politicians worked within a highly sensitive political environment, providing incentives to set up structures to avoid scrutiny. The only way for French government officials to do this would be to do it outside of public scrutiny. Government officials, thus, sought to “depoliticize” religion.

Since the 1990s, successive governments on both the Left and Right had pursued the creation of a “representative body” for the Muslim religion, seeking a single interlocutor to not only effectively manage the religious issues arising from Islam in France but also a political interlocutor. The French government, in a more nationalized, top-down policy, has attempted to make Islam more “French” through the government’s institutionalization of Islam in the creation, first of the Council of Reflection on Islam in France in 1990 (Conseil de Reflexion sur l’Islam de France, CORIF), and, in 2003, the French Council for Muslim Religion (Conseil Francais du Culte Musulman, CFCM).216

216 While the process of the constitution of a Muslim representative body on that national scale began at the beginning of the 1980s (the Grand Mosque in Paris previously assumed this role informally), the French state actively pursued the institutionalization of Islam in the promotion of a national form of Islam in the late 1990s. The process of creating a national Muslim interlocutor has been fraught with difficulties for the French state and for the French Muslim community. Events in 1989, including the Ayatollah Khomeini’s fatwa against Salman Rushdie and the first headscarf affairs in France, raised the specter of the threat of political Islam from both abroad and within the French nation. This spurred Pierre Joxe, then the Interior Minister in a Socialist government, to address the issue of Islam in France. Through this initiative, the first Muslim buffer institution was created in 1991. Composed of 15 Muslim individuals, CORIF (Conseil de Reflexion sur l’Islam de France) was not intended to be a representative association but as an advisory council for the Islamic practice in the French Republic. CORIF was mainly the victim of external events, first indirectly affected by the first Gulf War. Moreover, the process was directly impacted by the halting of the democratic process in Algeria, leading to the departure of the rector of the Paris Mosque, Tedjini Haddam, to serve in the new governing council in Algeria. The rightist government formed in 1993 also tried its hand at creating a national Muslim interlocutor. During this time, Charles Pasqua, as Interior Minister, placed his political support behind the Paris Mosque and marginalized the UOIF and FNMF, the two other major Muslim associations, during this process. Moreover, in an effort to solidify the Paris Mosque’s position, Pasqua granted the Mosque a monopoly on halal slaughter certifications, providing a substantial stream of revenue to the organization as well as significant state legitimacy. The Paris Mosque could not create a workable solution, and, subsequently, Jean-Louis Debre removed this monopoly and initiated a period of nonintervention by the French state from 1995-1997.
Rather than an abdication of state sovereignty, the French state’s response reflects a strategy to bring Islam in line with what is thought proper “religion” (in practice as well as doctrine) but also in line with French values as well, a strong-handed way “to take Islam under state control and to assimilate it” (Kuru, 2008, 11).

The French Council of the Muslim Faith (CFCM) was established May 4, 2003 under the auspices of Nicolas Sarkozy as Interior Minister. Beyond concerns of equality and integration, however, the actions of the French elite should be interpreted as ensuring Islam conforms to the French notion of religion. That is, government officials have defined, regulated, and observed through the CFCM in order to ensure that Islam, like other religions in France, is organized, bounded, orderly, contained in its buildings and defined by worship practices in those buildings. If it strays into the street, selling tracts or proselytizing, it is out of bounds, and even when it is tolerated it is no longer protected by the French constitution and can easily be quashed in the name of protecting order (Bowen, 2007, 18).

The institutionalization of Islam in France, thus, is an effort to organize and regulate Islam within the French Republic. The main driving force in the process has been the secular state: the process has been initiated and directed by French political elites, specifically by successive Ministers of Interior, who have initiated the first meetings, participated in how to define the procedures of election to the Council, drew up criteria for participation—and, to a certain extent, to ensure broad representation of all Muslim perspectives, and provided the organizational support for the elections (Laurence and Vaisse, 2006; Laurence, 2006; Bowen, 2007).
The structure of this religious buffer institution is substantially different than those in Britain. The CFCM is composed not of government bureaucrats but elected (or appointed) representatives from the Muslim community. The CFCM is composed of an executive board, a general assembly of 150 delegates, and seven working groups on major issues concerning the practice of Islam. In the final structure, the major Muslim organizations are represented on the executive council, including the Paris Mosque (Grande Mosquée de Paris, GMP), UOIF (Union de Organisations Islamique de France), FNMF (Federation National de Musulmans Français), Foi et Pratique and Dawa illa Allah (Taligh organizations), CCMTF (Le Comité de coordination des musulmans turcs de France), FFAIACA (La Fédération française des associations islamiques d’Afrique, des Comores et des Antilles). And, in sharp contrast to the buffer institution in Britain, the representatives, or delegates to the general assembly, are elected through a complex electoral process. It could be argued that this arrangement might better represent Muslim issues within the government apparatus. To the extent that the structure adequately and effectively packages and channels these different orientations this may indeed be the case. In practice, the institution has been hampered by ideological and theological diversity and, perhaps more importantly, political maneuvering by actors within the organiza-

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217 The executive board’s positions of president, two vice-presidents, and secretary are filled by representatives of the major French Muslim associations (Paris Mosque, UOIF, FNMF, and the CCMTF). Over 1500 mosques and associations elect or appoint delegates to regional councils, who subsequently elect 150 representatives to the general assembly; seven eligible federations and five grand mosques elect another 24 organizational representatives; and, finally, ten unaffiliated “personalities” are appointed by the French government to the assembly (Billon, 2005; Klausen, 2005; Laurence and Vaisse, 2006; Bowen, 2007). The negotiated electoral formula privileges large prayer spaces: 210 of the large prayer spaces elect around 75% of the delegates (Laurence and Vaisse, 2006). This formula was necessary for the participation of the Paris Mosque who, with one of the largest mosques on French soil, has been afraid of losing its influential status within the government. In addition to the general assembly, the CFCM has seven working groups to facilitate the practice of Islam in France. These working groups cover areas related to prayers spaces, training of imams, the appointment of Muslim chaplains, the organization of the Aid slaughter, halal certification, and facilitation of the hajj.
tion as well as the nominally independent French state elites. In terms of providing a degree of cohesion and acting as an institutional mechanism for developing consensus, the CFCM has not acted as intended (at least for the general Muslim community; the same, perhaps, cannot be said for the actors involved within the CFCM and government officials). Moreover, the lack of bureaucrats within the institution distances it from actual policy implementation. As will be discussed later, this may be a deliberate strategy of French elites. That is to say, the creation of an institution that meets to deliberate issues but lacks political power and resources to move beyond this superficial level benefited certain elites within the French government.

The concern that the body acts as a representative institution for religion rather than a political body for an ethno-religious group is to ensure state conformity with the principles of church-state separation. French state involvement has tried to move beyond the boundaries of laïcité, however, and has done so in the name of security. Concerns for integration of the Muslim population have been eclipsed by security, in this case the specific concerns of foreign tutelage and encroachment of fundamentalism.

The current CFCM sprung from the efforts of Chevenement as Interior Minister in 1999. In November 1999, Chevenement initiated the Al Istichara (or Muslim Consultation). The structure created at this time was the basis for the CFCM.\(^\text{218}\) One of the most important steps during this early period was the signing of a “Declaration of Intent” in January 2000 which committed the participating Muslim actors to the laws of the

\(^{218}\) The Consultation included five Muslim organizations, representatives of six independent mosques, and six qualified persons (Muslims favored by the government as “moderate” and intended, according to Bowen, to provide an “intellectual counterweight to large organizations”) (Bowen, 2007, 50).
Republic. By signing this agreement, Muslim associations were placed symbolically on the same footing as other religions in France; to the French state, it was an important act of sovereignty, imposing upon the different organizations a commitment to abide by all the legal principles of the French republic’s fundamental texts (Laurence, 2007).

Sarkozy, taking over the helm of Interior Ministry in 2002, made the creation of a national Muslim interlocutor one of his foremost priorities, and, while continuing the process started by Chevenement (and later Daniel Vaillant), his leadership marked a change in style for the process, one that was more direct and straightforward and whose personal investment was described by one scholar as “unprecedented” (Billon, 2005). The preceding period was marked by different maneuverings by the major associations, trying—and, ultimately, failing—to come to an agreement on the issue of representation and weight, with each Muslim organization seeking to increase its influence based on claims to representativeness and, in the case of the Paris Mosque, its moderate and accommodating stance (as well as history of serving as the unofficial interlocutor). After 9/11, the Paris Mosque and other “moderate” organizations tried to capitalize on the heightened security environment. In particular, the Paris Mosque sought to marginalize the UOIF from the process by claiming the organization was too radical. The process did not

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219 Although, Muslim organizations successful kept the right to change one’s religion out of the document causing a stir among both the right and the left (Bowen, 2007, 50).

220 Indeed, Laurence (2007) argues a declaration of intent is one of three common features of state incorporation of Islamic institutions designed to "domesticate" Islam within the Western nation-state. The most important feature of this founding document is that participating Muslim associations confirm their respect for the rule of law, establishing the state’s sovereignty. The other two instruments Laurence identifies include the establishment of technical working groups that include representatives of Islam working with state officials and the nomination or election of a representative council that serves as the interlocutor for the state.
move forward until an agreement was reached in December of 2002 among the three major Muslim federations of the Paris Mosque, the UOIF, and the FNMF.221

The CFCM has not satisfied the government’s expectations and, as the third effort to create an interlocutor for the government, this development is perhaps not surprising. At the creation of the Council in 2003, an opinion poll showed that 81% of Muslim respondents thought the CFCM signified recognition of Islam’s place in France and that the Council would allow for greater account to be taken of Islam and French Muslims (IP-SOS, 2003). French Muslims had strong hopes for the Council at the time, with 80% responding it would improve the image of French Muslims vis-a-vis French society and 74% that it would resolve the difficulties they faced in practicing their religion. By 2008, a poll of Muslims provides evidence that many of these hopes have gone unrealized, with only 47% of respondents agreeing that the CFCM represents them well (only 16% responded very well) and 14% responding that they did not know enough about the CFCM (CSA, 2008b). Moreover, despite the creation of the CFCM and the hopes that it would improve relations between Islam and French society, two-thirds of Muslim respondents thought that strong hostility to Islam still existed in France.

One particular problem with the CFCM is its cumbersome structure, the result of negotiations between the government and a myriad of Muslim associations. Another overarching problem is the ambiguous expectations of the Council. The French government has maintained that the CFCM is only a consultative religious body and does not represent the Muslim “community.” However, scholars have pointed to the fact that

221 Other participants were not happy with the agreement but would eventually agree making the path open to move forward with elections.
those in the leadership positions of the CFCM are political activists and not theologians or jurists and the Council repeatedly has been called upon to take public positions on issues affecting Muslims.

More importantly, political rivalries within French Islam stymied progress on the major issues of mosque construction, halal certification, and imam training. Just as the first two attempts to create a national interlocutor failed due to the role of the Paris Mosque, the CFCM too is plagued by representational concerns over the Paris Mosque. As previously noted, the project only moved forward after a political pact was forged between the main organizations, with Sarkozy throwing his support behind the Paris Mosque and insisting that the position of the Presidency be filled by its rector, Dalil Boubakeur. In the subsequent elections of 2005 and 2008, the UOIF, FNMF, and RMF (Rally of French Muslims) outperformed the Paris Mosque. Consequently, in 2008, the Paris Mosque boycotted the elections in an effort to strengthen its position.

The issue over the Muslim headscarf became a particularly challenging political question for the CFCM and further reinforced the divisions between the different Muslim organizations and schools of thought. After the expulsion of the Levy sisters in October of 2003, the CFCM’s official position supported the existing Conseil d’État jurisprudence, thereby permitting the girls to wear the headscarf in the school. This was not a particularly controversial stance as there had been almost a decade of jurisprudence to support it and the decision was backed by a state institution. However, the CFCM went one step further in publicly contending that the voile was a “religious prescription” (Bowen, 2007, 112). Within the institution, however, the major Muslim federations took
diverging positions regarding the issue of how the political situation should be resolved and whether the headscarf was an obligation, placing the UOIF and the Paris Mosque in direct contention. The two organizations, rather than working through the Council (ostensibly one of the main—if not the primary—functions of the body), circumvented the deliberative body and sought out the media spotlight to argue their positions publicly. This served to further politicize the issue of the headscarf as well as the Council’s place in the Republic. The Council, rather than acting to dampen the issues, served as a space of political struggle as both organizations postured for greater power in the upcoming elections. The internal divisions within the organization over the headscarf ban were only settled due to an international crisis.222

The CFCM was intended to provide French state policies with a degree of legitimacy. To the extent that it did not or could not provide this legitimacy, the French government sought out other partners and undermined the institution. The issue of using religion to support government policy is evident in the actions of Nicolas Sarkozy during the headscarf affairs. Because the CFCM did not provide the government with a unified response in 2003 to the issue of whether the headscarf was a religious prescription or not—with the UOIF arguing that the headscarf was a religious obligation and Dalil Boubakeur taking the contrary position—Sarkozy turned to the reputable Al Azhar in Egypt

222 After the adoption of the headscarf ban in 2004, French journalists were taken hostage by insurgents in Iraq. One of the insurgents demands was the removal of the French headscarf law as terms for the release of the journalists. The CFCM acted as one of the government’s emissaries to negotiate the release of the hostages, underscoring the ambiguity of the Council’s role as a religious body. In another highly publicized rift within the organization, the CFCM and UOIF took diverging positions concerning the November 2005 riots. During the crisis, the UOIF issued a fatwa (religious decree) that condemned the violence and, at the same time, denounced the CFCM for not intervening. The CFCM, according to the President Boubakeur, refused to intervene in order not to implicate Islam in the rioting.
to obtain a religious decree that argued the headscarf was not a religious requirement for French Muslim girls.

2.2 Funding and Research

A funding dilemma—a political quagmire over two competing interests of maintaining a strict church-state separation in order to uphold a restrictivist interpretation of laïcité and the growing realization by French political elites and security officials that foreign influence in the form of funding and imam provision was serving to radicalize the domestic Muslim community—provided the impetus for the creation of two more religious buffer institutions. Due the 1905 law on church and state separation, the French state is prohibited from directly financing places of worship or overseeing imam training. While there are other arrangements that Muslim associations can make, such as building a mosque within a cultural center or paying a nominal fee on a long-term lease, funding for Muslim places of worship is still largely dependent on funding from sources abroad. As the Islamic infrastructure in France has grown, the issue of foreign financing, and the attendant fears of radical Islamist influence, has increased on the political agenda. According to the Interior Ministry, of the over 1600 Muslim prayer spaces in France, a majority is not originally intended for worship purposes such as an apartment or converted commercial space and only 13 of spaces can accommodate over 1000 people (French Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2007). Moreover, of the 1200 imams in France, the majority—75% according to most sources—are non-citizens and as many as one-third do not speak adequate French (HCI, 2000).
At the beginning of his tenure as Interior Minister, Sarkozy drew up a controversial plan for the “backdoor funding” of mosques, starting with a large mosque in Marseille (Haddad and Moslon, 2007). According to the plan, the French government, prohibited from directly funding religious spaces, would fund auxiliary spaces such as parking lots and cultural centers surrounding the religious space. As alluded to at the beginning of Part II, this created considerable political controversy within Sarkozy’s own party, with Jacques Chirac and Prime Minister Dominique de Villepin—two of Sarkozy’s strongest political opponents—remaining opposed to any measure that was viewed as challenging French church-state separation. However, the funding dilemma remained: while French elites opposed any measure in which the French state provided funding for religious institutions and activities, it also placed pressure on Muslim groups not to accept funds from foreign sources.

To circumvent this constraint and address the competing goals—as well as an example of political maneuvering among elites jostling for leadership within the rightist UMP—Chirac and de Villepin created a second religious buffer institution in July 2005: the Foundation for the Works of Islam (Fondation des Œuvres de l’Islam de France). In creating the institution, de Villepin, as Interior Minister, staked a political position opposite to his predecessor, Sarkozy, rejecting a change the law of 1905 to allow the Muslim communities to use public funds to build mosques and train imams. What de Villepin created was an officially-recognized public interest organization—with an initial budget of 800,000 Euros intended to subsidize imam training and the daily activities of the CFCM and technically independent from the French state. The action avoided direct in-
tervention by the French government in subsidizing religious spaces and training, and, consequently, permitted de Villepin and Chirac to dampen public scrutiny over the action. In reality, however, the organization was a way to address the real concerns of the French elite regarding the issues of foreign funding of mosques and imam training. The institution was intended to serve as a buffer, i.e. to allow the French government a degree of intervention while maintaining a necessary distance to the public eye, particularly against the backdrop of the headscarf controversies in which the political current was pushing for a stricter version of laïcité.

The overall goal, beyond raising adequate fiduciary support for Islamic infrastructure in France, was donor transparency and freeing the French Muslim community from foreign support and intervention. The Foundation was intended to act as a clearinghouse for donations from foreign countries, religious federations, as well as donations from businesses and individuals to be used for religious purposes within the Muslim community. A primary function of the organization was to create greater transparency for the French state regarding the source of donations flowing from foreign donors. To this end, the French state insisted that any foreign donations to finance projects of worship on French soil be directed through the Foundation. The organization was also intended to encourage domestic sources of funding by facilitating tax-deductible donations for the construction of mosques and other charitable causes.

One indication of the “backdoor involvement” of the French state was its financial management of the funds. All French and foreign donations are deposited into an account managed by the Deposit and Consignment Office. As a public interest organiza-
tion, an auditor must review the balance sheets and the activities of the Foundation must be publicly reported. As noted above, the French state justifies these requirements as creating transparency but they should also be viewed as permitting a substantial degree of government oversight, mitigating the potential negative outcomes produced in the principal-agent structure.

French state intervention is also demonstrated by the structure of the organization. As a parallel institution to the CFCM, the Foundation has a similar leadership structure. The organization has seven members, two representatives from the GMP, two from the FNMF, two from UOIF, and one from the CCMTF, and eight independent members (“qualified personalities”). The French state acts as a “member of right,” represented by the Minister of Interior who designates a government auditor. Internal rivalries among the Muslim community necessitated an agreement in which the presidency rotated every two years. As such, this organization has also been plagued by rivalries among the main Muslim organizations that have blocked action from going forward.223

In another action that avoided direct government intervention while at the same time playing an instrumental role in the formation and transmission of Islam on French soil, the French government, through a third party partnership, instituted a state-approved imam training course in 2008. Mirroring the history of the formation of the CFCM, the

223 Thus, even though Dalil Boubakeur of the Paris Mosque would lose the Presidency of the CFCM by 2008, he would still be in charge of the Foundation.
French state has attempted to create an imam training program since the 1990s. The purpose of such programs was to teach French culture, including language and the strict tradition of laïcité, as well as encouraging a contextual (rather than a literalist, textual) approach to the teaching of the Quran and Islamic principles. In other words, the French government supported those structures which provided imams with greater interaction with wider French secular society and promoted a form of Islam which did not undermine liberal secular norms.

Even though the French state publicly committed itself to a position of non-interference in the area of imam training, internal divisions within the CFCM and the financial constraints within the Muslim community forced the French government to intervene to address a situation that Interior Minister de Villepin characterized as “unacceptable.” The most recent government-sponsored secularization project in the guise of imam training is intended to give imams a more secular education, one rooted in French history and culture, in order to encourage the emergence of imams who are religiously moderate, dedicated to French secularism, and well-versed in Western values and lifestyles. Although officially administered through the Catholic Institute of Paris, three government departments—the Central Bureau of Cults of the Interior Ministry, the

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224 One of the first attempts by the Interior Ministry was to work through the UOIF to create the Institut Europeen des Sciences Humaines (IESH) (Laurence and Vaisse, 2006; Haddad and Balz, 2008). The French government has also supported an imam training program, the Mosque Institute, through the preferred Muslim interlocutor, the Paris Mosque, during this time period. However, due to the inherent limitations of principal-agents relationships, the government had no direct avenue of influencing the curriculum of these programs. One avenue that the French state asserted control over these programs was in denying visas to potential students (Haddad and Moslon, 2008, 224).

225 In 2004, the Interior Ministry would take the position that providing government support for training imams was not on the government’s agenda. At the time, a spokesperson for the Ministry stated: "This is precisely the CFCM's mission and task. The ball is in their court. The French state will have nothing to do with how a religion organizes itself" (qtd in Ford, 2004).
newly-created Ministry of Immigration, Integration and of National Identity and Co-Development, and the Office of Population and Migration—are official partners in the program. This “secular” education is complemented by “moderate” theological training provided by the Paris Mosque. Thus, once again the French state provided the Paris Mosque with a privileged partnership position. While the French university partner educates imams in secular subjects, the Paris Mosque provides the necessary theological training. The government, therefore, circumvents the issue of funding religion by separating the cultural and language portion of the curriculum from religious training courses.

In 2008 the Institut de Catholique de Paris (ICP) began to administer the course, entitled “Religions, Secularism, and Interculturality.” It is a two-semester course on French politics, law and secularism, given by the social and economic sciences faculty of the ICP. Students are required to take a variety of courses in four subject areas—general history and culture of France, legislative matters, religion, and intercultural exchange—constituting over 200 hours of course work over a six-month period followed by a six-month period of thesis writing. The program is intended to provide a secular education upon which to build a religious framework; in other words to provide the proper Republican frames and concepts from which to interpret the Islamic religious tradition. As demonstrated in Table 6, the classes address both practical issues such as the “Economy and Management of Worship,” with a course description noting “the aim of this course is to learn to manage and administer in the context of republican egality” to the more philosophical, including the course “Religion and philosophy.” As such, the princi-

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226 In the first year, the program enrolled 25 students, 22 men and 3 women. Over half of these students were French citizens while the remaining twelve originated from Morocco, Algeria, and Turkey.
ple of laïcité—and what it entails in practice—is at the foundation of the “Religions, Secularism, and Interculturality” Program.227

The imam training program is a clear case of state outsourcing in order to circumvent negative scrutiny and legal constraints. The controversy over the appropriate secular partner demonstrates the particular importance of buffer institutions in this policy field.

227 One of the principal goals of the program, according to the then-Prime Minister François Fillon, was to encourage within students an “an open-minded secularism, challenging, respectful of the beliefs of each, but also demanding, vigilant, uncompromising even when the terms of the pact are common game” (ICP, 2008). Subsidiary goals include: providing specific knowledge on how to conform to French law as well as training in French language and culture (ICP, 2008).
The government first sought a government-supported imam training program in 2005 to be administered through Paris III-Sorbonne and later Paris VIII-Saint Denis. The first two attempts failed because of the concerted and heated opposition mounted by professors within the Sorbonne and University of Paris as well as other notable combative secularists in the name of protecting laïcité. The French Interior Minister justified his actions against criticism that it was a violation of laïcité by referring to the security situation, arguing that “there was an urgent need for providing imams, who speak French and are familiar with French laws. That is why the course was organized in tandem with the Grand Mosque’s (theology) institute and the Catholic institute” (Yahmid, 2009).

2.3 Muslim Partnerships

The creation of a national Muslim interlocutor and the other religious buffer institutions are examples of a form of inclusion, or a seat at the Republican table, similar to the terms of the other major recognized religions in France. Laurence and Vaisse (2006) make just this argument in their book on Integrating Islam, providing a relatively sanguine analysis of the French state’s actions and the progress made to “include” Islam. However, what is equally the case is that it is a form of inclusion on the French government’s terms. Indeed, the French government has had an active—if not interventionist—hand on the project from the very start. This strong hand wielded by the Republic, particularly by the Interior Ministry, provides evidence of a greater degree of managing and shaping religion than is officially acknowledged. Kuru contends that this development, rather than being a reflection of a “pro-Islamic or religion-friendly policy perspective” was in fact a heavy-handed way “to take Islam under state control and to assimilate
it” (Kuru, 2008, 11). In this perspective, state actions should be viewed as (re)-asserting state authority. In particular, state elites have sought partnerships with specific Muslim interlocutors to influence the formation of a French Islam.

The composition of the CFCM demonstrates the active hand of the French Republic to influence both the composition of the institution and debates within it. The French government has sought to legitimize moderate and liberal partners over a concern for “representativeness” during the institutionalization process of the buffer institutions. Indeed, throughout the process, there has been a concern that radicals—while having to be included for the sake of establishing a “representative” institution—do not dominate; this would be done primarily through the external propping up of moderates and providing them with privileged positions outside of the institution.228

A rather conspicuous example of the activist French hand concerns how Sarkozy negotiated the terms through which “moderate” Muslim figures were assured leadership positions within the CFCM. Fearing the influence of the UOIF and the FNMF, then newly-appointed Minister of the Interior, Nicolas Sarkozy, negotiated a political compromise that guaranteed the post of president-spokesman of the CFCM to Dalil Boubakeur, the director of the Paris Mosque, and the other two executive positions to representatives of the UOIF and FNMF. Insisting on Boubakeur as the first president illus-

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228 Indeed, Bowen views much of French governmental action as a continuation of its colonial policy of promoting “moderate” Islam. Bowen does not give a detailed historical analysis of how the colonial French administration had sought to rule Algeria based on communalism and ethnic discrimination; however, if we take his discussion in conjunction with Silverstein’s (2004) more detailed analysis of how colonial practices were translated into postcolonial policies and prejudices, one can see a pattern emerging in which the French state actively created ethnic and religious categories that would “fit” in the French state while denying those categories that were deemed inappropriate. Up until the 1990s, this was largely concentrated on the ethnic dimension of non-native French peoples, constructing a beur identity, etc. However, after the 1990s, the French state would turn to the Muslim identity, seeking to support “good Muslims” against “bad Muslims”.

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trates how the government sought to privilege “moderate” Islam as the interlocutor and maintain the unofficial policy of working with the Algerian government to regulate Muslim affairs in France (Laurence and Vaisse, 2006; Bowen, 2007). The manager of the GMP, Dalil Boubakeur, was well-known among Parisien elites and well-liked, particularly as he has advocated a version of Islam that adopts Western values (Laurence and Vaisse, 2006, 102). His liberal, moderate credentials were further instantiated when he supported the headscarf ban in 2004.229 The French state further legitimized the Paris Mosque as its “moderate” and preferred partner in 2008 with the creation of the imam training program.

In placing the French state’s institutional weight behind the Paris Mosque and Boubakeur, French leaders sought to decrease the influence of other strands of Islam within France, given form in the two large Muslim associations in France, the UOIF and FNMP. The UOIF has gained prominence over the last two decades, starting with its role in the headscarf controversy in 1989. The French state has been particularly concerned with the UOIF’s rising popularity within the Muslim community because of its ties to political Islam (and the Muslim Brotherhood in particular). The FNMP, a Moroccan-dominated organization, has also increased its grassroots support.

However, the French government was not able to marginalize what some deemed radicals or fundamentalists without jeopardizing the whole project. The inclusion of the UOIF and other more fundamentalist or radical organizations was important to provide

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229 In fact, Dalil Boubakeur warned to the members of the Stasi Commission during his testimony that emphasizing religious identity in public would “open the door to demands for a separate religious status, and to communalism, something the Republic rejects because it integrates individuals and does not recognize communities” (Bowen, 2007, 159-160).
the very legitimacy the French state sought. French politicians, particularly Sarkozy, realized that the UOIF represented a significant percentage of the French Muslim community—and, perhaps, the very percentage which the French state sought to draw in more closely, i.e. those who were prone to radicalization (and, equally as troubling to the French state, the least “secularized”)—and that the participation of the organization furthered state objectives. Haddad and Molson (2007) suggest the inclusion was also a form of co-optation of radical sects to “de-radicalize.” To a certain degree, it is a form of reigning in dangerous elements by giving them a stake in the spoils of the process.230

Moreover, the final organization of the CFCM reflects additional government intervention, demonstrating the government’s desire to ensure that the Council maintains a particular ideological bent. Officially, representatives are chosen in a democratic process with representation based on the size of the mosque.231 During his brief tenure as Interior Minister, Daniel Vaillant co-opted the institution and stretched the limits of laïcité through the provision of several government appointed personalities instead of “elected” members who would sit on the administrative council of the future Muslim body. This was done in order to include moderate Muslims, including women, sat at the decision-

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230 Haddad and Moslon (2007) point to an incident during the most recent headscarf controversy to suggest that a degree of de-radicalization has occurred on the part of the UOIF. In self-policing a student-affiliated organization which called for demonstrations against the French ban on headscarves directly against an official decision from the CFCM, the UOIF showed a degree of moderation in its actions and support of the state-led process of addressing Islam. Haddad and Molson argue this provides evidence of how the “CFCM thus serves as a prototypical example of how the state can insert itself within a presumably internal Islamic discourse as ‘a guarantor of public order and as a broker between opposing sides,’ and thus potentially engineer a more agreeable Islamic institution” (2007).

231 In attempts to marginalize the bad from the good, the government’s policy toward the CFCM has oscillated, according to Alexandria Caeiro, “between including the diversity of Muslims and favoring specific tendencies has shaped the state organization of Islam” (Caeiro, 2005, 73).
making table of the national body as well as ensuring the UOIF and FNMF did not end up controlling the Council.

When Sarkozy assumed the helm at the Interior Ministry, he continued this policy. For Sarkozy, the legitimacy of CFCM was based on the participation—but not necessarily equal representation—of all. Sarkozy extended this principle to the issue of minority and gender representation, arguing, in a speech on October 21, 2002, that it was essential that minorities were represented in the CFCM, particularly noting that women have an equal representation as men in the qualified persons category (Billon, 2005). The six independent qualified persons (representing those aspects which were completely absent from the representation model above, particularly women) included Soheib Bencheikh, a media champion of liberal Islam; Mohsen Ismail, diplomatic theologian of Zitouna of Tunisia; Betoule Fekkar-Lambiotte, the only woman of the Consultation and former inspector of national education—replaced at by the Council’s creation by Dounia Bouzar, an educator of the judicial protection of children; Michel Chodkiewicz, the former director of Seuil editions, a convert, and specialist of Muslim mysticism—later replaced by Eric Geoffrey, also a convert; and Mamadou Ba, an anthropologist of Senegalese origin (Billon, 2005).

Similar to the British government, the role of women has been a particular point of concern for the French state in creating an Islam de France. As mentioned above, French state elites insisted on appointing several independent members to the Council to ensure that women were represented. In another example of the circumvention of the CFCM when it did not meet the elite expectations, French state elites have also sought
out Muslim women interlocutors such as the French feminist organization *Ni Putes Ni Soumise*, particularly during the headscarf controversies to represent a “moderate” position. The interlocutors with whom the French state has formed alliances—almost all secular Muslim women—have served to reinforce an image of Islam as something from which women must be liberated.232

3. The British and French Religious Buffer Institutions in Comparative Perspective

The creation and use of religious buffer institutions in the two cases was driven primarily by the security processes described in the previous chapters. Indeed, if not for the security imperative, it is plausible that the British and French political elites would not have created the Preventing Extremism Unit or the Foundation for the Works of Islam, for example. The successful politicization of religion at the political level as a problem to be addressed provided similar incentives to elites to shift policy venues to the bureaucratic realm, particularly with respect to deflecting attention from the partnerships the government formed with Muslim actors. Both British and French politicians faced incentives to render policy “invisible” to the general public as well as political actors, sometimes even those within their own political party.

Relatedly, the security situation provided incentives for politicians to divorce the issue of Muslim “incorporation” from other issues within the political process. As was described in previous chapters, the political process constructed the policy problem as a “Muslim” problem—that is to say, the problem became framed as a separate issue. Con-

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232 For instance, the former president of *Ni Putes Ni Soumises*, Fadela Amara, was appointed as the Secretary in charge of urban policy in Sarkozy’s government. During the most recent controversy over whether the French state should ban the burqa, Amara expressed support for a “total ban,” stating in an interview that she was in favor of the “banning of this coffin which kills basic freedoms...This debate has to clear the way to a law which protects women” (Davies, 2009).
sequently, this created both the incentive—but also the policy space—to separate the solution from larger issues facing the post-industrial democracies, including problems of unemployment, social security provisions, quality and provision of healthcare, etc. Therefore, the British Preventing Extremism Unit was created as a separate administrative unit—rather than a subsidiary unit—from those addressing concerns of community cohesion. However, there was less divorcing in the British case than in the French. In practice, these two units often worked together closely on particular projects. As one example, many of the bureaucrats within the Preventing Extremism Unit held former appointments in the Cohesion and Faith Unit, Home Office, Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM), and other units that addressed these broader issues. In the case of France, beyond channeling Muslim-related issues to the bureaucratic realm and away from the general business of politics, another important way French elites ensured issues were divorced was to give the CFCM a narrow mandate as well as no direct channel to the political process. The body did not have power to introduce legislation or provide direct policy advice to the government. In this way, French elites ensured faith issues did not get implicated and brought to the attention of the general public.

British and French elites sought out Muslim partnerships, facilitated through the buffer institutions, in a concern for the legitimacy of state response. Indeed, the issue of legitimacy was crucial and a driving force of state actions. In both cases, government elites desired a specific “stamp of approval” for government actions, in the form of cooperation with religious actors and the construction of a religious narrative to make the state position stronger. This was a form of bringing religion back into the public sphere—i
deed, within the political sphere—to provide legitimacy for government policies (and for the Western state more broadly).

Therefore, both British and French elites sought to support and prop up what they defined as “moderate” leaders and organizations. The role of the Paris Mosque – led by a well-spoken, fully-integrated, moderate “Republican” Muslim in Dalil Boubakeur—as a privileged interlocutor for the French government despite the lack of genuine grassroots support of the institution is a case in point. Moreover, British and French elites chose broadly similar Muslim partners and narratives to provide state legitimacy. In both cases the inclusion and legitimation of women was a particular focus, evident in the creation of a national advisory body in Great Britain as well as preferential funding through the Preventing Extremism Unit. The appointment of independent members to the French CFCM is another example.

A secondary concern common to both cases was to harness the positive benefits of outsourcing. However, the cases display significant differences in the benefits sought and derived from the partnerships and buffer institutions. To a certain degree, the political stakes were higher in France due to its unique church-state history. The degree of delegation, thus, to the buffer institutions was circumscribed by legal constraints concerning state action in the religious sphere as well as a less sanguine assessment of the benefits of the partnership. In this case, the incentives to create a buffer institution overwhelmingly focused on the need for nominally independent institutions that would help circumvent the legal (as well as societal) strictures of church-state separation while simultaneously acting as bodies that were firmly acting in state interests. There was considerably less
focus on the benefits inherent to the Muslim partnership itself. French elites were not interested in any meaningful sense with what the particular actors could bring to the table. Consequently, in the French case, one sees a significant degree of circumvention of the buffer institutions when they did not serve state interests.

The creation of the French religious buffer institutions resulted from a more politicized process in France than in Britain, accounting for some of the differences in orientation and outcomes. Buffer institutions in France still functioned as politicized spaces, despite their intent to shield scrutiny. Political motives were paramount throughout the process of creating the religious buffer institutions. Thus, the creation of the Foundation for the Works of Islam was partly a political maneuver by political rivals to marginalize Sarkozy’s rising power within his own party. Moreover, even within the institutions, policy has been directed by political actors rather than bureaucrats, in contrast to British religious buffer institutions. The large national associations which direct the CFCM and the Foundation, such as the Paris Mosque and UOIF, are not without their own political agendas. Indeed, the Paris Mosque and the UOIF along with the other major Muslim organizations have repeatedly sought to politicize the internal dealings of the institutions, using the media spotlight to generate greater public scrutiny of issues within the Council because of substantial internal disagreements. Rather than reflecting a problem-solving approach, the CFCM reflects a divisive, political process. The Council’s inability to produce a unified stance of the headscarf ban is one example.

French politicians sought to shift the burden of policy-making to extra state actors for legal as well as political reasons. However, devolving a degree of authority created
tension among the actors within the state. In a classic case of the principal-agent problem, French politicians were wary of relinquishing control, particularly as security concerns rose on the political agenda in a post-9/11 world. Thus, the institutions were kept on a short leash (if they were every given a degree of authority to begin with), with French politicians intervening frequently and placing a particular emphasis on making sure the preferred partners were well-situated within the institutions. This is evident, for example, in Sarkozy’s (as well as previous Interior Ministers’) intervention with the CFCM to ensure that the Paris Mosque maintained a strong position.

While the British government has utilized religious buffer institutions to form partnerships to effectively deliver government programs, the French government has seemed less concerned with the use of buffer institutions as a form of improving government policy delivery. Indeed, there have been several instances in which the government has circumvented the institutions themselves when policy formulation and delivery has become too complicated, notably in use of al-Azhar in lieu of the CFCM to support the government’s ban on the headscarf.233

To a certain extent, British elites provided a longer leash to their Muslim partners, reflecting a greater and deeper level of delegation. First, through the religious buffer institutions, the British government partnered with a wide variety of Muslim organizations. While the exact number of local Muslim partners is not known, a review of the different funding streams provides evidence of the wide nature of government-Muslim partner-

233 However, one should also view the French state’s actions from another perspective. The CFCM was intended to act as a representative body that could address some of the core concerns of the Muslim community in France regarding how to practice the Muslim religion on French soil and within the boundaries of French law. If, in creating a religious buffer institution, the French state sought a policy solution that would result in greater policy efficiency and efficacy, the circumvention of the institution could be understood in light of the inefficiencies that resulted by working through the institution.
ships. As one example, in 2007 the Preventing Extremism Pathfinder fund directly supported over 177 projects. Moreover, a cursory glance at different government publications during this period provides an ABC potpourri of Muslim partner organizations. These varied partnerships have increased the scope of the government’s service delivery. As one example, in the 2008 funding cycle for the Preventing Extremism Pathfinder fund, a government audit estimated that over 44,000 individuals were beneficiaries of an initiative supported by the fund, with the average project reaching 245 individuals (DCLG, 2008c).

There was also a deeper level of policy delegation to these institutions. The various government initiatives set out broad policy guidelines, sought out applications from potential partner organizations, and then provided the organizations with funding to deliver various policy proposals. As a result, the particular government projects that were funded or otherwise given government support were community-led initiatives for the most part. Only a handful of projects reflect significant government-led initiation and direction: for example, MINAB, the Young Muslim Advisory Group, the Muslim Women Advisory Group, the Scholars’ Roadshow. It should be noted that these particular projects have been given substantial resources while the community-based projects have received far less funding as individual projects. For example, the government has allocated £75,600 in 2007-08, £116,000 in 2008-09, and £58,000 between April and June 2009 to MINAB; the Radical Middle Way was allocated £350,000 in the same funding cycle.

234 These include: An-Nisa Slough Muslim Women’s Group, Aurat Enterprise, Barking and Dagenham Islamic Awareness, Black Country Imams, Community Cleaning Services, Day Service for Asian Women, Fatima Women’s Network, Faith Matters, Islamic Society of Britain, Kirklees Webspace and Radio Activity, Lambeth Women’s Forum, League of British Muslims, Muath Trust, The Prince’s Trust, Rahabar Trust, Southwark Muslim Women’s Association, Sufi Muslim Council, Three Faiths Forum, United Multicultural Centre, Ulfah Arts, Watford Bridge of Peace, Young Muslims UK, “100 Voices” College Debate.
Overall, however, a significant amount of funding was channeled to local, community-based projects through the various funding schemes.

As an example of venue-shopping, the creation of the CFCM and other institutions reflect an overarching goal of deflecting outside scrutiny into government dealings with certain Muslim institutions and practices rather than initiatives formulated as considered measures to address core policy issues. This is not to say that these initiatives were not intended to address issues of foreign funding and imam training. However, the primary consideration has seemed to buffer negative scrutiny and take the issue off the political agenda and as a subject of party competition. That these efforts were politically-expedient may also be reflected in the actual resources devoted to the particular institutions and initiatives, particularly when placed in relief against the British case and the funding that has been channeled into and through the buffer institutions to support the formation of British Islam. Table 7 provides an overview of funding sources managed by the British religious buffer institutions, totaling over £16 million in 2007-2008. Outside of the human capital put forth during the 15-year period to create a national Muslim interlocutor, the allocation of resources to the CFCM, the Foundation, and the imam training course indicate that the issues are not high on the lists of the government’s priorities—or at least suggest these are not the primary state initiatives to address the issues of integration and radicalization. Indeed, while the issue of foreign funding has seized almost every politician on the French Right and Left, the Foundation has only been given 800,000 Euros, a paltry sum for the size and scope of the problem. Moreover, according to the Interior Ministry, the CFCM operates with an annual budget of less than 150,000
euros, suggesting a rather ineffectual organization suffering from inadequate resources, regardless of the debate concerning its nature as a representative religious or political institution. Perhaps, most importantly, the structure has done little by way of facilitating integration in the French Republic, the stated goal at the outset. The Council has not only been riven over the politically divisive issue of the Muslim headscarf but on issues concerning imam training, mosque construction, and halal certification. Indeed, in the first five years, the CFCM was unable to move forward on these issues independent of government instigation and interference.

**TABLE 4.7**

**TOTAL GOVERNMENT FUNDING THROUGH BRITISH RELIGIOUS BUFFER INSTITUTIONS: FY2007/2008**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Initiative</th>
<th>Funding</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Preventing Violent Extremism Pathfinder Fund</td>
<td>£6000000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Leadership Fund</td>
<td>£650000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Challenge and Innovation Fund</td>
<td>£3200000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faith Capacities Building Fund</td>
<td>£4500000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FCO Projecting British Islam (includes Empowering Voices of Mainstream Islam Project)</td>
<td>£300000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creation of Faith and Social Cohesion Unit within Charity Commission</td>
<td>£600000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Islamic Studies in Higher Education initiative</td>
<td>£1000000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>£16250000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In direct contrast, the British government has devoted considerable resources to its “softer” security strategy through the Preventing Extremism and Faith and Cohesion Units. Table 8 provides an overview of some of the major initiatives of the British government during this time period. Thus, while in France, one can only point to the creation of the CFCM, the Foundation for the Works of Islam, and the imam training program—all with questionable effectiveness and durability—the British government has developed a considerable agenda to address problems of radicalization and extremism within the Muslim community. In its size and scope, the British government response simply cannot be characterized as politically-expedient.

### TABLE 4.8
THE SCOPE OF BRITISH POLICY INITIATIVES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Initiative</th>
<th>Details of Initiative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Scholars’ Roadshows</td>
<td>-Independent organization, Radical Middle Way, funded and given logistical support through PEU of DCLG</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-Purpose to host programs with speakers and Islamic scholars to develop a counter-narrative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Projecting British Islam Abroad</td>
<td>-Delegation of British Muslims sent by government to Muslim-majority countries to challenge negative perceptions of Islam in the UK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tackling Violent Extremism Roadshows</td>
<td>-Events run by Muslim organizations that seek to provide practical steps for people to respond to challenges in their own communities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-Sufi Muslim Council has run 12 roadshows in 12 areas; British Muslim Forum ran 1 in Birmingham</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forums on Extremism and Islamophobia</td>
<td>-Local forums intended to bring together local authorities and citizens to address issues of extremism and discrimination</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-12 forums were held in 2007; 40 became the target number for 2008 and beyond</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Young Muslim Advisory Group</td>
<td>-Advisory panel of 23 young Muslim leaders to work with government officials on issues that concern Muslim youth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Initiative</td>
<td>Details of Initiative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Muslim Women Advisory Group</td>
<td>- Advisory panel composed of 19 Muslim women, many professionals, to serve as role models as well as to provide advice on issues concerning Muslim women</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Also publication of “Empowering Muslim Women: Case Studies” in January 2008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faith and Social Cohesion Unit in Charity Commission</td>
<td>- Dedicated unit to work with and support faith-based charities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Provides support and advice to faith-based groups to improve standards of governance and accountability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Continuous Professional Development (CPD) Programme</td>
<td>- A professional development course for faith leaders and workers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>for Faith Leaders</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standards for all Imams and Muslim Chaplains engaged</td>
<td>- Guidelines for specific language and professional qualifications (in conjunction with CPD program)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>by state</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roundtable discussion on the role of women in Islam</td>
<td>- Series of roundtable discussions convened through partnerships with Oxford and Cambridge Universities of academics, theologians, and community leaders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and mosque access</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identification of Islamic studies as an area of “strategic importance”</td>
<td>- L1 million has been given to the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) and different universities to address the study of Islam in higher education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forums against Extremism and Islamophobia</td>
<td>- 17 local forums supported through the Community Leadership Fund</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understanding Muslim Communities Research</td>
<td>- Research of 13 different ethnic Muslim communities in Britain; produced reports for government service delivery</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MINAB</td>
<td>- Independent government-supported body</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Facilitates good governance in mosques and improve their standards of services through a system of self-regulation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Major project: Mosque Code of Conduct</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Islam and Citizenship Education program</td>
<td>- Project supports the development of a citizenship curriculum for use by madrassahs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Aimed specifically to educate pupils aged 7 to 14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Topics covered: Islamic tradition, values and their roles and responsibilities in society as good Muslims</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
This chapter provided evidence that the British and French politicians shifted policy to the bureaucratic realm in order to circumvent constraints imposed by politicization of national security and Muslim incorporation issues as well as harness the benefits of a more insulated process and third-party partnerships, particularly with Muslim leaders and organizations. These institutions supported a wide-range of government initiatives including interfaith meetings, government-funded Muslim magazines and TV channels/programs, lectures by Muslim clerics, professional development seminars, informal or formal working groups for women and youth, and imam training programs. Governments undertook experiments to diminish costs, enlisting actors outside of the political process, particularly moderate Muslims, in a principal-agent relationship. Through this process, governments sought to enhance the political capacity of the state, to make the state more flexible and adaptable, to shift the focus of responsibility away from the state and deflect criticism from political opponents as well as the general public, and to generate more effective state legitimacy.
CONCLUSION

This dissertation is a broad story of the selective “de-secularization” of politics within the Western state. Through a comparative longitudinal study of governmental policies in Britain, France, and the United States, my research uncovered and illuminated the different conditions under which religion rose to the forefront of state agendas as a problem to be addressed and as a solution for the Western state in its quest to incorporate its domestic Muslim community. My research explored the historical roots of how religion came to be politicized within the Western state in the 1990s and offered a comparative analysis of contemporary policies, focusing on the creation of religious buffer institutions by both the British and French states.

The place of religion in the public life of liberal democratic societies has become more prominent and more controversial in the past two decades. Against a general backdrop of minority conflict that has become more complicated since the early 1990s, the place of the new Muslim minority and the Islamic religion has become a target of societal and political anxiety (Messina, 2007; Sniderman and Hagendoorn, 2007). As a consequence, issues of ethnicity, multiculturalism, identity, and the place of religion in the public space are more politically salient in contemporary Western Europe than at any time since WWII. This is commonly expressed as an incompatibility of Islam and the Muslim population with Western norms and democratic and liberal practices. The liberal democracies of the West provide a crucial context within which to understand how political ac-
tors are articulating and acting upon visions of what a tolerant society should look like and what differences—particularly religious differences—are acceptable within a secular space and how democracies have managed seemingly competing principles in practice.

Democratic and liberal theorists have grappled with the question of secularism and democracy. Many prominent social scientists have inferred from the European experience that a certain type of church-state separation is necessary for the proper functioning of democracy and the promotion of liberal values, political development, and modernity. Alfred Stepan notes how secular perspectives, including thinkers in contemporary liberal philosophy, assume that tolerance, pluralism, and democracy require religion’s absence from the political sphere. A well-regarded example is John Rawls’ call for taking “the truths of religion off the political agenda” (1993, 251). Recent research has provided evidence that despite the normative theories of secularism and democracy, democratic practice has actually coexisted with a great variety of patterns of church-state relations (Stepan, 2001; Fetzer and Soper, 2005; Fox, 2007; Kuru, 2009).

Scholars studying Muslims in the West have not adequately scrutinized the assumption that religion is problematic for Western states. Indeed, my dissertation research uncovered an interesting outcome: religion was both constructed as a problem in the Western democratic state, particularly as an illiberal force, but was also viewed as an asset by democratic actors in their quest to incorporate the domestic Muslim population in the nation-state’s search for security in the post 9/11 international system. Which aspects of religion have been constructed as problematic for the Western liberal democratic state and which aspects have been considered unproblematic—if not resources—is a
particularly understudied political phenomenon in a sea of studies which have pointed to how religion has been only a problem for the state and democracy.

1. A Comparative Look at the Origins and Development of Muslim Incorporation Policies in France, Great Britain, and the United States

    International events fundamentally altered the politics of religion in the three ways, ultimately leading to the politicization of religion and Muslim incorporation issues. First, international events provided a higher profile to the Muslim community to citizens that were unaware or indifferent, thus increasing the salience of the issue among the general public. Events surrounding the Rushdie affair and headscarf controversies put religion on the agenda of society and the media in the 1990s. The Rushdie affair was an important turning point for Great Britain but also for Western societies in general. In France, the headscarf controversies took place under the shadow of the Rushdie Affair. For Americans, the terrorist attacks on September 11 provided a key moment for the nation to discover the Muslim population that had been growing in the last decades of the twentieth century.

    Through these events, which implicated issues of social control, the presence of Muslims in Britain, France, and the United States was brought sharply under the public and political gaze. The Muslim community became a visible community. For the first time, references within the media and government to “Muslim” activism were heard, unrecognized under the collective color and ethnic discourse of previous decades. And, through these events, the threat posed to Western liberal and progressive values was highlighted. Subsequent events such as the terrorist attacks in Madrid in 2004, the July 2005
bombings in London, the murder of Van Gogh in the Netherlands, the November 2005 riots in the Parisian suburbs, and the Danish cartoon controversies that erupted in February 2006, served to reinforce the growing unease about the ability and willingness of Muslim immigrants to incorporate into Western society.

Religion, connected to larger international events and trends, became a target of societal anxiety. For example, public opinion polls have demonstrated that there is a significant negative perception among the general public regarding the rise of religious identities among the Western Muslim population and the role of religion in public life. Indeed, when asked whether an increase in the Islamic identity of Western Muslims was a good or bad thing in a Pew Global Attitudes survey in 2006, 59% of respondents in Great Britain, 82% of respondents in Spain, 83% of respondents in Germany, and 87% of respondents in France considered it a bad thing (Pew Forum, 2006, 9-10). Moreover, as presented in Chapter 3, there has been a slight increase in the negative opinions held among the general population in the West toward Muslims in the last five years. In 2008, over one-third of the French general population held negative opinions of Muslims; this reached as high as 50% in Germany and Spain (52%) (Pew, 2008b). In both the United States and Great Britain, less than one-fourth (23%) of the general population held a negative view of Muslims; however, as noted, this number has increased in Great Britain since 2004.

One of the primary concerns among the general public and politicians is that the religious identity serves as a roadblock to integration because it is purportedly incompati-

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235 This finding differs little from the survey taken the year before and conducted before the 2005 terrorist attacks in London (Pew, 2005).
ble with a European and/or national identity. This concern most often takes the form of arguing that Muslim religiosity is a threat to a secular, liberal Europe—one that is constructed increasingly, as several commentators argue, as a secular identity (Weigel, 2006; Jenkins, 2007; Taras, 2009). Muslim piety is associated with moral conservatism and cultural traditionalism. As such, the Muslim identity is regarded by the general community as being marked by an inability or an unwillingness to integrate. As a result, Muslim communities are isolated from contemporary societies and it is in this isolation that radicalization finds a fertile breeding ground.

Consequently, the negative opinions held by Western publics have been linked to several concerns in public opinion polls: a belief that a religious identity conflicts with Western values and contributes to a lack of immigrant integration; a loss of community cohesion (often associated with critiques of multiculturalism in general); and a fear of radicalization and violence (Pew, 2005; Pew, 2006). The 2006 Pew Global Attitudes Project found that a substantial proportion of the Western public believed the strength and growth in an Islamic identity negatively affected community cohesion. Moreover, the survey documented a widespread perception among the general public that Muslims want to remain distinct by creating an enclave culture within the Western nation that is insulated from national customs and way of life (Pew, 2006). This debate over integration often concerned religious symbols in public, notably female head covering, pointing to important sources of tension over the role of religion in public life.

International events increased the salience of religion and the Muslim community in the political realm as well, providing those among the Left concerned with illiberal re-
ligion and those on the Right with immigration, social order, and national identity issues with evidence of a problem—changing the political definition of the problem, that is to say, rendering religion a problem. International and domestic events that raised concerns over social order provided “windows of opportunity” or catalysts for the political construction of Islam as illiberal. It is at this time that religion was targeted and, thereby, providing European publics and politicians the opportunity to deny second- and third-generation Muslims a European identity on the basis, as Taras describes, that a European identity is a modern, secular one (and that a religious identity is anachronistic and a challenge for full integration) (Taras, 2009). He suggests that this construction is an implicit one; one that is not stated openly for, as he describes it, “[i]t would be too provocative to state openly...that abandoning religious practice is also a prerequisite for assuming a pan-European (secular) identity. So it is not said,” (Taras, forthcoming). Religion need not be in conflict with the European identity but the actual processes and discourses have placed religion in opposition (Asad, 2003).236

The second result, then, concerned the politics among the political Right. Among the Right, concerns over social control strengthened the position of the mainstream right as well as the far right, depending on conditions specific to the domestic context, particularly as issues of national identity and security increasingly became central to political debates. Specifically, the appearance and political advance of extreme right-wing parties

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236 This study connects to other studies that have documented a backlash against the Europeanization project. Taras describes this xenophobic backlash as being against the new minorities entering the European state but also against the European elites that are seen as privileging civic rights for migrants over civic obligations as well as at the expense of national identity. Therefore, the larger processes of Europeanization and supranationalization are implicated in the policy responses that I am finding. The concern over the new Muslim minority is not just a backlash against the communities and their particularities but to the larger anxieties European masses have expressed at the loss of national cultures and identities.
has affected the political context in which Muslim minorities have been integrated into Western society.

Recent scholarship has demonstrated the success of far right parties beyond a general observation of a “hardening discourse” on Islam (Cesari, 2005). The parties have appealed to and, to varying degrees of success, mobilized popular anxieties, prejudices, and resentments, especially against immigrants (Mitra, 1988; Mayer and Perrineau, 1992; Golder, 2003; Givens, 2005; Hale Williams 2006). New populist parties have had some political success, and in some cases, assumed positions of significant political influence within the party system. Popular support of these parties and their electoral success is a result of a combination of the presence of immigrants and new racial and ethnic minorities since the end of WWII, a genuine dissatisfaction among the general population with immigration policies, and, as Messina notes, the political savviness of these political entrepreneurs to successfully utilize the political system and frame the issue in terms of larger national issues (Messina, 2007).

Recent scholarship has demonstrated that the rise of anti-immigrant parties in Europe has increased the salience of the issue of immigration and successfully reframed the issue from one of a labor market concern—and, consequently, in the realm of technocrats and businesses—to one of national identity and security, thus increasing the number of actors, particularly the mass public, who have a perceived stake in the issue (Hainsworth and Mitchell, 2000; Givens and Luetteke, 2005; Hale Williams, 2006; Schain, 2008). Moreover, scholars have demonstrated that the rise in anti-immigrant parties and anti-immigrant sentiment have led to an increased emphasis on immigration con-
trol measures across Western states (Messina, 2007; Schain, 2008; Givens et al., 2009). As Givens and Luedtke note in 2005, the salience of the immigration issue in Europe, particularly in the policy area of immigration control, increased in tandem with radical right success and resulted in more restrictive policies.

Electoral success should not be the exclusive measure of the influence of these groups. When a group has managed to co-opt the issue of immigration and Muslim presence within the state, its framing of the issue, often in terms of national identity and security concerns, has contributed to rise in prominence of religion and the “Muslim problem.” Indeed, the appearance and political advance of right-wing parties has affected the political context in which Muslim minorities have been integrated into Western society.

A significant, and not wholly unexpected trend, has been the extension of xenophobic and nativist rhetoric against Muslims within Western society. The far right has used the public sphere to equate Muslims as the “enemy within.” While right-wing parties are not the (sole) cause of Islamophobia, these parties have contributed to the anti-Islamic prejudice and violence in society.237

In Chapter 2, I demonstrated how the success of the National Front in the 1980s and 1990s affected the rhetoric, platforms, and policy positions of the major political parties in France, particularly concerning immigration and the place of ethnic minorities. One of the most important effects of the presence of the National Front was the simplification of larger debates to center on immigrants, and specifically the new Muslim minor-

237 Following the terrorist attacks on September 11, EUMC implemented a reporting system on potential anti-Islamic reactions in 15 EU member states. A report in 2002 found that Islamic communities and other vulnerable groups became “targets of increased hostility” since 9/11 and tied the xenophobic rhetoric of anti-immigrant groups to this development, especially through the rise in the profile and activities of far-right and Neo-Nazi groups (2002, 5).
ity, as the source of all of France’s ills. First, the party contributed to the rise of the sali-
ence of immigration during this time period. Indeed, one cannot understand the contem-
porary situation without reference to the Front National and how it has structured the
terms of the debate within French society. Immigration—connected intimately with the
Muslim population—became the frame through which debates over nationality, identity,
and eventually laïcité were addressed.

Second, the party created a climate of fear, eliciting societal anxieties over the is-
sue of immigration and the presence of “others” within French society, raising the tem-
perature and stakes of the debate. This forced the mainstream political parties and politi-
cians to respond in order to maintain voters and draw back support from the Front Na-
tional during this period. As a result, these issues could not longer be dealt within a bu-
reaucratic framework but, rather, migrated to the context of electoral competition. In-
 deed, Schain (2008) argues that the National Front was primarily responsible for this shift
in venues. Moreover, he contends that the National Front brought about an electoral rea-
lignment in France. By forcing the Left and Right to take on the issue of immigration,
the party impacted the policy agenda and policy outcomes later in the process. He notes,
“the dynamics of party competition resulted in redefinition of the issue of immigration in
national politics from a labour market problem, to a problem of integration and national
identity, to problems of education, housing, law and order, and citizenship” (2008, 283).
As a result, there was a noticeable shift in elite rhetoric—but more importantly, policy
positions among both the mainstream Right and Left—toward greater restrictions in the
1990s (Hale Williams, 2006; Schain, 2006; Schain, 2008). The same phenomenon has
been documented in other national cases (Guiraudon and Joppke, 2001; Givens, 2007; Givens et al., 2009).

The literature, therefore, emphasizes the negative impact of the radical right on the salience of the immigration issue and policy outcomes, including greater restriction in immigration control as well as refocusing national integration policy from multiculturalism to assimilation. However, it is important not to have an exclusive focus on the negative outcomes attributed to the radical right. In increasing the salience of the immigration issue, the radical right has also led to a focus on immigrant integration that has not been wholly negative in policy orientation. In particular, the radical right has provided the catalyst for the political Left to develop integration and anti-discrimination measures. Givens provides the example of the European Union Racial Equality Directive as a direct response by European Union officials to the rise and popularity of extreme right parties. She argues that the ascendancy of the radical right Austrian Freedom Party in the late 1990s acted as the catalyst for a Left-party dominated European Council to push forward anti-discrimination policy.\footnote{In October 1996, Jorge Haider’s Austrian Freedom Party gained 27.6\% of the vote in European elections. Three years later, in 1999, the party was the first among the radical right to enter into a national coalition government, receiving 26\% of the vote. In 2008, the party increased its share of the national vote to 29\%.} Indeed, Givens suggests that the success of the radical right actually focused the Left’s attention to issues of immigrant integration and anti-discrimination—a policy story that is parallel to developments within Britain in the 1960-1970s (Katznelson, 1973; Messina, 1989; Bleich, 2003).

As discussed in Chapter 1, due to an increasingly inhospitable environment among the general population and within the Conservative Party toward new immigration
following World War II, the governing Labour Party strategically embraced a two-track policy response, passing both restrictive immigration measures in tandem with inclusive anti-discrimination provisions in the landmark race relations acts of this period. The race relations acts were crafted specifically to act as counterweights to the effective halting of immigration. As “coloured” immigration was viewed as a problem, the political solution lay in effectively closing British borders to new immigration (besides, of course, immigration stemming from British liberal commitments in the form of family reunification and asylum—even these, however, were the subject of restrictive measures) as well as integrating the minorities present. This strategy provided a political viable solution to the lack of an internal consensus within the Labour Party itself over the relative merits of the increased diversity.

It is, therefore, important to analyze both the restrictive and inclusive policy tendencies that have resulted from the political opportunity structure created by the rise of the radical right. One, for example, should look to the electoral incentives of the political Left concerning the immigration and integration issue. Money (1999) contends that the political Left has an incentive to push for integration measures in order to develop new constituencies of immigrants who are voters. This, therefore, focuses on the traditional theoretical position that the Left has been the ally of immigrants and the driver of integration policy. Similar to the situation that transpired in the 1960s-1970s in Great Britain, left parties have been willing to accept immigration restrictions in return for anti-discrimination measures for minorities.
A significant body of scholarship has provided the two important observations concerning the political Left and immigrant incorporation. First, immigrants and racial/ethnic minorities who vote are more likely to support Left political parties (Messina, 1989; Tillie, 1998; Money, 1999; Messina, 2007). What is more, because of the Left’s ideological and political commitments, political parties of the Left are more inclined than other political parties to promote collective political interests of immigrants and minorities (Messina, 2007, 197). Generally, parties of the left are more inclined to embrace immigrants and minorities as well as support public policy issues that matter to this population, including goals of full employment, greater socioeconomic equality, universal health care, public education, and racial equality (Saggar, 2000; Ireland, 2004; Messina, 2007). “Simply put,” notes Messina, “for the new ethnic and racial minorities of Western Europe, formal political representation predominantly implies representation through traditional political parties of the left” (Messina, 2007, 203). In Britain, this fact has been well-documented, with studies and surveys since the 1970s confirming that non-whites favor the Left Labour Party by an overwhelming margin—as much as 75%—and only provide token support to minor political parties.

A third result would be to alter the politics among the political Left. Much of the scholarship has focused on the response of the Right, especially the new or radical right, to immigration. However, what has not been the focus of study has been the response of the Left, particularly as immigration has introduced and/or made more salient competing liberal principles. While scholars stress that the Left has not been as constrained historically by ideological contradictions and other competing internal factors that prevent them
from embracing immigrants, this, I argue, has changed as a result of the politicization of religion, introducing new cleavages and internal contradictions over competing principles such as gender equality and supporting immigrant values.

My research has demonstrated the complexity of the political Left’s response. Although traditionally the party of immigration and integration rights, the change in the policy problem to religion raised important, and sometimes seemingly irreconcilable, issues for the political Left. Specifically, the policy frame of “illiberal religion” highlighted competing principles. On the one hand, the Left was supportive of immigrant rights and cultural integrity. On the other hand, these principles often were viewed as being increasingly at odds—if not in direct competition—with a notion of gender equality (framed as a universal right); a commitment to other (sometimes disinheritied) groups and lifestyles—notably, homosexuality; particular historical settlements and interpretations of secularism; and a commitment to modernism. Immigrant cultures that were portrayed as traditional and conservative especially were problematic for the political Left and its vision of the national identity. How these particular issues were juxtaposed played out differently in each national (and for that matter, sub-national) context. Nevertheless, the different issue framing yielded the same result: the Left was only committed to the notion of the “right to difference” if this difference fell within acceptable bounds.

Due to this framing, certain issues surrounding the domestic Muslim minority were particularly rancorous among the Left and affected the possibilities for an internal consensus.
Indeed, one of the important findings of my research is the effect this “shift to religion” had on the political Left.\textsuperscript{239}

Since the 1990s, the “field of acceptability” for difference for both the political Right and Left has narrowed significantly across contexts. Due to the traditional conflict between the Right and Left—but also the new conflict within the Left—“boundary-related” debates—those invoking both the territorial and conceptual boundaries of the nation—have been highly politicized and implicated larger normative debates about nation-state membership. In particular, while scholars have argued that the Right has espoused and mobilized mass opinion toward a more ethnocultural notion of citizenship during this time period, the Left has been the party to support a more civic notion of citizenship. I suggest that the competing principles have moved the Left to espouse a more ethnocultural notion of citizenship: instead of decoupling the idea of citizenship with ascriptive characteristics such as race, religion, and ethnicity, there has been a reforging of these connections—now expressed in terms of cultural values as universal principles—and concretely mobilized against religious practices and symbols. This has been documented, for example, by Joppke (2007a; 2007b) in his research on citizenship policies that increasingly hold cultural identity rather than a commitment to civic identity as an important basis of entering the national community. This narrowing of the field is also

\textsuperscript{239} As a more general observation, I have found a continuation of scholars’ observation that postwar immigration has destabilized established party systems and “raised the ideological temperature of domestic politics across Western Europe” (Messina et al., 1992; Messina, 2007). One indication of this destabilization is evidence that the Left’s increasingly precarious electoral base as working class voters and new ethnic and racial minorities are leaving the party’s fold. Scholars have argued that anti-immigrant sentiment and xenophobia have polarized domestic politics and, in doing so, accelerated the flight of fragments of this class away from political parties of the traditional Left and toward the traditional and new right (Messina, 2007).
seen in government actions against symbolic cultural and religious practices, including the Muslim headscarf and the burqa.

There were intense political debates over migration and integration issues, centering not on the economic dimensions of the issue but on the costs and benefits of cultural diversity. In both the British and French contexts, the dilemma faced by the Left contributed to a prolonged process of questioning the national model. In France, the politicization of religion and Muslim incorporation divided the political Left, causing new cleavages to form over the interpretation of laïcité and what constituted appropriate state action when dealing with religion. There were two major groups: 1) those arguing for a “laïcité plurielle” or “laïcité positive”—an interpretation of the norm that would allow for a greater accommodation on the state’s part for religion in the public space as well as a generally positive assessment of the role of religion—and 2) those arguing for a laïcité without adjectives (Pena-Ruiz, 2006)—calling on the French state to defend a strict interpretation of laïcité, one which excluded religion in public spaces—through a bright boundary between public and private expression of religious belief. The latter camp also included those individuals and groups that viewed religion as a negative and divisive force in society. This split created the facilitative conditions for a new left-right coalition that supported repressive policies toward Muslims, most notably in the headscarf ban of 2004, and an aggressive interpretation of laïcité.

In Britain, the large national debate over multiculturalism sparked by domestic riots in the north of England in 2001, and four years later by the terrorist attacks in July 2005, was also facilitated by a split among the Left over the presence of diversity cen-
ing on the domestic Muslim population. In the British case, however, the problem for the Left was that the national identity was an elusive concept, defined more by what is was not and, thus, did not put forward a core unifying identity. As a result the debate was less focused in Britain than in France. This would pose a problem in the post-7/7 security context and the government’s efforts to develop a “fighting creed” to counter domestic radicalization. Blair’s left Labour government turned to “religion” as an asset against this backdrop. Particularly due to the unease over illiberal religion, the government sought to promote “liberal,” “democratic,” “mainstream,” and “moderate” voices.

In the case of the United States, the absence of an extreme right and split on the political left cannot be underestimated as both of these factors propelled British and French political processes that, at their center, placed Muslim difference as a threat to national cohesion and integrity. As a result, American politicians had wider political space to craft a response. Without a strong and/or highly vocal extreme right, the issue did not have to be addressed in national identity terms nor was there system pressure to adopt a highly restrictionist response. Moreover, in the absence of a political left uneasy with “religion,” the *problematique* of competing liberal values was not raised as a main concern in the political process. Another consequence is that the political process was not consumed by a public, and largely symbolic, debate over the nature and definition of the nation’s core values.

2. Two Policy Paths: Deconstruction and Construction of Islam within the Western State

Restrictive policies in the areas of security as well as immigration and integration were undertaken in a highly publicized and politicized process. As the salience of the
issue rose—as media coverage increased, as public consciousness and interests increased, and as the issue rose to the top of the political agenda through the involvement of political party and electoral politics—policy tended to become more restrictive. My argument is that one needs to understand the restrictive and inclusive measures as interdependent. This very process, by successfully linking the state’s “Muslim problem” with security concerns, provided the necessary political argument and political opportunity space for the state’s more inclusive measures. The security imperative justified and demanded measures to bring Muslims to “opt in” to Western political and societal structures. Although scholars have focused on the constraining aspects of the far right politics and policy legacies, the successful politicization of religion has also provided policy opportunities. I am suggesting that we might profitably view politicization as circumscribing certain policy avenues but also opening up what might have been previously unavailable avenues.

As religion became a matter of public policy concern, both the British and French governments acted to assert state control through restrictive policies that were designed to marginalize and expel that which was framed as “bad” and dangerous. These restrictive measures largely took place through a highly politicized and publicized policy process in the areas of security and immigration and were intended to rid the state of terrorism and other transnational (and “illiberal”) threats. At the same time, through the connection to security concerns, these measures targeted those strands of Islam that the state deemed unassimilable (for example, Salafism), resulting in a widening of the state’s ability to interfere in religion.
By contrast, many of the British and French government actions to construct a secular, liberal Islam took place in the domain of bureaucrats rather than politicians, particularly in the case of British faith policy. The processes through which inclusive measures were initiated and enacted proceeded in a markedly different manner than the restrictive measures: inclusive measures were ushered in through an administrative process rather than the political process with policy developed by a narrow group of policymakers who tended to be “problem-solvers” rather than politicians constrained by political and electoral considerations. Policy was developed in the presence of low-level government officials and outside high-profile government venues. The fact that these processes were initiated and conducted outside the levers of party politics and largely under the radar of the domestic media and society is not unimportant. These efforts reflect a strategy of venue-shopping stemming from a political incentives to keep certain “religious issues” off the public agenda, a depoliticization of religion.

Three main governmental actions can be identified across the cases to construct religious difference into something that is commensurable with the state’s raison d’être. First, governments sought to manage and channel difference through the creation of institutions and institutional processes. Second, governments provided funding to particular civil society organizations that they deemed supportable and commissioned research which reflected governmental priorities. And, third, governments set about legitimating certain identities over others through the recognition of particular actors as acceptable mediators and/or leaders of a particular community, often through the above actions.
There was a reinforcing quality to the restrictive and inclusive measures. The restrictive measures were negatively group targeting while inclusive measures were group producing, both actions further entrenching the “Muslim” identity. In this process, the Western state put forth an identity that was hegemonically “liberal”: portraying itself as a bastion of liberal values of freedom of thought, speech, conscience, and gender equality.

3. A Selective Desecularization of the Western State?

If secularization is a process in which the political and the religious/spiritual are made separate or differentiated, we may perhaps be seeing a “desecularization” trend within Western states (Casanova, 1994; Berger, 1999). That is, the different policy initiatives described in this dissertation have resulted in Western governments becoming more involved in religious affairs rather than a de-linking of state and religious spheres.

Conventional wisdom once had it that modernization—and its attendant forces of urbanization, economic development, democratization, and bureaucratic rationalism—would diminish the force of religion in politics, economics, and society. Derived from contemporary thinkers in the Western tradition such as Auguste Comte, Herbert

240 I have taken this insight from Joppke’s work on civic integration and anti-discrimination measures in Western European states. He argues that “Our analysis also reveals that the two liberalisms that undergird civic integration and anti-discrimination are implicitly reinforcing, even producing their ideological opposite: ascriptive group boundaries, or ‘race’. The liberalism of civic integration, one could argue, is negatively group targeting; the liberalism of anti-discrimination is positively group producing” (2007b, 271). Joppke goes even further in noting: “In its negative focus on fighting ethnic separatism, which in Europe is predominantly a Muslim problem, civic integration entails an obvious potential for discrimination: it furthers the normatively questionable vision of the liberal state as one for liberal people only” (2007b, 271). He points to a statement made by Nicolas Sarkozy during the 2007 French presidential election campaign that highlights the negative group targeting in guise of liberalism: “Who does not want to respect our conception of human being, who rejects humanism...who wants to abolish the heritage of the Enlightenment and Revolution, who does not want to recognize that women are equal to men, who wants to imprison his wife at home and force her to carry a veil, who wants to circumcise her or subject her to forced marriage, should stay away from France” (qtd in Joppke 2007, 271). The inclusive liberalism of the anti-discrimination policies produces group boundaries, particularly in the construction of statistical groups.
Spencer, Emile Durkheim, Max Weber, Karl Marx, and Sigmund Freud, secularization theory predicted that through the processes of modernization and urbanization, religion would become increasingly irrelevant and marginalized to the private sphere (Norris and Inglehart, 2004). Over time, religious organizations and their leaders would gradually retreat from the public sphere. This theory became a canon in the social science literature, gaining almost universal adherence among the Western intellectual establishment in the mid- and late-20th century.

The secularization theory has two main component arguments. First, scholars predicted a general decline in personal religiosity, that is to say, there would be a decline in the number of individuals who hold religious beliefs. Second, the theory predicted a decline in the influence of religion in the public sphere, particularly on political and social institutions. In this second component, a process of “differentiation” would occur between religion and other spheres of society in a way that entailed a long-term decline in the influence of religion (Philpott, 2009). The concept of differentiation implies that the roles of the state and the role of religion are separated from one another; one does not participate in the other’s governance or perform the other’s activities (Stepan, 2001). For example, scholars argue that secularization predicates an eventual separation of church and state as the state takes over the traditional welfare functions of the religion.

Indeed, for the better half of the 20th century, Western governments have sought to eliminate the religious and/or spiritual from their political discourse and actions and

241 Philpott (2009), in a review of religion in the political science literature, differentiated between 9 different definitions of secularization that scholars have used.

242 Philpott and Shah point to another measures of differentiation: the strength of a religious body’s transnational ties to coreligionists and external supporters, which can strengthen it with respect to the state (2006, 40).
religion was relegated to the private sphere, providing evidence of the secularization thesis scholars were asserting. However, since the 1980s, the secularization thesis has been under intense scrutiny. Commentators and scholars have yielded various pieces of evidence to show that religion has not declined in importance, pointing to the continued vitality of religion in the United States (and, as discussed in Chapter 3, an outlier among Western nations in terms of sustained and vigorous personal religiosity among the general population but also in terms of the degree of religiosity which infuses the public realm), the success of evangelical movements in Latin America (Martin, 1999), the prevalence of ethno-religious conflict in the post-Cold War period (Brubaker and Laitin, 1998; Fox, 1999; Appleby, 2000; Fox, 2003), and, perhaps the most commonly cited evidence, the rise of Islamic and fundamentalist movements in the Muslim world (Kepel, 2002; Almond et al., 2003). Evidence from major cross-national (as well as national) surveys demonstrates that individual religious belief and the importance of religion to one’s personal life has not declined as the processes of modernization have marched forward. As Philpott describes, “During a century in which religion was under attack from regimes across the globe and elite sectors in the west...religious belief generally did not decline” (2009, 191). Peter Berger, a leading proponent of the secularization thesis in its apogee in the 1960s and 1970s, noted by the late 1990s that “the assumption that we live in a secularized world is false. The world today...is as furiously religious as it ever was, and in some places more so than ever” (1999, 2).

In a cross-national research project using data from World Values surveys over two decades, Pippa and Inglehart, two defenders of the secularization thesis, declare that
religion has not disappeared and is unlikely to do so. Providing a theory of secularization tied to beliefs of existential security, the scholars argue that the data demonstrates two predominant trends. First, among Western nations, the publics are increasingly secular in orientation, a robust trend they have found over the past 50 years. Second, worldwide, there are more people who hold traditional religious views than in the past and this population is growing (due to demographic trends, including higher fertility rates). The scholars contend that a lack of existential security—a feeling of vulnerability in terms of physical, societal, and personal risk—is driving the increase in religiosity among the developing world’s population. Secure conditions, mainly prevalent in affluent post-industrial societies, dampen the importance of religious values and decrease religious participation. Therefore, while trying to fashion a theory that accounts for the evidence of a lack of decline in religious values among the world’s population, the authors, nevertheless, adhere to the original thesis that modernization drives secularization.

According to growing body of scholarship, modernization, however, has a more complicated relationship with secularization. In the first instance, modernization has not necessarily led to a decline in personal religious beliefs. Grace Davie has highlighted a trend that conflicts with the secularization narrative, what she terms “believing without belonging” (1994). She points to an apparent paradox in which most British profess or persist in certain religious beliefs (such as a belief in God) but do not participate in religious institutions. Although Britons have not participated in religious life, relatively few, she argues, have “opted out” of religion altogether. Other scholars have suggested that the rise in fundamentalist movements is inextricably tied to modernization (Keddie, 1998;
One of the most common explanations for the rise in fundamentalist movements is that they are a reaction to the destabilizing forces of modernization. In this construction, modernization has resulted in the increase in traditional religious beliefs among certain populations.

Scholars have also challenged the thesis that as modernization progresses religion will retreat from the public sphere and we will see a greater separation between church and state. For example, many scholars have examined how the historical church-state relationships within Western Europe have affected public policy positions on education, abortion, and women’s rights (Minkenberg, 2002; Minkenberg, 2003; Modood et al., 2006). This scholarship has demonstrated that even if one can provide evidence that very few people among the general population identify with religious institutions or practice, these institutions can still play important social and political roles in path-dependent terms. A volume edited by Peter Katzenstein and Timothy Brynes (2006), Religion in an Expanding Europe, provides greater nuance to how the religious traditions of Catholicism, Eastern Orthodoxy, and Islam are affecting the process of Europeanization. Providing evidence that democratic states have reached out to religious institutions to deliver essential government services, Zehavi (2008) has documented the rise of faith-based initiatives in the United States and Great Britain. Moreover, in a comprehensive analysis of government involvement in religion in 152 states, Fox (2006) found that involvement in religion increased globally from 1990-2002. What is more, this analysis demonstrated that democracies exhibit a wide variety of government involvement, casting doubt on the more philosophical and ideological arguments that a particular level or type of church-
state separation is necessary for the functioning of a democratic state. This particular observation has been developed in greater detail in a recent contribution by Kuru (2009), illustrating the very different forms official state secularism can take in three democracies (France, the United States, and Turkey) and the (sometimes opposing) policies these different states have pursued with regard to religion in the public sphere. In the case of France and the United States, the opposing policy tendencies toward religion—in the case of the United States, an accommodating approach and, in the case of France, an aggressive, exclusivist stance—is despite similar levels of modernization.

My research provides illuminating evidence regarding the second component of the secularization thesis. Chapter 4 provided evidence of how the state has developed closer relationships with religious actors, even to the extent of bringing religious actors into governmental institutions for the explicit purpose of using “religion” to legitimate its actions and foster political loyalty among Muslims. The evidence suggests that there has been a degree of “de-differentiation” of religion and state. As noted above, secularization theory had as one of its central tenets that the state and “church” would differentiate, particularly that the state would not need the “church” for legitimation of its actions or consolidation of political loyalty. However, the British and French state, in the fight to counter radicalization and terrorism as well as to generally integrate the Muslim minority communities, has turned to religious organizations and even created official religious bodies for the explicit purpose of legitimacy and encouragement of state loyalty.

British and French elites sought out Muslim partnerships, facilitated through the buffer institutions, in a concern for the legitimacy of state response. Indeed, the issue of
legitimacy was crucial and a driving force of state actions. In both cases, government elites desired a specific “stamp of approval” for government actions, in the form of cooperation with religious actors and the construction of a religious narrative to make the state position stronger. This was a form of bringing religion back into the public sphere—indeed, within politics—to provide legitimacy. As one example, in the British case, the issue of utilizing religious legitimacy is illustrated in various initiatives including the Radical Middle Way Roadshows and the Islam and Citizenship Education (ICE) project. A common feature of these initiatives was the explicit use of religious precepts to encourage an active citizenship among British youth. Moreover, the creation of MINAB and its resulting “code of conduct” provided an important veneer of religious legitimacy to many of the government’s concerns with mosque governance.

My research also demonstrates how the British and French state elites have attempted to develop a distinctive religious narrative in order to counter extremist message. British and French elites chose broadly similar Muslim partners and narratives to provide state legitimacy. In both cases, the inclusion and legitimation of women was a particular focus, evident in the creation of a national advisory body in Great Britain as well as preferential funding through the Preventing Extremism Unit. The appointment of independent members to the French CFCM is another example. In this way, the French state was concerned with addressing the place of women within the Muslim community; however, in terms of resources and sustained attention, the British state has been more proactive in supporting women’s leadership.
In privileging certain partners over others, both the British and French state sought to promote a particular narrative regarding the type of Islam that is compatible with the Western state. British and French elites supported activities and partners that were turned toward the liberal democratic state, that is, civic-minded, oriented to “opting in” to prevailing societal values. This type of Islam, often labeled Euro-Islam, entails a strong commitment to civil society, secular democracy, and individual human rights. Euro-Islam, introduced by scholar Tibi and increasingly used in Ramadan’s writings on Islam in Europe, connotes a liberal and progressive strand of Islam in Europe that is in harmony with European values. The quest for a new Muslim establishment that not only can reside in the West but can contribute to Western society—and at this particular moment, provide security guarantees against homegrown extremism and radicalization—is common to all government initiatives.

The rhetoric of moderation and mainstream used by both government officials divided religion into that which was “good,” requiring and, therefore, justifying, government support, and that which was “bad,” consequently, needing to be targeted, controlled, and, ultimately, eradicated. In both cases, British and French government officials differentiated among Muslim organizations and activities, seeking to legitimize those considered supportive of liberalism and democracy. In conjunction, the illiberal elements of Islam, particularly with reference to the role of women in Islam and other marginalized populations (i.e. homosexuals), were targeted for removal.

As my research found, an important impetus for venue shopping was to reconcile seemingly competing pursuits in one particular venue or one stage of the political proc-
Shifting the venue to religious buffers served to deflect attention from conflicting policy goals. In the case of Great Britain and France, solutions to alleviate the security and the incorporation imperatives were often seen as incompatible in the political realm. The issue of supporting what was considered an illiberal religion was particularly contentious within the political sphere but politicians also recognized the need to engage with the “Muslim” community out of a concern for domestic security. These conflicting goals were not adequately resolved in the political realm. However, when the issue was moved to the administrative realm, incorporation of the domestic Muslim population was framed as an essential component of the new security dilemma facing Western states. Consequently, in the administrative realm, politicians could put aside certain concerns for engaging with illiberal actors.

Beyond shifting the externalities of decision-making in a highly contentious issue area, religious buffer institutions also sought to benefit from the policy expertise of third-party actors as well as bureaucrats. By incorporating outside actors, as well as training bureaucrats in the specialized policy area of faith and Muslim issues, politicians reaped the benefits of greater knowledge of Muslim communities. Politicians also benefited from increased contact with the Muslim communities through these actors. However, as described in Chapter 4, this contact was circumscribed by the government’s policy goal of supporting particular types of interlocutors and strands of Islam within the state.

My dissertation presents microlevel reasons for the “selective desecularization.” While the use of religion was viewed as a liability among certain state elites and socie-
ty—differing due to different church-state histories as well as levels of secularization among the general population—it was also singled out as an important resource.
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