

Key concepts

- How far should Muslims integrate and take part in society, whilst maintaining their own culture, and how far should they fully assimilate the culture of the host nation? Issues of food, dress and religious practice are three to focus on.
- The Muslim Council of Britain was set up to represent Muslim interests in the UK. There are questions over how far it is representative, and the causes it champions. Challenging Islamophobia, rejecting terrorism and positions around issues of integration are areas to focus on evaluating.
- Over the 20th century, large numbers of Muslims migrated to Britain for work. Their families stayed and became more accustomed to the British way of life than to their country of origin. Large communities congregated in cities and in some areas.
- Whereas some Muslims mixed and integrated well, others felt worried about losing their identity. Some integrated by working alongside others but did not assimilate to local culture and lived separate lives whilst at home.
- Prayer five times a day, fasting in Ramadan, Muslim dress, such as the veil for women, and finding halal food are live issues. For Muslims who are working or going to school alongside others, it can be difficult at times to pray or to fast whilst others are eating. Nevertheless, some see it as an opportunity to show others their faith and a personal test to uphold Islam.
- The prevent strategy has focused minds on the importance of allegiance to the UK and the worry of extremism influence.

- The MCB is an umbrella group for Muslim organisations in the UK, acting as a pressure group to raise concerns in government as well as represent Muslims at important events, such as at Remembrance Day poppy laying occasions.
- The MCB set up a 'tell mama' campaign to record incidents of Islamophobia and advise victims (following the Runnymede Trust report). Nevertheless, the definition of Islamophobia has not been widely agreed as some point out that it might be used to prevent legitimate criticism of religion.
- The MCB is only partly democratic and has been criticised in the past for failing to support Holocaust Memorial Day, controversial guidance for schools and lack of support for the government's counter extremism Prevent strategy.

Key quotes

- 'I define integration, therefore, not a flattening process of assimilation but as equal opportunity, accompanied by cultural diversity, in an atmosphere of mutual tolerance.' (Roy Jenkins)
- 'It cannot be right that people can grow up and go to school and hardly ever come into meaningful contact with people from other backgrounds and faiths. That doesn't foster a sense of shared belonging and understanding – it can drive people apart.' (David Cameron)
- 'The hijab, jilbab, burqa and niqab are visible signs of this retreat from progressive values.' (Yasmin Alibhai-Brown)
- 'The Islamic dress had a thrill to it, a sensuous feeling. It made me feel empowered... I was unique ... it made me feel like an individual. It sent out a message of superiority.' (Ayyan Hirsi Ali)
- 'Defenders of the council point to its "democratic" procedures; its leaders are elected by the group's affiliates every two years. But these days, when Muslim condemnations of terrorism hit the press they are more likely to come from the Quilliam Foundation.' (The Economist)

Key words

Sectarian	Tauheedul	Quilliam	Jamiat Islami
Milaud an Nabi	Niqab	Thobe	Shalwar kemise
Assimilation	Multiculturalism	Segregation	Shirk

Issues for analysis and evaluation

Key questions, arguments, and debates

1. The possibility of assimilation into a secular society for Muslims in Britain. Can followers of a revealed faith, with its traditions of separate of genders, prohibition of alcohol and prayer at the centre of life, fit into a non-religious society? Or, is it really in keeping with the mixed community of Madinah set up by Muhammad?
2. The effectiveness of the Muslim Council of Britain. How far has the MCB been able to help Muslims with 'tell mama' and other campaigns? How far has its more controversial stances meant that the MCB has been less effective at being heard? Or is it a question of representativeness? An evaluation could score and balance these issues in discussion.