Ever since David Cameron announced the EU referendum back in February 2016, there has been an overwhelming amount of information hurled at the British Public, from all directions. Statistics, jargon, promises, threats, more statistics, gibberish, lies, truths, accusations, scaremongering, fear raising material, and even more statistics, all thrown at the bewildered British voter.

It was no wonder that the vast majority of the British electorate was left confused about the issues and about which way to vote.

Now that the vote has been cast, the country has boarded a one-way journey out of the UK; or Brexit as the newly coined term.

With the huge amount of info dispensed over the past months; and even after the vote was cast and sealed; the actual realities of what awaits us is still unknown.

Britain has never been in a more uncertain state. The economy is flinching; politicians are bewildered; and the masses are gobsmacked. All that topped with an increase in racism and bigotry.

At the Muslim Association of Britain, we realised the need for Muslims to have some sort of idea of what to expect from the Brexit. We thus hurried to organise a conference. And here we are. We are delighted to present the MAB Conference: Muslims and Brexit: What Next?

We’ve brought to you a panel of analysts with varying expertise in their fields to present to you their predictions for the future of Muslims post-Brexit.

We hope you enjoy this conference. We hope you take pleasure in listening to the panel and that you join in the discussion, enriching the topic.

In addition, the Muslim Association of Britain has put together what it feels needs to formulate the important vision for Muslims in Britain, post-Brexit. This vision is a set of ideas which serve as directions for good practice. We believe that the narrative needs to be enriched and that actions must speak louder than words.

Join us in our vision: Building Society...Creating Hope

Omer El Hamdoon
INTRODUCING MAB

The Muslim Association of Britain has been around for nearly two decades. Set up in 1997, it is dedicated to serving society through promoting the comprehensive understanding of Islam in all its dimensions. We believe that a person’s faith is a positive influence in his/her contribution to society.

MAB seeks to achieve its goals through its various units; which include: Youth and Students, Women, Media, Public Relations, Education Politics and Scouts. It has several branches covering Britain’s main cities, and is constantly engaged in scrutinising its work with the aim of improving it.

In the UK, MAB is an affiliate member of the Muslim Council of Britain (MCB) – an umbrella organisation which works to represent Muslims in diverse matters. MAB is also a founding member of the Mosques and Imams National Advisory Body (MINAB), which seeks to develop and improve working standards in mosques and Islamic centres, as well as training Imams and developing their skills. On the Europe scene, MAB is a member of the Federation of Islamic Organisations in Europe (FIOE), a federation of organisations which work all over Europe on joint matters.

MAB supports just causes in the UK and throughout the world. It encourages dialogue and cooperation between different cultures and between people of faith and no faith, with the aim of serving society and humanity.

WHAT ARE WE AIMING FOR?

We aim to promote and propagate the principles of positive Muslim interaction with all elements of society to reflect, project and convey the message of Islam. We affirm the duties of citizenship and the firm and undeniable roots of Islam and Muslims within British society.

OUR VISION

"Muslims At their Best".
By this, we aspire to train, develop and equip our members through structured processes, to enable them to serve themselves and their communities in the best mode possible.

OUR STRAP-LINE:
Building Society...Creating Hope

British Muslims must realize their potential in society and they must continue to contribute effectively for its betterment. This can only happen if Muslims have a true sense of belonging and actively engage in the different spheres of social life.

HOW DO WE ACHIEVE OUR AIMS?

By having a membership made up of strong, knowledgeable and resolute individuals. By having a strong presence in the various media platforms and discussion forums. Through establishing working relationships with other organisations who share our concerns.

WANT TO MAKE A CHANGE?

Contact us:
www.mabonline.net/contactus
Donate to our cause:
www.mabonline.net/donate
ANAS ALTIKRTI

BIOGRAPHY
Anas Altikriti is CEO and Founder of The Cordoba Foundation and is the Chairman of the Muslim Association of Britain (MAB). Anas holds a PhD in Political Studies from Westminster University, London. He is a leading figure in the Global Anti-War Movement and was co-Chair of the 2 Million March in London on 15th February 2003. Anas is a world-renowned political analyst and media commentator. He is also a known hostage negotiator.

ABSTRACT
The EU Referendum which former British Prime Minister David Cameron promised for specific party political considerations in 2013, delivered an outcome which shocked not only his government by the entire country and European Union. Not only did Cameron himself not seriously think that Britain would vote to leave, but it became apparent that even the Leave campaign was shocked by the outcome. The fact that virtually all the main figures of the Leave campaign quickly departed the scene contending for the top spot was evidence that there seemed to be little after-thought should the country vote to leave. Further, the fact that the person to replace the outgoing and defeated Prime Minister was actually a Remain supporter, speaks volumes.

While the country contends with the arduous and prolonged process of disentangling the country from its 40 year partner, which will have serious consequences on virtually all facets of life for a long time to come, British Muslims are left with a number of important questions.

On the matter of immigration, it comes as no surprise that whatever policy is agreed in the post-Brexit phase, thousands, possibly tens of thousands of Muslims, who fled from war zones, political oppressions and economic hardship, will be affected. Future laws governing the free movement of labour between European countries will also come to have an impact on European Muslims and whatever economic implications come to play, British Muslims will be among the most to feel them.

However, the matter of greatest concern to British Muslims must be the manner in which the political discourse of late has taken a nasty and potentially hazardous turn. The debate of the London Mayoral election in May is fresh in the memories of most, when the entire debate turned away from what each candidate would do for London, to whom amongst them was the closest to Muslim figures, hence deserving of the most vilification and abuse.

During the European Referendum, it was notable how the same level of abuse and Islamophobia took on a European flavour, when immigration (almost always conflated with illegal immigration, then Muslim immigrants, then extremism and ultimately terrorism) became the main talking point by both sides.

The lingering questions of Muslim engagement and involvement in the public debate remains outstanding, but it is the very real impact of Brexit and the immediate and long-term effect on British Muslims that must be thoroughly discussed.
**BIOGRAPHY**

Shenaz Bunglawala is the head of research at MEND. Shenaz holds undergraduate and postgraduate degrees in political science and has taught undergraduate courses at the LSE and King’s College, London and Religion and Faith in Humanitarian Contexts for the MSc in Psychosocial Consultation at UEL. Shenaz sits on the Research Excellence Framework 2014 expert sub-panel for Theology and Religious Studies and advises on various AHRC/ESRC research projects. She is a member of the Management Board for the ESRC Centre for Corpus Approaches to Social Science at Lancaster University. She is a Fellow of the Royal Society of Arts and a Trustee of the Muslim Media Forum. Her work has been published in books, journals and periodicals.

**ABSTRACT**

 Brexit is a process, not an event and many of the anxieties expressed by British Muslims in the immediate aftermath of the EU referendum vote, about the rise of xenophobic and blatantly anti-Muslim slogans during the electoral campaign and its impact of social relations, are likely to persist throughout the negotiation process.

What we have witnessed in recent weeks, with a rise in hostility and hate crime towards Muslims and other minorities may yet be just the tip of the iceberg as full scale negotiations on free movement, immigration and bilateral trade agreements loom over the months to come and these issues retain their potency among sections of the British public.

On nationalism, which has reared its ugly head, questions remain over the post Brexit settlement on the state of the union. For Muslims, the residual elements of English, Scottish and Welsh nationalisms cannot be ignored not least because of the voting decisions in the different regions and what drove them. And there is also the lingering question of British identity, most UK Muslims strongly identify with a British only national identity – how will this fare in the future as nationalisms are unleashed and the equality agenda potentially fractures along new borders?

What of policies issues that have a significant impact on British Muslim communities? There are those policy issues which have direct impact, in the case of security and counter-terrorism, and indirect impact, in the case of immigration where Muslims are doubly disadvantaged – whether it be British Muslim citizens who are cast as ‘outsiders’ on account of their racial and religious identity, or the denigration of Muslims in contemporary public discourse with the derogatory and lazy conflation of refugees and migration with Islam and Muslims.

Where next for pan-European Muslim alliances? How will British Muslims communities resuscitate solidarity with their European Muslim counterparts in the post-Brexit landscape? What steps must Muslim civil society organisations – in the UK and Europe – take to ensure pan-European Muslim collaboration and civic solidarity remains relevant in pre and post-Brexit policy discussions?

On the upside, we may regard Prime Minister Theresa May’s centring of social mobility and social justice as key planks of her premiership as a welcome opportunity to address those policy issues which have, to some extent, brought us to where we are now – Brexit. Let us make a sober assessment of our challenges and opportunities so that our voices are heard in future policy discussions that will redefine our place in Europe and the world.
KHALIL CHARLES

BIOGRAPHY
Khalil Charles is a journalist and broadcaster. He began his career in BBC local radio 30 years ago. He worked at the BBC as a news reporter, assistant television producer and a radio and TV presenter. He left the BBC and became a freelance documentary producer making films for the BBC and Channel 4. In the late nineties, Khalil emigrated to Sudan, working as a Media consultant to the Sudanese Government, and as an Editor of a Sudanese Monthly magazine and of a daily English language newspaper. He was formerly the Director of Media and Communications at MAB, and is now the Head of News and Current Affairs at Islam Channel.

ABSTRACT
While the result of the UK referendum on Europe is known, the lasting effects on the Muslim community in the UK are still to be assessed. What is clear is that Britain appears to be more polarised than ever before. Anti-immigrant sentiment has to a great extent been normalised. The vote demonstrated that immigration had become so scary that its worth risking the country going into an economic recession to curb the numbers.

Xenophobia, the fear of foreigners appears for some to be at the heart of the Leave campaign proving that not only is such fear powerful, but it also has the ability to shape the course of the entire future for Muslims in this country. 77% of Brits believe immigration should be reduced and 52% believe that could only be achieved by leaving the European Union. The pressure on the NHS, the housing crisis and low paid jobs were blamed on immigrants, mainly from Eastern Europe but the lackluster response to the migrant crisis sent a clear government-sponsored signal, migrants most of whom are Muslims are ‘unwelcome’ in the UK.

However, the most worrying aspect is the ‘climate of fear’ that has been stirred up to a frenzy by the referendum campaign may take a long time to die down. Former UKIP leader, Nigel Farage fanned the flames of fear with his now infamous poster of migrants marching to the caption ‘Breaking Point, the EU has failed us’. By no means the only purveyor of doom, but Farage is quoted as saying “people do see a fifth column living in our country who hate us and want to kill us.” But it was the hatred of a far-right, homegrown extremist that led to the brutal slaying of MP Jo Cox, a murder that shocked the nation, but caused politicians to think again about the tone of the campaign that had helped to create ‘a climate of fear’.

Unless the narrative that views immigrants and Muslims as the source of the country’s problems is not effectively challenged, its seems only a matter of time before the intolerance that has been unleashed, reinforced and normalised, looks for easy targets. Already open expressions of racist abuse have been directed at Muslim women and girls. What should Muslims be doing to reverse the tidal wave of negativity that threatens the safety and well being of every Muslim British citizen?
TALHA AHMAD

BIOGRAPHY
Talha Ahmad is a teacher turned lawyer. He has substantial involvement in the social activism spanning over two decades and is presently Chair of the Home Start Tower Hamlets. He is a former Chair of the Membership Committee of the Muslim Council of Britain and regularly speaks for the organisation. In his latter role, he regularly contributes in the international, national and regional media. A graduate of Mathematics, Law & Education, Mr Ahmad feels passionately about social justice and creating opportunities for the under-privileged. He also believes that fundamental to creating a just and fair society is to uphold and strengthen the role of law.

ABSTRACT
Brexit has caused much debate and uncertainty. It will have the greatest impact on our laws and legal system. The impact of Brexit in England, Wales (lesser degree Scotland and Northern Ireland) law and legal system will have serious (if not far wider) implications for the 5% diverse Muslim communities as it will for the wider UK population. The EU laws have been an integral part of our legal systems and processes for over forty years. It extends to every area of law.

These are the five important areas for practical ramifications in our daily lives:

1. Equality and anti-discrimination laws;
2. Consumer protections;
3. Employment rights;
4. Free movement of people;
5. Human Rights laws.

Equality and Discrimination Laws:

1. The EU has been a strong force for good when it comes to equality and discrimination laws. There are significant overlaps between this and Employment law. Much of the equality and anti-discrimination measures are within employment context.

2. Stamping out discrimination has become a core element of the EU. It has taken significant steps to ensure greater equality between EU citizens, including providing protection for vulnerable communities/groups.


4. Muslims are vulnerable to discrimination, employment as well as being victims of racism and hatred.

5. Muslims are likely to be among the greatest beneficiaries of these legal protections. It is not certain if all or any of these protections will survive and even if it does in what shape or form.
Consumer Protection Law:
1. The Charter of Fundamental Rights features consumer protection as an important element of rights of the citizens of the Union.

2. There are over 90 directives governing the rights of consumers. Whilst the sheer numbers of directives add to the complexity of the consumer rights and protection, it also shows the seriousness that the EU treats consumer protection with.

3. The protection for consumers comes in many shapes and forms. Brexit potentially threatens the rights enshrined in the EU law.

Employment Rights:
1. EU has been a strong positive force for improving employee rights including work time directives, health and safety at work, paid holidays, time-off for family emergencies and other matters. EU law made significant progress to ensure greater fairness for part-time and agency workers.

2. It is unlikely that the UK government will want to let go of all these protections, but it is likely that some of these will reduce.

Free movement of people:
1. Free movement of people is at the core of the EU Project. Following Brexit, it is likely that free movement will see a significant change.

2. Muslims have European connections who have settled in the UK. Whilst some may have acquired indefinite leave (even citizenship), many have not. Brexit is therefore causing concern as there is no governmental clarity.

Human Rights Law:
1. Human Rights law developed in the UK is sophisticated and progressive, but the EU had a large significant positive impact.

2. The UK had for some time contemplated withdrawing from the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR).

3. Withdrawal from the ECHR will not be possible – subscribing to the ECHR is a key requirement of EU membership.

4. With Brexit, the possibility of withdrawing from ECHR becomes more likely, but without the protection of the European Court of Justice (ECJ).

Conclusion:
EU law not only brought about new law, it had also changed significant ways how laws are interpreted and implemented. ECJ’s approach is what is known as purposive approach. As part of the EU, UK courts had been obliged to adopt that approach.

Therefore it remains to be seen how the UK legal order adopts to the changed circumstance if and when UK withdraws from the EU.

All in all, Brexit has raised serious questions of legal protection in respect of many fundamental aspects of Muslims’ daily lives and will be part of those impacted from the changed landscape.
ALAA’ AL-SAMARRAI

BIOGRAPHY
Alaa Al-Samarrai is a monitoring consultant for a political monitoring firm in central London. Previously she worked for the international humanitarian relief agency Islamic Relief Worldwide. She has also served as Vice-President Student Affairs of the Federation of Student Islamic Societies (FOSIS) in 2010-2012, and currently sits on the Young Leadership Group of Citizens UK’s Commission on Islam, Participation and Public Life.

ABSTRACT
It’s fair to say that the UK’s decision to leave the European Union will affect young people more so than any other group in this country.

And yet, most young people voted to stay in the EU. According to the last YouGov poll before the referendum, 72% of 18 to 24-year-olds were in favour of a Remain vote, while just 19% backed Brexit. In contrast, 34% of pensioners were in favour of Remain, while 59% favoured Brexit. These oft-repeated statistics have been a source of deep frustration and anger for many young people, many of whom feel they have been ‘betrayed’ by older voters who they blame for voting us out of Europe.

Young people are now faced with an uncertain future, and feel they will be denied all the privileges their elders previously enjoyed such as the freedom to travel, work, and study freely across the 27 other countries of the EU. Not forgetting all the other risks involved with our departure, the consequences of which young people will have to live through the longest. The Institute for Fiscal Studies found that young people were earning less and had higher living costs than their predecessors, and predicted that Brexit would only make things worse.

This has highlighted a significant inter-generational divide between young and old in the UK. With this we have seen an increasing disillusionment with the political system among young people, which has fostered anti-establishment sentiments and a push towards populism.

Academia is another area that will be adversely affected by Brexit. During the referendum campaign, the vast majority of university staff and students supported remaining in the EU, primarily because of the research opportunities this offers, and schemes such as the Erasmus exchange programme. However this is all at risk now, as is the beautiful diversity on British campuses that many students, past and present, have cherished.

Finally, an important issue to highlight is the worrying message that Brexit sends to non-white and non-British communities in the UK. Following a fear-mongering and hate-filled referendum campaign centred on immigration, it comes as no surprise that a sharp rise in racist and xenophobic incidents have been documented following our decision to leave. Many of the victims have been young Muslims, a group already conflicted by their multiple British and Muslim identities, and it prompts serious concerns about the security of our communities and our place in the UK. This is an issue that our political leadership, and our own communities, will need to address.
MAB VISION: POST-BREXIT

“This is undoubtedly the most important vote Britons will ever cast in our generation.”

President of the Muslim Association of Britain, Dr Omer El Hamdoon, made the remark when questioned about the 23rd of June referendum to decide whether Britain remains in or exits the European Union.

The EU has been one of the most significant post-war developments in Europe; and MAB believes that Britain would be much stronger as a member state. The reasons for or against the Brexit are behind us; and it is important to address the issues that are to be anticipated following the Brexit.

MAB has put together its vision of how the Muslim Community should be dealing with the consequences of Brexit. This vision can and should be implemented straight away. We believe that implementing it would bring great benefit to the individuals, organisations and the wider British Society.
SEEN MORE...HEARD LESS

The core of our vision is about visibility. We need to be seen more, and heard less. The British Muslim community has a duty to show its reality in existence in Britain, through its activities. There must be more diverse activities which extend their benefit to others; and there must be more promotion of such goodness. We know in Islam, acts of obedience that transcend one’s self have greater reward. In addition to doing more, marketing more is necessary. When good work is being done, it should be proclaimed from the rooftops (in a voiceless way).

We have free platforms of advertising in the form of social and digital media, but also many of the local media want to hear about activities on the ground. It is important for local Muslim organisations, which include mosques, to have good relations with their local newspapers, radio stations and other outlets.

“BUILDING SOCIETY....CREATING HOPE”

It’s about being part of those who contribute to building society. It’s about being part of the fabric of society. Muslims are part of every sphere of British life, from health professionals to engineering, from journalism to politics. There are Muslim entrepreneurs, skills people, lawyers, teachers, etc. It would be pointless to list all the occupations here, as Muslims partake there in.

Muslims don’t just exist in society, but very often they are achievers, winning in different competitions or getting the ‘top’ jobs. This is something that the Muslim Community needs to be proud of; and something that British Society should appreciate.

“OUR WHOLE PHILOSOPHY IS ONE OF TRANSPARENCY”

Muslims have to be ready to open their doors to the wider public. The mosque open days did wonders for many people. It allowed many to come in to understand more about the functions of a mosque – as a social and religious and social institution; and to meet the imams and mosque management to ask any questions and see that a mosque is just like any other place.

This transparency can be extended to our homes and minds. Let your neighbours into your homes; and into your minds by sharing moments of sadness and times of happiness. Neighbourhoods need to be stronger through transparency and by deploping an attitude of care. As Muslims, we have a wealth of traditions guiding towards better neighbouring practices. The Prophet e said, “Whoever believes in Allah and the Final Day should not harm his neighbour.”
“IT IS ONLY WITH GRATITUDE THAT LIFE BECOMES RICH.”

Society needs to understand the importance of showing gratitude towards others. Courtesy coupled with gentleness wins the day. We need a society which doesn’t just "tolerate" others, but "appreciates" others. Everyone who serves society needs to be thanked. More so, we should all feel grateful for Britain as a country that has embraced its citizens and looked after the immigrants. We should be proud of the fact that our country is an attraction for people, past and present. It is because of the services and care that our country has that people want to come here. “He who isn’t grateful to people, isn’t grateful to Allah” are the words of the Holy Prophet.

LOOK AFTER THE PENNIES...

Saving money...investing for the future. In times of uncertainty, it is wise to consider saving money when able to do so. Saving money will allow us to be ready to face hard times. There are many ways in which one can save money, which we can’t discuss here. However, advice is readily available online and through advice centres. Of course, saving isn’t an invitation to stop giving. As Muslims, we believe in the blessings that come with giving and doing charitable work. Charity must not only continue, but thrive through donations and charitable acts. “Charity begins at home” is a message that Islam preaches to its followers. Muslims give immensely in charity. Year in, year out they are giving more and more. In Ramadan 2016 alone, more than £100m was donated to charity by Muslims in Britain. This is a positive contribution of British Muslims, which we should be proud of and tell others about.

INVESTING IN SMALL VENTURES

Britain needs investment and financial growth. If you have some "spare" cash, consider investment opportunities which help the economy and help you personally. Of course, any investment comes with risks, and no one should hasten into any investment without proper and due assessment. Advice should always be sought.

ENGAGE WITH PUBLIC LIFE

MAB encourages engagement with daily politics and daily life. Whether you join a party or register as a supporter. Whether you follow BBCs Question Time or read the newspapers, there is always room for you to engage with politics. Politics isn’t a dirty word; and it only right that more and more Britons engage to make UK’s democracy more reflective of the people. The current democracy has it’s drawbacks, with MPs too often representing their parties more than their constituents who elected them. It is vital that we have a proper representative democracy. This can only happen if the constituents (you) get involved and account those who speak on your behalf.
BRITAIN ISN’T RACIST.... PEOPLE CAN BE

The narrative of coexistence is to really care for the land you belong to. Muslims in Britain are here to stay. Some thought that voting for Brexit meant Muslims would be asked to leave. No one explained to them that those who are British will not be asked to leave. We believe that Britain isn’t racist, Islamophobic or xenophobic. However, people can act in unacceptable, abhorrent ways. But, these people come and go. Society changes and develops. If we want society to change and develop, we have to believe in ourselves and those around us. A cup of tea and a short chat can do wonders for community relations (as demonstrated by York Mosque). So, let us not lose hope in people.

BRITISH TO THE CORE

The attitude of belonging needs to be nurtured into our young and upcoming generations. There needs to be sense of caring and sharing. It’s not about which football team you support or what your favourite food is. But it’s about the attitude of belonging. MAB doesn’t buy into the rhetoric of “integration”, as this term implies a foreign body’s existence into another body. We must not allow the rhetoric that Muslims are alien to Britain, or they belong elsewhere. This can only happen when there is clear rebuttal of the alien culture. We still hear from ill-informed people that Muslims shouldn’t be here. Or “they should go home”. However, they are ignorant of the existence of Muslims as part and parcel of British Society.

INTERFAITH RELATIONS AND FORGING PARTNERSHIPS

More arms need to be stretched out to others in dialogue and collaboration. Dialogue breeds understanding and partnerships instil care. Through interfaith work and collaborating with those with shared interests, huge barriers will be broken. There are different aspects of life in which we can work together. These are restricted to matters of religion, but extend to a wide spectrum of issues from human rights to caring about the environment; and from pro-life campaigns to lobbying for living wage. Whatever the issue, it's good to work together.

“DON’T HATE THE MEDIA.... BECOME THE MEDIA.”

Too often we complain about the negative media portrayal; and it’s our right to complain. However, to avoid becoming someone who just moans about everything, you must couple your complaints with action. With the explosion of social media and ultrafast broadband, everyone should and can have a say. You can air your views and you can speak about issues. Social media has given you a voice, so use it. And in a world of high volume marketing, we need to learn to market our activities and to sell ourselves.

FINALLY...

In conclusion, the MAB vision is about being positive in society. Let us re-explore our qualities and strengths; and let us highlight our achievements. We need to reach out to others and we need to be seen to be doing what we are doing. Brexit may come with its huge challenges, but equally, it comes with immense opportunities. Join us in harnessing these opportunities.