

The Poisonous Campaign against the British Muslims

Written by Dr Firoz Mahboob Kamal

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The Trojan horse hoax

For more than a week, the British government and the whole British media, with a very few exceptions is on a propaganda hype to depict the Muslims with terrorist taint. It was alleged that the Muslim extremists have taken control of five schools in the second biggest city of Birmingham to groom terrorists. The issue created huge uproar as if the UK's security is under a great threat. Mr Michael Gove -the British education secretary appointed Mr Peter Clarke - London Metropolitan Police's anti-terrorism chief to investigate the plot. Such an appointment of a high ranking anti-terrorism expert in an academic premise speaks a lot about the government's hidden agenda. It implies that the government has already made a judgement before the enquiry. As if, an event of 7/7 magnitude has happened in those schools.

In those schools, the Ofsted inspection team of Department for Education (DfE) found inadequacies in sex education, science education and sex segregation and gave suggestions to comply with. But Mr Peter Clarke –the counter terrorism expert was sent there to discover something else to feed government's neocon agenda -revealed in subsequent speeches of the British Prime Minister Mr David Cameron and Education Secretary Mr Michael Gove. It is worth mentioning that Ofsted found the same inadequacies in sex and science education in Catholic and ultra-orthodox Jewish schools almost every year, but the government never discover any Trojan horse plot there. Just to put more venom into anti-Islamic propaganda, the most British press published news that in those schools white women are described as prostitute. The Time, the Daily Mail and the Evening Standard published such news with a big headline. The non-Muslim school management authority and even the white teachers of those schools called it a blatant lie. But the media continued to spread the lie and did the decisive damage.

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The Panic in the Muslim community

Appointment of a counter terrorism expert was sufficient to cause tremendous trauma to the students' psyche and huge panic in the Muslim community. These innocent young children were given the harsh message that they are under close scrutiny as potential terrorists. The students were taken to interrogation rooms to face the spy agents. Such interrogations are usually used by the security apparatus to derive information from suspected or combatant terrorists. It is now revealed that the investigation team has also used coercion to derive information to feed their agenda. However, the investigation team couldn't discover any grooming exercise or tool of indoctrination that could help make the students terrorist. However, they could discover that more than 98 percent of the students of these schools are Muslim, and the remaining 2 percent are the Romanian immigrants. The investigation team might have been upset by the conspicuous absence of the English students in their midst. They might have been also upset by seeing almost all of the Muslim girls in hijab, almost all of the Muslim students offering midday prayer in the school premises and some teachers with long beard. Probably such unusual features on the British soil didn't match very well with the usual picture of an English school. They considered such unusual features of the Muslim schools as markers of extremism; hence returned back to the schools within weeks with plans and strategies for snatching these outstanding schools from the local governors and managers.

The Trojan horse hoax and the concurrent poisonous campaign against the British Muslims have put some new light on the anti-Muslims agenda of the British neocons. It shows how heavily they have infested the current conservative government. It also reveals the anti-Muslim agenda of the British media. The Daily Mail, the Time, the Evening Standard are in the forefront of spreading such venom against the Muslims. Such offensive campaign has also exposed the government's discriminatory standard for the Muslim citizens of the country. State funded faith schools are not new in the UK. The Catholic, the Protestant, the Jew, the Sikh and the followers of other religions have their own faith schools; distinctive dress, symbols and curriculum to

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enhance religiosity in the children are not uncommon there. But such Trojan horse hue and cry was never raised against those faith schools. The British government thus shows its deep discrimination against the Muslim majority schools.

Denial of educational right

Like survival right, the educational right is very fundamental. Without proper education, it becomes impossible for a man to be fully human with much needed moral, intellectual and spiritual attributes. In civilised societies, every human has the right to make a free choice of his or her religion. But such right remains unachievable if he or she is denied the full right to be a perfect follower of such faith. None should be compelled to make any compromise on such core issue of pursuing full religiosity. Hence, a Muslim must have a right to be a full Muslims: hence his or her Islamisation needs to be complete, or at least optimal. For that, a Muslim child needs optimum Islamisation of his knowledge, thought, behaviour and culture. For Muslims, such Islamisation is a religious obligation: any amount of compromise on such issues only endangers the students' upbringing as a full Muslim and increases the chances of getting deviated from Islamic road map –delineated by the Holy Qur'an. So it is a crucial issue of every Muslim who aims at grooming their children as true Muslims. But those who nurture deep anti-Islamic and anti-Muslim agenda deny such rights to the Muslims. In fact, the British education policy is taking that route. It is indeed the legacy of its colonial past.

Dismantling the process of Islamisation

For optimal Islamisation, it is indispensable that every child must be provided with adequate access to original sources of Islamic knowledge like the holy Qur'an, the tradition of the prophet, practices of the early days' Muslims and the Islamic history. Hence the duties of the Muslim families, societies and states are not only to provide food, shelter and health care to their children, but also ensuring such basic Islamic opportunities. It is the minimum religious requirement of a Muslim child. Otherwise they miss to be a true practitioner of Islam. Such basics of Islamisation can't be labelled as indoctrination to extremism –as has been alleged by the neocons and the secularist extremists. It amounts to label the last prophet of Islam and his devout followers as extremists and terrorists. Such Islamisation through education is so important in Islam that it was made an obligation prior to other religious obligations like five times daily prayers, month-long fasting in Ramadan, haj and zakat. Muslims can't generate, nor can sustain true faith without enabling education and educational institutions. Creating such institutions is not only the duty of the Muslim parents and the Muslim communities, but also the duty of the state where they live in and pay the taxes. But the enemies of Islam do the opposite: dismantling Islamic institutions and obstructing the establishment of such institutions becomes the key strategy -as was the policy of the European colonialists, communists and autocratic fascists in the occupied Muslim lands.

Therefore, occupation of the Muslim land, demilitarisation of its people and dismantling the native industries were not the only strategies of the colonial powers. Destroying the institutions of Islamisation received the highest priority in their anti-Muslim campaign. It helped them to take the Muslims away from the Islamic road map –the siratul mustaqeem. The colonial missionary project of Christianisation though got a great success in Americas, in some part of Africa and in a small part of Asia (Philippines), but failed in all Muslim lands. Such failure in Christianisation prompted them to take another route. And it was de-Islamisation through education. Education worked as a powerful tool of indoctrination against Islam. The European colonialists indeed attained huge success in this new strategy. It caused huge damage to the Muslims and Islam. In fact, there exists little difference between the conversion to Christianity and de-Islamisation. The catastrophic consequence is almost the same: both take the people far away from the Quranic road map and inject the vitriolic animosity against Muslims and Islam. The people who

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dismantled Hafsa madrasa in Islamabad and killed scores of its girl students, and those killed or maimed thousands of innocent religious people in Shapla round-about in Dhaka and those who massacred thousands of Muslim protestors in Cairo's streets are not the Christian crusaders or the Hindu thugs of BJP-Shiv Sena-RSS outfits, they are the army of the de-Islamised converts.

The British colonial power has collapsed, but their anti-Muslims campaign has not ended. It still survives amongst the neocons. They are fighting the same battle with the same strategy -not only in occupied Muslim lands but in their own land with significant Muslim population. In fact, the Trojan horse hoax against 5 Birmingham schools is only the tip of such anti-Muslim campaign. They are not ready to see the Muslims grooming up with any amount of Islamisation. They label such provision as indoctrination to terrorism. But what happened in Birmingham schools is far from Islamisation. These schools didn't provide any enhanced access to Islamic knowledge or Islamic grooming. These schools are not Muslim faith schools and not managed by the Muslims. These are secular state schools -focused only to follow the state curriculum; and were regularly monitored by the state inspection teams. Therefore how the so-called Trojan horses can land in Birmingham in the midst of so many vigilant eyes of the government? Is it not the new bogey of the neocons to frighten the local people against the Muslims? The Ofsted school inspection team couldn't find any evidence that these schools were ignoring any part of state curriculum and teaching Islam. Instead, two of the alleged five schools made outstanding performance to meet the curriculum-based learning targets. Apart from head scarf and hijab, segregation of girls and boys during the physical exercise classes, few books on Islam in the library, congregation prayers at lunch break, absence of Christmas tree amidst 98% Muslim students and few teachers with long beards -what else could they find to suggest a deceitful takeover of British land –as the Trojan horse plot implies?

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The Islamophobia

Fear of Islam has reached its peak in the UK. It has heavily influenced the policy makers of the current conservative government. In such panic, the common sense can seldom survive. And with such panic, increasing Islamisation of the Muslim youth has been announced a great threat to British society, its culture and values. The slogan of multi-religious, multi-ethnic and multi-cultural British survives only as eyewash. The ground reality is different. Hence the Muslims with Islamic faith and culture are considered as a big threat. Now Mr Gove and Mr Cameron believe that “robust educational intervention” can stop such Islamic resurgence.

Education institutions have been successfully used by the British colonialist to do de-Islamisation of the Muslims in the occupied lands. Now they want to do the same in the UK. In the name of British values and culture, they want to restrict any educational and cultural inputs in schools that may help Islamisation of the Muslim children. To slash the influence of the Muslim parents, the government has already dissolved the school governors' body and has taken over the control of 5 schools allegedly linked to so-called Trojan horse plot. The government has labelled any access to knowledge on Islam as indoctrination of terrorism. So they are keeping close vigilance on books in the school libraries. In fact, such government policy exposes its extreme contempt of simple religiosity of the Muslims children. Even benign practice of Islam has been given the colour of terrorism -as if these young kids are being groomed as terrorist.

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Both Mr Cameron and Mr Gove have told that they will not make any difference between such extreme religiosity and the violent extremism. They believe in so-called "conveyor belt" concept that confirms non-violent Islamism and terrorism as the parts of the same process. Hence, they don't make any difference between peaceful practice of Islam of the majority and the armed violence of a few. It is indeed the pathological ignorance on Muslim culture and Islam. When the Prime Minister of a country like UK suffers from such disease can only cause disasters. Indeed, due to such cultural ignorance, the occupying US and British forces in Afghanistan and Iraq failed to recognise the differences between the simple religiosity and the violent extremism. Hence they repeatedly bombed the wedding and funeral gatherings. Now it appears that Mr Cameron and his neocon comrades suffer from same ignorance. If such ignorance and intolerance goes on increasing, it is not unlikely that the British Army and the police may surround the Muslim majority schools in the UK with tanks and heavy guns, and the apache helicopter may drop bombs on the children. And the Muslims may be put in oven too –as happened with the millions of Jews in Nazi Germany. Those who did such horrendous crime were not less educated or less modern than Mr Cameron and his comrades.

The fabrication and the crime

The alleged five schools are located in Birmingham's deprived Muslim areas. More than 90% of the students are Muslim. Like other schools in the UK, these schools too had a body of governors taken from the local population. Considering the specific demography of the area, it is not unusual that most of the governors were also Muslim. However these governors didn't have any power or authority to change the school curriculum, nor could they dictate the teachers what to teach and what not to teach. They could only convey the community's concern vis-à-vis school performance and the expectation of the parent; hence could help connect the school management and teachers to the community.

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Such healthy interaction with the community improved the performance of these schools much better than the average British schools. Two of these five schools were labelled outstanding by the previous inspection team. Even the non-Muslim teachers are very happy with such healthy environment of the school. In an article published in the Guardian on 10.06.14, the non-Muslim vice-head of one of the schools strongly appreciated the Muslim governors' role in the improvement of the school's learning environment and denied any indoctrination of terrorism. But Mr Gove –the education secretary and other neo-cons in the British government and the British media did not like such role. Such good performance didn't impress them. It seems they wanted something else which didn't come out of these schools. Hence the follow-up report after a short while found these schools inadequate and put them under special arrangement. Their paranoia made them so crazy that they perceived such positive contribution of the Muslims as a conspiracy to take over the education system. They went to the extent to label it as a "Trojan horse plot". What can be more defamatory and humiliating for the British Muslims?

The Trojan horse plot carries a huge negative connotation of invading a country with a deceitful ploy. In an epic story it says how the Greek invaded the city of Troy under the camouflage of a wooden horse. It says a lot about the neo-con's cynical mentality against the Muslims. They can only celebrate the invasion and occupation of the Muslim lands and the massacres of the innocents -as they did during their colonial rule and recently in Afghanistan and Iraq. They are not ready to recognise even the Muslims' excellent contribution to the British society. The same mentality brought the total annihilation of Muslims and Jews in Spain in fifteenth century –though they contributed heavily to educate the Europeans over a span of seven hundred years. Indeed, the British government and the British media –with a very few exceptions, have done everything possible to paint the Muslims with a bad colour –without any consideration of the adverse impact of such malice on the Muslim psyche.

The paranoia

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Mr Michael Gove –the British Education secretary is known for such negative and offensive attitude against the Muslims for long time. Trojan horse is not a new vocabulary in his anti-Muslim narratives. On 7th June 2014, the Guardian published a revealing story on Mr Gove's neocon ideology against Islam and the Muslim. In his polemic book "Celsius 7/7" published in 2006, he wrote a chapter with the title "the Trojan Horse". Mr Gove justified writing such a book with the perception that there exists "a widespread reluctance to acknowledge the real scale and nature of the Islamist terror" in Britain and "the failure to scrutinise, monitor or check the actions, funding and operations of those committed to spreading the Islamists word in Britain".(The Guardian; 7.06.14).

With such a distorted perception, Mr Gove finds the Muslims' presence anywhere in the UK as a Trojan horse ploy. He thinks that the Muslims are here only to occupy the UK. Hence it is not surprising that his ministry could use the overwhelming presence of the Muslims in five schools in Birmingham as a convenient pretext for a Trojan horse hoax. Mr Gove is one of those extremist neocons in British politics and media who see the presence of the Muslims as the threat not only to the British values and culture but also to the west as a whole. He is very critical of the past Labour government's policies for not doing anything against the Muslims. He begins the chapter of the book with the following sentence: "Nowhere has moral clarity been more lacking in British state policy over the last ten to fifteen years than in approach to the Islamist threat." He also writes that a sizeable minority of 1.8 million (now 3 million) Muslims hold rejectionist views; and he went to the length to compare Muslims as Nazi and communist threat. He added, "The west faces a challenge to its values, culture and freedom as profound in its way as the threat posed by fascism and communism. But the response to that challenge from many in the west is all too often confused, temporising, weak and compromised." The Time published huge banner-headed news on 9th June with the caption "Mr Gove told to launce 'dawn raids' on schools". The news covered almost whole of the front page. Such "dawn raids" are usually carried out to catch thieves, robbers or killers, or to make D-Day like invasion into a country. The Times also quoted from the Prime Minister Cameron saying, "Protecting our children is one of the first duties of government that is why the issue of alleged Islamist extremism in Birmingham schools demands a robust response." But what does it mean by protecting children from Islamic extremism? How did he define extremism? What are the markers of extremism? Do they label wearing hijab, offering prayer, giving azan in school premises and keeping long beard, avoiding sex education and reading Islamic books as extremism?

Tool of the dogged imperialists

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Education is the strongest stool for causing cultural conversion as well domination of the occupied people. It brings occupation on the territory of mind. In Muslim countries that has been used by the colonial imperialists to perpetuate their cultural empire. The colonial powers have not only been successful to do ethnic cleansing in many occupied lands, but also a cultural cleansing to promote their own values and culture. The British Empire has died, but its desire to sustain its cultural empire still survives –especially in minds of the people like Mr Cameron and Mr Gove. The education secretary Mr Michael Gove couldn't hide such imperialistic intention either. He recently told in the British Parliament that the educational institutions in the UK will exert all effort to promote British values, and will not tolerate any religious extremism. Here, the target is Islam. Simon Jenkins –the very prominent Guardian columnist describes Mr Gove as the most dogged imperialist (The Guardian 11th June, 2014).

Due to the emergence of large Muslim population in the UK, sustenance of such colonial ambition of the British Imperialists faces some home grown challenge. Many of the young Muslims are determined to grow up with the core Islamic beliefs that were nurtured by the prophet of Islam himself and his devout companions. To them, these early Muslims of the prophet's time are the true figure of highness that deserved to be followed in every aspect of the life. Hence the original Islam enters into their hearts with its inherent sharia, khelafa, migration and jihad. The de-Islamised and secularised converts to the western values and culture enjoy little honour or credibility in the eyes of these young British Muslims. This owes to the huge bulk of Islamic books in English language which is much more enriched than many of the native languages of Muslim countries like Urdu, Hindi, Bengali, Malaysian, Indonesian, Somalian or Turkish languages. Hence women with hijab and youth with long beard are more visible in British universities than in the universities of Bangladesh, Pakistan, Turkey or Indonesia. Islam is more visible in some parts of the UK like East London, Birmingham, Bradford, Oldham and Luton than many parts of the Muslim countries. One can find hardly a Bangladeshi, Indian or Pakistani youths fighting in the jihad of Syria. But hundreds of British youths have already reached there; many of them have already given their life. This has added more venom to the anti-Islamic narratives of the British neocons. They are struggling to reconcile with such harsh reality of the British society. They are raising Trojan horse hoax just to encounter that reality.

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