Muslims in Great Britain

1 Immigration

- From 1700 on: First communities and immigration movements (-> Cardiff, Liverpool, Manchester, South Shields and London's East End)
- Since WWII: Largest influx with the majority coming from South Asia in the 50s 60s and 70s (Pakistan, Bangladesh)
- From the 80s grown further with e.g. political refugees (from Afghanistan, Iran, Somalia etc.), through family reunification schemes or British converts

2 Demography, social and economic position

- Represent a microcosm of Islams global variety (-> ethnically distinct communities)
- Most from the Indian subcontinent: Pakistani (43%), Bangladeshi (17%) and Indians (7%); others from e.g. Africa, the Caribbean, Eastern Europe (Bosnia), the Middle East, etc.
- Islam as largest religion after the Christianity in Britain (3 % of the population with 1.6 mio. Believers)
- Employment patterns:
  - o Majority entered Britain at the bottom of the socio-economic ladder -> semi-skilled and unskilled sektors of industry (=> unemployment, poor working conditions, poverty, poor and overcrowded housing, poor health and low educational levels)
  - o Development / social mobility: e.g. in 1990, % of Pakistanis in professional occupations bigger than that for white people (successful business ventures in property, food, services, and fashion emerged)
  - ➔ large proportion of highly skilled Arab settlers employed in professional positions e.g. as engineers, professors, doctors

3 Recent events and their effects

- **The Rushdie Affair**
  - o Publication of the controversial book *'The Satanic Verses'* (1988) by Salman Rushdie
  - o Huge furore in the Islamic world because of seemingly blasphemous elements and following misinterpretations
  - o Issuing of *fatwa* (death sentence) against Rushdie by the then Iranian leader, Ruhollah Khomeini (forced Rushdie to submerge for years)
  - o Reaction of the British Muslim community: foundation of the *UK Action Committee on Islamic Affairs (UKACIA)* -> a lot of good respect and reputation for the organisation and the community
- The effects of **Islamist terrorism** (especially 9/11 and the 2005 London bombings)
  - o Hate against Muslims
  - o Muslims seen as a threat to the national and personal security of Britons
  - o Anti-terror laws (e.g. detention without charge

4 Main problems

- Conflict between two identities and cultures: British and Muslim (part of the *umma*)
- **Coexistence of Muslims and non-Muslims** at a fierce debate:
- **Islamophobia** (= discrimination, intolerance and hostility towards Islam and Muslims)
  - o prejudicial and stereotypical assessment towards the Muslim way of life (discussions about hijab, Danish cartoons etc.)
- Growing faith hate crimes against Muslims
- Radical movements within Muslims which comprise only a small number of the total Muslim population but overshadow the majority consisting mainly of moderate Muslims