



# BEYOND FOOTBALL

## *who are our people?*

*Umma-hood vs. Nationhood*

Dr Rizwan Syed



# World Cup 2022

## Quarter finals:

England v France

## Semis:

France v Morocco

## What if:

England v Morocco?

## Final:

Argentina v France

Compare: Morocco v France

Which teams did you support in which game?  
Why?

How did the two teams greet each other after these two games?  
Why such a contrast?



# Contents:

Belonging &  
narratives

- ❑ **Football!**
- ❑ **When identity goes wrong**
- ❑ **Our underlying unity**
- ❑ **Need for belonging**
- ❑ **Narratives fill that need – even if imperfect**

Ummah-hood  
and beyond

- ❑ **Umma-hood**
- ❑ **Multiple identities**

Why we are  
British

- ❑ **Need for a British belongingness**
- ❑ **Crafting our British Islamic narrative**

How to feel  
British

# When identity goes wrong

## Israel and Palestine – Competing Narratives

"I think Israelis have to take over and kick them away. To go back to Arab countries."

"When someone occupies your land, don't you want to remove them?"

TeleSUR English "Latin America's answer to CNN"

Empire Files: **Israelis Speak Candidly to Abby Martin About Palestinians**

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1e\\_dbsVQrk4](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1e_dbsVQrk4)

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5VqmUgami\\_Y](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5VqmUgami_Y)

The Ask Project  
"Do you think Jews should be expelled from Palestine?"



# Belonging & narratives



## COMPARISON POINT 1

- **Zionist perspectives on the land and its peoples**
- Stories that entitle Jews to the land
- Stories that build animosity to the other
- Leads to *their* grand narrative
- **But is it the full picture?**
- **Are there other stories to reconcile?**



## COMPARISON POINT 2

- **Palestinian perspectives on the land and its peoples**
- Stories that entitle them to the land
- Stories that build animosity to the other
- Leads to *their* grand narrative
- **But is it the full picture?**
- **Are there other stories to reconcile?**

## Belonging & narratives

Other conflicts of

- similar people competing for the same land,
- with mutually exclusive narratives:

**Northern Ireland**

Is this all a million miles away?

Or Birmingham & Bradford,  
50 years from now...?  
(hopefully not!)

# Same...

# to...

# different

Belonging &  
narratives



**Our  
underlying  
unity**



And (remember) as your Lord took  
from the Seeds (Or. sons) of Adam, from their backs,  
their offspring,  
and made them bear witness concerning themselves,  
“Am I not your Lord?”  
They said, “Yes indeed, we bear witness.” (7:172)

**Brain**

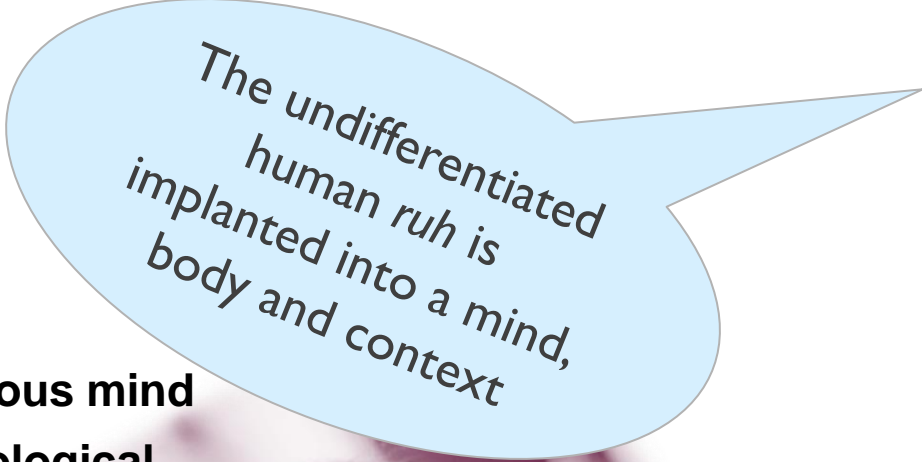
**Abilities**

**Unconscious mind**

- Psychological needs
- Personality
- Habits
- Baggage
- Internal voices

**Body – physique**  
**Skin colour**

**Family  
Stories**  
**Identity**  
**Language**  
**Nationality**  
**Opportunities**



The undifferentiated  
human *ruh* is  
implanted into a mind,  
body and context



# Need for belonging

## Narratives fill that need – even if imperfect

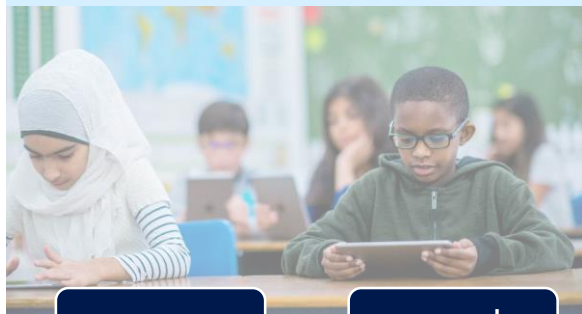


**But why?**

**Why does our  
psychology make us  
susceptible to  
stories?**



# From family... friends... school... society...



Innate need



Stories and ideas

grand narrative

identity

belonging

belief system

attitudes

words

actions

Natural, normal, human need to identify themselves



O mankind, indeed We have created you from a male and female

**And made you peoples and tribes that you may know one another.**

Surely, the most noble (of mankind) in the sight of God is the most righteous of you.

Indeed, Allah is All-Knowing and Well-Acquainted. (49:12)

يٰٓأَيُّهَا النَّاسُ إِنَّا خَلَقْنَاكُمْ مِنْ ذَكَرٍ وَأُنْثَىٰ وَجَعَلْنَاكُمْ شُعُوبًا وَقَبَائِلَ لِتَعَارَفُوا إِنَّ أَكْرَمَكُمْ

عِنْدَ اللَّهِ أَنفُسَكُمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلِيمٌ خَبِيرٌ



# a grand narrative is a selection of stories or ideas...

To be the **truth**...

Narrative must include angles of all stories...

Physically impossible!

**So a narrative is not the  
whole truth**

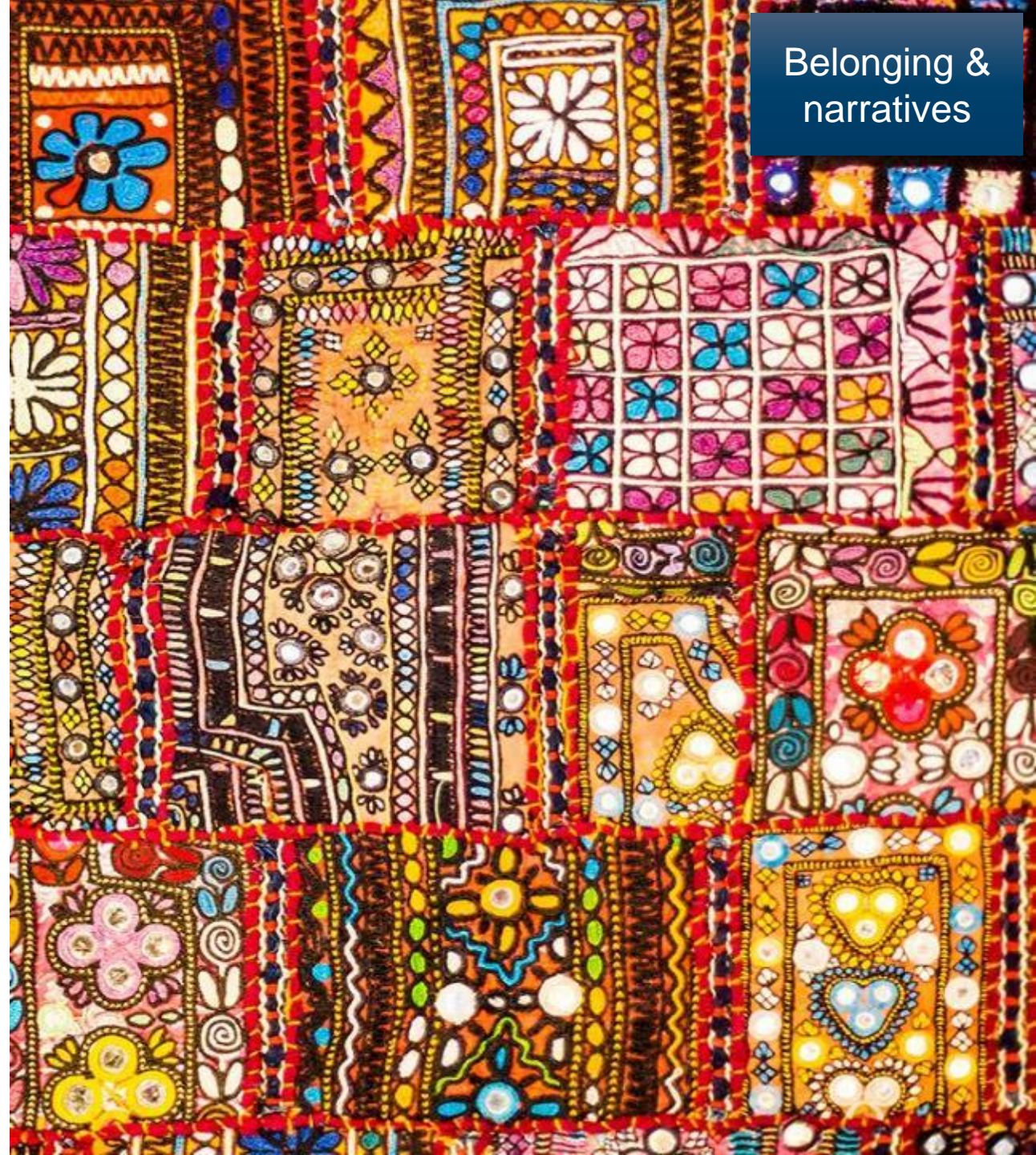
**It is a convenience**

**For a positive purpose**

e.g. belonging

Love, safety, support within a group

And sense of community



If grand narratives are an incomplete picture but serve a positive purpose,

When might they cause problems?

Ummah-  
hood and  
beyond

# a grand narrative is a selection of stories or ideas...

So a narrative is not the whole truth

It is a convenience

**For a positive purpose**

Identity goes hand in hand with **defining the other**  
- what you are **NOT**

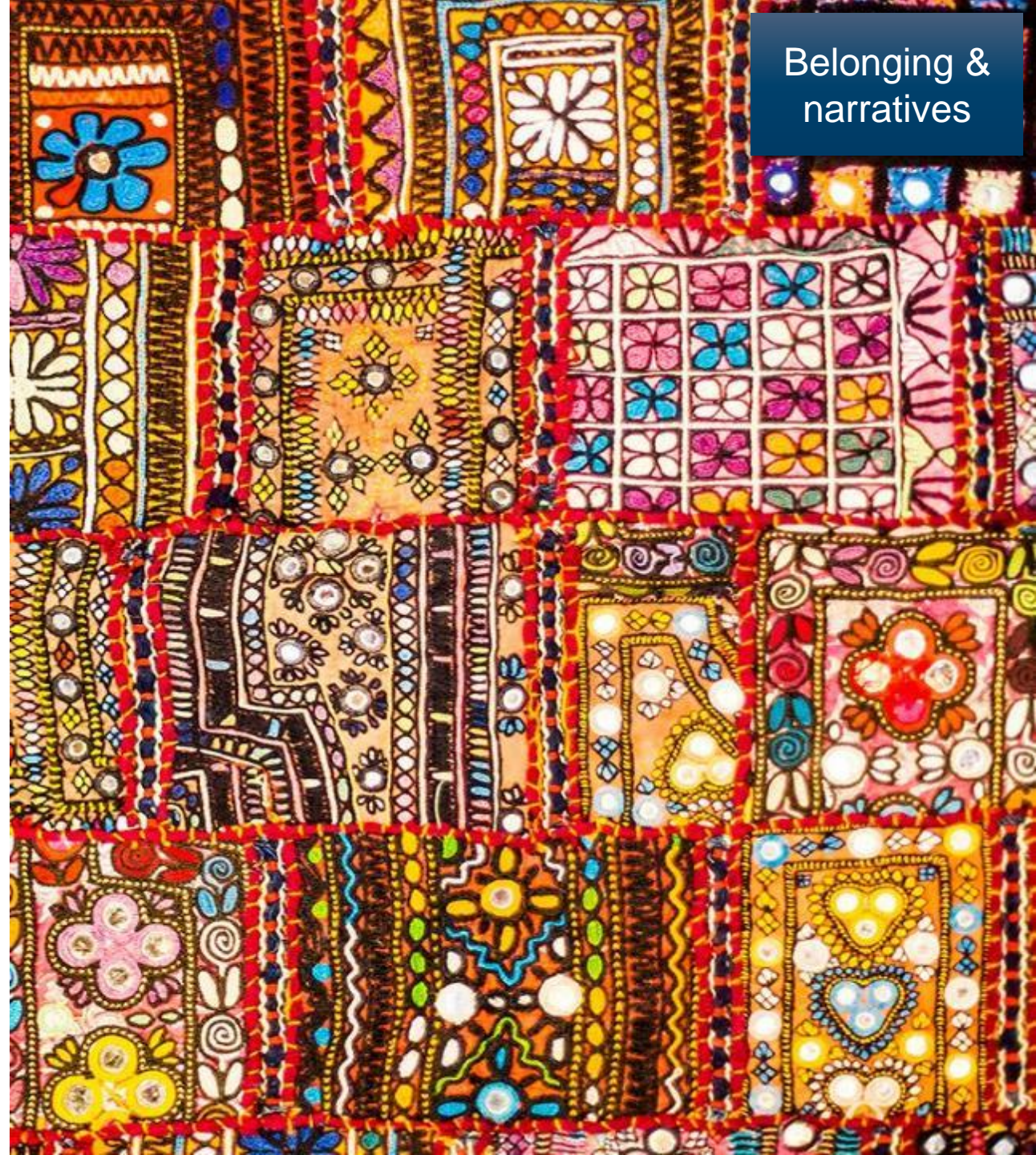
And fear of the other

This **was useful** when we were in small communities, at genuine threat from the 'other'

## But today?

- When all communities are part of a larger community, with the same interests
- The security and prosperity of their country
- **Grand narratives are a generalisation, which is helpful for bringing people together**
- **But not for fearing or hating the other**

Belonging & narratives



**a grand narrative is  
a selection of  
stories or ideas...**

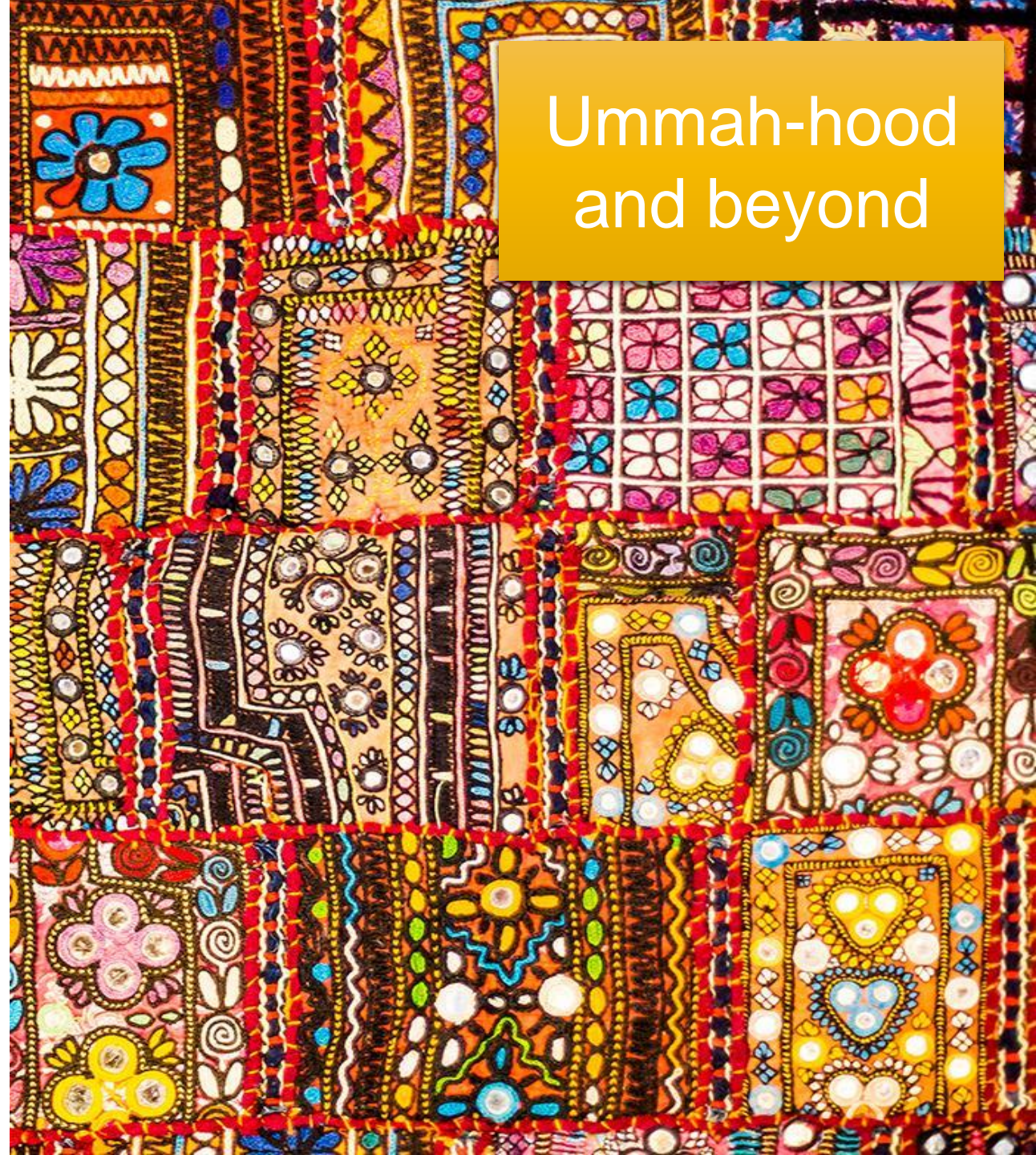
**So a narrative is not the  
whole truth**

**It is a convenience**

**For a positive  
purpose**

*So what kinds of narratives or  
ideas hold Muslims together,  
as a faith community?*

Ummah-hood  
and beyond



So what kinds of narratives or ideas hold Muslims together, as a faith community?

- Struggles of the Prophet (S) for us
- History of the Caliphates
- History of greatness during times of unity
- Tolerance, learning, hospitality
- Uniting culture and languages - Arabic and Farsi
- Greetings, terminology, festivals
- Future unity under Mahdi/ Isa (AS)
- Meeting the Prophet (S) at Al-Kawthar
- United in Jannah

## Ummah-hood and beyond

**“The Believers are but a single Brotherhood:  
So make peace and between your brethren.”**  
(49:10)

**“And hold firmly to the rope of Allah all together  
and do not become divided.  
And remember the favour of Allah upon you -  
when you were enemies and He brought your hearts  
together  
and you became, by His favour, brothers.”**  
(3:103)

**“The example of the believers in their affection, mercy, and  
compassion for each other is that of a body. When any  
limb aches, the whole body reacts with sleeplessness and  
fever.”**  
(Bukhari & Muslim)



Ummah-hood  
and beyond



# But... we have multiple identities!

“O mankind, indeed We  
have created you from a  
male and female

And made you peoples  
and tribes that you may  
know one another”

(49:12)

Each identity is  
a “Passport”

To connect and  
belong to  
different people



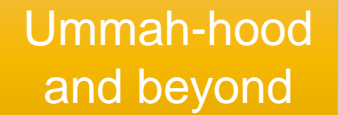


**Multiple  
identities**

**We also have a “Yearning for connection with others”**

**How do we find connections?**

- ✓ **Shared experience – including shared challenges**
- ✓ **Shared interests**
- ✓ **Shared values**
- ✓ **Shared needs – socioeconomic status**
- ✓ **Shared past / heritage**
- ✓ **Shared culture / behaviours/ traditions/ norms**
- ✓ **Shared land and language**
- ✓ **Common enemy**
- ✓ **Common future**



**Ummah-hood  
and beyond**



Are we...  
Northern Irish?  
Scottish?  
Welsh?  
English?

Guests or been  
here generations?

*When do we  
indigenise?*

## Need for a British belongingness

Why we are  
British

The point of  
being here...



Destiny... God's plan...

If so, should we be wholly  
British

- or outsiders?

Are we here to:

Undermine?

Exploit?

Offer benefit?

# Being British (Like it or not!)



Why we  
are  
British



Sura Ale 'Imran 3:110

You are the best of  
peoples,  
**evolved for mankind,**  
enjoining the  
**common good,**  
**preventing wrongs,**  
whilst believing in  
God.



Muslims have been created for the purpose of benefiting wider society!!!

Shaykh Sherman Jackson explains that *ma'ruf* in the verse refers to 'common good' – not what's good for just Muslims

And *munkar* refers to what has been rejected by *all people* – i.e. wrongs in society, e.g. injustice, discrimination, poverty, health inequality, etc



# Being British (Like it or not!)



Why we  
are  
British



- Yusuf (AS)



Yusuf (AS) was an immigrant who put himself forward as the second most important job in the country, Chancellor of Ex-Chequer!



To save millions of Egyptian lives. He looked like an Egyptian – his brothers didn't recognise him!

- Lut (AS)



Lut (AS) also an immigrant, married into the people (he was Ibrahim AS's nephew)



Yet they were labelled the *People of Lot* (Qawm Lut) and he addressed them as "O my people"



# Being British (Like it or not!)



Why we  
are  
British



We have a **beautiful message**

And **way of life**

To **witness is to let people see it!!**

- First hand
- Up close

For that, we have to be part of the fabric of society

In people's lives !!

Sura Baqarah 2:143

And it is thus that We appointed you

the **community of the middle way**

so that you might be **witnesses to all mankind**

and the Messenger might be a witness to you.



The point of being here...

Why we  
are  
British

Destiny... God's plan...  
Duty to serve  
humanity...

BUT do we *feel* British?

# Which narratives and ideas will help us *feel* British?

How to  
*feel* British

**Crafting  
our  
British  
Islamic  
narrative**



## How to *feel* British

Islam does not belong in just the East or the West.

So, Muslims have always settled and felt belonging and a commitment to their new country and culturally adapted to new lands...

What gets in the way of us feeling we belong here?

Could new narratives and ideas help with these hang ups?

# Which narratives and ideas will help us *feel* British?

How to  
*feel* British



## Culturally we already are!

- Customs
- Language, idioms
- Literature, movies
- Entertainment, sports
- Arts/ music
- Food

## Connection to the land

To the soil

Pride in institutions and values

## Islamic influence on Britain, especially

- Culture
- Universities, science
- Common law
- The enlightenment

## Spiritual and moral commonality

- Fitrah / Spiritual Code
- Christianity
- Enlightenment

Shared future – *shaped by us!*





# Cultural – Islam is Eastern and Western

How to  
*feel* British

- ▶ *“Accept (from the people) what comes naturally (for them). Command what is customarily (good). And turn away from the ignorant.” (7:199)*
- ▶ **Ibn Atiyya (Andalusian jurist and Qur’anic commentator) –**
- ▶ **It “upheld the sanctity of indigenous culture”**

**“In history, Islam showed itself to be culturally friendly and, in that regard, has been likened to a crystal clear river.**

**“Its waters (Islam) are pure, sweet, and life-giving but—having no color of their own—**

**reflect the bedrock (indigenous culture) over which they flow.”**

**(Shaykh Umar Faruq Abd-Allah)**

# Culture – we are much more Western than we think!

How to  
*feel* British

- ▶ *It's unavoidable*
- ▶ *We hear and speak the language - language is based on cultural assumptions*
- ▶ *We interact using cultural assumptions e.g. eye contact, when to smile etc*
- ▶ *By going to school, much of how we think is western, our main cultural references are western!*
- ▶ *Our idea of fun is western, our entertainment and art (music, poetry, literature, movies) is western*
- ▶ *But Islam says that this is ok!*
- ▶ *Because Islam is neither eastern nor western, or you could say, it's both – and we are shaping western Islam*



How to  
*feel* British

## China – the Hui Muslims



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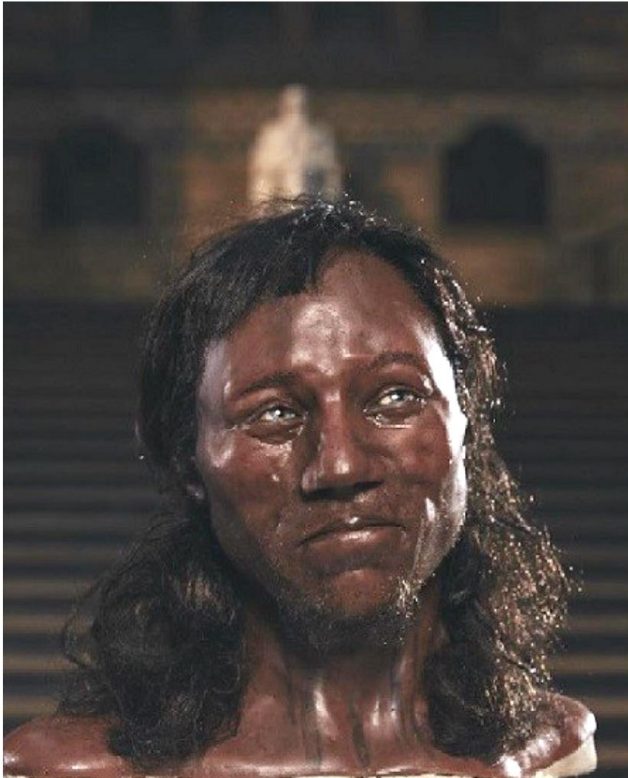
Shared future – *shaped by us!*



Different people have  
come and gone.  
Only the land has  
remained constant

## Connection to the Land

How to  
*feel* British



The first British people  
were dark skinned  
hunter gatherers!  
(up to 5000 years ago)

# Connection to the Land

The next wave of immigrants came from the middle east (Anatolia) and built Stonehenge and farmed the land



By Mavratti - Own work, Public Domain,  
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=30273250>

How to *feel* British

Different people have come and gone.  
 Only the land has remained constant



Finally, 500 years later, Northern Europeans came, originally from the Caucasus (Yamnaya – warring, horse-riding pastoralists) – includes Celts, Saxons, Normans etc.

# Connection to the Land

“Identity is connected to a particular place ... by a feeling that you belong to that place. It’s a place in which you feel comfortable, or at home, because part of how you define yourself is symbolised by certain qualities of that place.”

Nikolas Rose

In Islamic cultures, people were identified by their land of birth:

- Bilal Al Habashi, Salman al Farsi, Suhayb Al Rumi – captured at an early age and spent most of their life in Arabia.
- Memories play an important part in one’s sense of self.
- Especially **the place of your childhood memories.**

# Attachment to the Land

How to *feel*  
British

- Abdullah Az-Zuhri reported: I saw the Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, while he was standing near Mecca and saying, "By Allah, verily, you are the best and most beloved land to Allah and had I not been driven away from you I would not have left you."

But when he migrated and settled in Medina, about Uhud in Medina, he (S) said:

"...this mountain loves us and we love it..."

(Bukhari)



How to *feel*  
British

**Can Muslims feel a  
connection and  
community with  
other religions,  
if they all belong to  
the same nation?**

# People joined by a Land

- Common interests and destinies
- Constitution of Medina:

(1) This is a prescript of Muhammad, (صلى الله عليه وسلم) the Prophet and Messenger of God (to operate) **between the faithful and the followers of Islam** from among the Quraish and the people of Madina **and those who may be under them, may join them and take part in wars in their company.**

(2) They **shall constitute a separate community (Ummah)** as distinguished from all the people (of the world).

**(46) And the Jews of the tribe of al-Aws, clients as well as original members, shall have the same rights as the people of this code:** and shall behave sincerely and faithfully towards the latter, not perpetrating any breach of covenant.  
As one shall sow, so shall he reap.  
And God is with him who will most sincerely and faithfully carry out the provisions of this code.

How to feel  
British

The non-Muslims of Medina were deemed part of the same community (ummah) because they were all concerned about the prosperity and security of Medina

Our loved ones are buried in the same soil...



# Which narratives and ideas will help us *feel* British?



Culturally we already are!

- Customs
- Language, idioms
- Literature, movies
- Entertainment, sports
- Arts/ music
- Food

Connection to the land

To the soil

Pride in institutions and values

Islamic influence on Britain, especially

- Culture
- Universities, science
- Common law
- The enlightenment

Spiritual and moral commonality

- Fitrah / Spiritual Code
- Christianity
- Enlightenment

Shared future – *shaped by us!*



How to *feel*  
British

# Pride in institutions

Democracy

Rule of Law

Free press

Freedom of worship

Protection of minorities

Welfare state

NHS

Charity

## Islamicity

Table 1. High and Low Ranking in Overall Islamicity in 2020

RANK	Overall	Rank	Overall
New Zealand	1	Syria	151
Iceland	2	Afghanistan	150
Netherlands	3	Sudan	149
Sweden	4	Congo, Dem. Rep.	148
Norway	5	Chad	147
Denmark	6	Burundi	146
Ireland	7	Venezuela	145
Switzerland	8	Angola	144
Canada	9	Congo, Rep.	143
Finland	10	Libya	142
Germany	11	Iraq	141
Australia	12	Mauritania	140
Luxembourg	13	Zimbabwe	139
Austria	14	Haiti	138
United Kingdom	15	Cameroon	137

Islamicity index – how  
*Islamic* countries are,  
based on *Islamic values*

Western countries  
including Britain, rank  
highest!!

### Top ranking Muslim countries 2021:

- Malaysia – 39<sup>th</sup>
- UAE – 43<sup>rd</sup>
- Qatar – 50<sup>th</sup>
- Albania 52<sup>nd</sup>
- ... Saudia Arabia 79<sup>th</sup>

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How to  
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Shared future – *shaped by us!*



# Islamic influence on Britain

- Religion
- Culture & architecture

## Secret histories:

- Universities, science
- Common law
- The enlightenment



If there are great things  
about Britain...

People have forgotten  
Islam's role in shaping  
them!



# Islamic influence on Britain

## Romans

Stoics – “monotheism” – Roman influence on Muslims

## Christianity

= “Islam” Many Christians are monotheists

## Law

Common law – taken from Maliki fiqh - Sicily

## Universities

G Makdisi paper – tidal wave of Islamicate knowledge

## Science

Scientific method, maths, etc etc. Jim Al Khalili

## Theology

Thomas Aquinas – Ibn Sina, Ibn Rushd, Al Ghazali

## Architecture

Domes, gothic arches – from Islamicate

## Reformation

Martin Luther, Ottoman support for protestants

## Enlightenment

Arabists, Unitarians, Hayy ibn Yaqzan, Ottoman example

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Shared future – *shaped by us!*





# Spiritual and Moral Commonality, Connection to the People

## Remember,

We are all born with an innate sense of right and wrong (fitrah)

Muslims re-connect to fitrah through Islam, others have to find their own way

**Abu Huraira reported: The Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, said,**

“No child is born but that he is upon natural instinct (fitrah). His parents make him a Jew, or a Christian, or Magian. As an animal delivers a child with limbs intact, do you detect any flaw?”

Then, Abu Huraira recited the verse, “The nature of Allah upon which he has set people,” (30:30).

**Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī 1292, Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim 2658**

# Spiritual and Moral Connection to the People

## Where are the 'Spiritual Code' Verses?

How to  
*feel* British

<p><b>2:2-5</b> 'The <i>muttaqun</i>' – Pious <b>Sura Baqarah</b></p>	<p><b>2:83-84</b> Covenant with Children of Israel <b>Sura Baqarah</b></p>	<p><b>2:177</b> <i>Ayat al Birr</i> (The Piety Verse) <b>Sura Baqarah</b></p>	<p><b>3:130-136</b> <i>Al 'Amileen</i> (Those who work and strive) <b>Sura Ale-'Imran</b></p>
<p><b>4:36-40</b> 'A great reward, multiplied over' <b>Sura Nisa</b></p>	<p><b>6:150-154</b> God's Path, leading straight <b>Sura An'am</b></p>	<p><b>16:90</b> 'God's instruction' to us <b>Sura Nahl</b></p>	<p><b>17:19-39</b> Wisdom and Commandments not to be violated <b>Sura Isra</b></p>
<p><b>23:1-11</b> Characteristics of <i>Al Mu'minin</i> (True believers) <b>Sura Mu'minin</b></p>	<p><b>25:63-76</b> Characteristics of <i>'Ibad Ul Rahman</i> (God's devotees) <b>Sura Furqan</b></p>	<p><b>31:12-22</b> The wisdom of Luqman <b>Sura Luqman</b></p>	<p><b>42:36-43</b> <i>The mutawakkilun</i> (Who trust in God) <b>Sura Shuraa</b></p>
<p><b>60:12</b> The Pledge with the Prophet <b>Sura Mumtahinah</b></p>	<p><b>70:22-35</b> The <i>Mukramun</i> (held in honour) <b>Sura Ma'arij</b></p>	<p><b>90:11-18</b> The steep path <b>Sura Balad</b></p>	<p><b>103:1-3</b> Those who will not lose out <b>Sura 'Asr</b></p>

# 43 Spiritual and Moral Connection to the People

At its core, Islam's teachings are universal

About 60 % of British people believe in God or a Higher Power

Maybe there are 40 million 'Muslims' in Britain...

- They just don't know it!

How to *feel* British

## Islam's 'Spiritual Code'

### BELIEF AND WORSHIP



- Believe in One God
- Believe in the Messengers & their Books
- Believe in the Judgement and Heaven and Hell
- Believe in the Unseen, being wary of Shaytan
- Guard your Prayer & obligatory devotions
- Be humble and devoted in Prayer

### SPIRITUALITY



- Nurture your relationship with God:
- Love God (*hubb*)
  - Feel gratitude (*shukr*)
  - Regret your mistakes / race to forgiveness (*istighfar*)
  - Have awareness / mindfulness of God (*taqwa*)
  - Submit your self fully to your Creator (*Islam*)
  - Follow the Prophet (PBUH) (*sunnah*)

### SERVICE



- Stand up for justice
- Make positive change:
  - Encourage the common good
  - Address the wrongs in society
- Encourage empathy & compassion (*marhama*)
- Care for family, neighbours, friends travellers and the poor
- Free the enslaved
- Be kind to those you have authority over

### COMMANDMENTS



- Honour your parents
- Be generous to those in need
- Do not shed blood or take life
- Do not exploit with usury, doubled and multiplied
- Do not oppress people
- Do not turn people out of their homes
- Do not steal
- Be faithful to your promises and contracts; do not cheat
- Do not come close to adultery - be faithful
- Do not kill your own children, for fear of want

### CHARACTER



- Be patient and perseverant
- Be honest, just and fair at all times
- Walk on the earth lightly and with humility
- Spend but avoid waste
- Be careful with your tongue
- Control your anger
- Forgive all people
- Consult in your affairs
- Avoid all shameful deeds, including secret ones
- Have humility in knowledge and enjoin the truth

# Spiritual and Moral Connection to the People

How to *feel*  
British

**Fairness – queuing culture**

**Stiff upper lip - stoicism**

**Civility**

**Restraint / politeness**

**Standing up for the underdog**

**Industriousness**

**Creativity**

**Sense of humour, self-deprecating**

**Conscience – abolition of slavery**



# Spiritual and Moral Connection to the People

How to *feel* British

Christianity shares...

Books

Prophets

Many beliefs

Many teachings



By Diliff - Own work, CC BY-SA 3.0,  
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=34509771>

Remember, Christianity was Islam until the Prophet (s) arrived!  
 So 'Islam' has been in Britain for nearly 2000 years!  
 Many great men and women were martyred on our soils, bringing Islam to the pagans of the land  
 Read about St Alban, who was condemned to death for declaring:  
 "I worship and adore the true and living God who created all things."

# Spiritual and Moral Connection to the People



- Islam influenced the enlightenment, which brought many Islamic values to the West
- Unitarian beliefs
  - Religious tolerance
  - Scientific openness
  - The spirit of questioning
  - Freedom of thought and expression

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How to  
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- Culture
- Universities, science
- Common law
- The enlightenment

Spiritual and moral commonality

- Fitrah / Spiritual Code
- Christianity
- Enlightenment

**Shared future – *shaped by us!***



# Shared future – shaped by us!

**Muslims are helping shape our country**

**At all levels – media, education, health, sport, law, politics, charities**

**Britain is diverse – we should feel comfortable here**

**14% minorities at the moment**

**BUT 34.5 % of school children are ethnic minority**

**- Increasing by 5% every 10 years (for now)**



## The Prophets' love for their people - even if the people rejected them

- The Prophets loved their people
- Their people's rejections were due to their narrow narratives: their ignorance
- The Prophets were not deterred by this - they stayed on purpose...

In the Qur'an (5:118) Prophet Jesus (AS) is quoted as saying:

**“If You punish them, they belong to You after all.  
But if You forgive them, You are surely the Almighty, All-Wise.”**

Abdullah ibn Mas'ud reported: I remember seeing the Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, tell the story of a prophet who was beaten by his people and he wiped the blood from his face, saying, **“My Lord, forgive my people for they do not know.”**