DERLEME REVIEW

Engaging with SESRIC's Country Report: Assessing and Acclaiming South Africa's Muslims

SESRIC'in Ülke Raporu: Güney Afrika'daki Müslümanların Tanınması ve Kabulü

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ABSTRACT The Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC) affiliated Statistical, Economic and Social Research and Training Centre (SESRIC) for Islamic Countries, which is based in Ankara, embarked on a new research project; it is one that assesses the status of Muslim minority communities beyond the Muslim heartlands. The team that was tasked with this decided to look at South Africa's Muslim community as their first case study and this will be followed by other communities. After having spent a short period in South Africa where the team conducted their field work and they compiled this informative report under review; it is a study that was appropriately backed up by workshops, interviews, and a selected list of secondary sources. Since it is the first in the series, this reviewer chose to scrutinize some of the report's sections that culminated in this review essay.

Keywords: Muslim Community; religious minorities; South Africa; Non-OIC member; diaspora

ÖZ Merkezi Ankara'da bulunan İslam Ülkeleri İstatistik, Ekonomik ve Sosyal Araştırma ve Eğitim Merkezi'ne (SESRIC) bağlı İslam İşbirliği Teşkilatı (İİT), Müslüman merkez bölgelerinin ötesindeki Müslüman azınlıkların durumunu değerlendiren yeni bir araştırma projesi başlattı. Bu projede görevlendirilen ekip, ilk vaka çalışması olarak Güney Afrika'nın Müslüman toplumunu incelemeye karar verdi ve bu çalışmadan sonra, bunu diğer topluluklar izleyecektir. Bu çalışmada ekip, saha çalışmaları ve incelemeler için Güney Afrika'ya gitmiş ve burada bu bilgilendirici raporu düzenlediler. Çalışma, ayrıca çalıştaylar, röportajlar ve seçilmiş ikincil kaynaklar listesi ile uygun şekilde desteklenmiştir. Bu rapor, serinin ilk çalışması olması nedeniyle, bu değerlendirmede raporun bazı bölümleri mercek altına alınmış ve bu inceleme yazısı ile sonuçlanmıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Müslüman toplumu; dini azınlıklar; Güney Afrika; İİT üyesi olmayan; diaspora

PRELIMINARY REMARKS

The Statistical, Economic and Social Research and Training Centre for Islamic Countries known by its acronym SESRIC (www.sesric.org) is an affiliated structure of The Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC). Being researched oriented and focused, its decision-makers reached a decision to produce a series of reports that would concentrate on the Global Muslim Diaspora (GMD) with its stress on the word 'diaspora'; a concept that has for some time been rigidly defined according to Kenny.[1]

[1] Kevin Kenny. *Diaspora: A Very Short Introduction,* Oxford University Press, Oxford 2013.

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Since there has been sea-changes globally, the term has been expanded and used widely with its meaning left open-ended.[2] Kenny stressed that it is a term that has gained currency and that includes migrants of all shades and colours.[3] Though the term was at heart a theological concept that related specifically to the Jewish community,[4] it has since taken on a broad sociological meaning.

Nonetheless, SESRIC titled this series 'Muslim Communities and Minorities in Non-IOC Member States' and its executive functioned under the leadership of Ambassador Musa Kulaklikaya who is SESRIC's current Director General (DG). Amb Musa stated in his Foreword (pp. ii-iii) that, 'The main objective of the project is to provide a range of useful comparative statistics and insights, which can help identify issues, initiate cooperation forums and shape future policy.'

According to Ambassador Musa, this GMD project, which was undertaken by the Social Science University of Ankara, hopes to fill a gap that would assist in providing representative views of Muslim communities in different countries. This specific report, which is under review, was researched and completed by Associate Prof. Dr. Erdal Akdeve, Associate Prof. Dr. Gürol Baba, Dr. Onur Unutulmaz and Dr. Servet Erdem. Though Dr. Erdem prepared the report, this reviewer was inclined to attribute it to him but opted not to by sticking to the DG's request; after all this was a SESRIC commissioned task and legally owned by it. SESRIC, as already indicated, chose South Africa as the first case study in its promising series.

THE RESEARCHERS' APPROACH

The University of Ankara research team adopted a two-pronged approach; besides relying on the desktop to gather their information, they complemented this with insightful, though limited, fieldwork. The data and information, which feature in this report, were thus gathered through surveys (covering 400 individuals). These were held during October 2018 in Johannesburg; and they consisted of seventeen in-depth interviews (however, only 16 names appear [see p.82]). In addition to the surveys, the researchers conducted roundtable meetings from the 8 to 12 October 2018 and these took place in only three major cities; they were Johannesburg, Pretoria, and Cape Town.

It is indeed a pity that key cities such as Port Elizabeth and Durban were excluded; and it is also regrettable that other cities such as Mahikeng, Kimberly, Polokwane, and East London, where Muslims reside in sizeable numbers, remain neglected in these types of studies. One should not blame the researchers for this neglect as such but put the blame on South African Muslim scholarship for having ignored these cities up to this day. This is an issue that should be addressed by insider and outsider researchers.[5]

Apart from the mentioned surveys and meetings, the researchers hosted a Johannesburg workshop; this was attended by various representative NGOs and groups on 10 October 2018. It is quite evident that despite having overlooked other representative Muslim communities located in the mentioned cities, one has to commend the Ankara social scientists for having laboured hard in producing a timely and an informative set of results and assessments. As far as this reviewer's knowledge goes, it is an academic effort that South African (Muslim) scholarship failed to undertake. This being the case, the report should act as a good foundation for further research by constructing complementary interview tools.

[2] Ibid p.21
[3] Ibid.
[4] Ibid, p. 27.
[5] Russell McCutcheon, *Insider/Outsider Problem in the Study of Religion: A Reader*, Bloomsbury Academic, 1999.

Alongside these activities, it was mentioned in the Acknowledgment page (pp.2-3) that they, as researchers, undertook a 'detailed investigation' of numerous secondary sources (see their list of references on pp.83-84). If this was indeed the case, then one expected the reference list to have been much longer than what was catalogued. From this researcher's perspective, when anyone - be it an established scholar or an emerging researcher - considers undertaking a study of a subject that ranges from a minor theme to a major topic, then the first port of call for any researcher - and one is certain that the team of researchers know this quite well - is to consult extant bibliographical compilations; these works are essential for any researcher especially outsiders who do not have an intimate insight into the South African Muslim community.

Since this team -as outsiders-[6] turned their focus to this community, one expected them to have perused, among others, journal essays, book chapters, and published monographs; each of which covered different aspects of this dynamic community. A close look at the list of references informs one that the team overlooked the available bibliographical works that were compiled during the past fifty years and more; these were and are readily available to these and other social scientists. While one does not deny this report's invaluable findings, they missed the opportunity of drawing from significant studies that were completed and that were not used as reference texts for this field work study.

RELEVANT SOURCES

The Ankara University team of researchers seems to have been unaware of the following bibliographical works; they are: Ruth Hampson's pioneering - dated - text titled *Islam in South Africa: A Bibliography*;[7] Gerrie Lubbe's 1985 'A Bibliography on Islam in South Africa' that was published in a Rand Afrikaans University [RAU] -now known as the University of Johannesburg)- journal;[8] Ebrahim Mahida's *Islam in South Africa: Bibliography, Organizations, Periodicals, and Population,*[9] David Chidester et al that covered 'Islam' in one of their three *South African Religions: Annotated Research Guide* volumes[10] and Muhammed Haron's *Muslims in South Africa: An Annotated Bibliography*.[11] Each of these contain valuable research material and these would have been invaluable for this research team.

These, from this reviewer's point of view, would most definitely have enriched their significant research project if they had browsed through each of these works. Besides these, they too neglected to refer to the University of Cape Town's (UCT) Centre for Contemporary Islam's two flagship publications. The one journal was mentioned in the previous paragraph and it was founded and managed by RAU's specialists, namely Prof. Jacobus A. Naude, in Muslim affairs.[12] The other journal that was missed as a reference was the *Annual Review of Islam in Africa* (*ARIA*); this publication was formerly referred to as the *Annual Review of South Africa* (ARISA).[13]

Though both contain useful and relevant entries on South Africa's Muslims, the last mentioned (i.e. *ARISA*/*ARIA*) had bibliographic articles that provided a catalogue of studies that were completed during the

[6] Ibid.
[7] Ruth Hampson, *Islam in South Africa: A Bibliography*, UCT., Cape Town 1964.
[8] Gerrie Lubbe, "A Bibliography on Islam in South Africa", *Journal for Islamic Studies*, 1985, Volume: 5, pp.115-135.
[9] Ebrahim Mahida. *Islam in South Africa: Bibliography, Organizations, Periodicals, and Population*, University of Durban-Westville [UDW], Durban 1995.
[10] David Chidester, Judy Tobler, and Darrel Wratten. *Islam, Hinduism, and Judaism: An Annotated Bibliographical Guide,* Greenwood Press, Westport Connecticut 1997.
[11] Muhammed Haron, *Muslims in South Africa: An Annotated Bibliography,* South African National Library, Cape Town 1997.
[12] This is the *Journal for Islamic Studies*.
[13] This publication was formerly known as the *Annual Review of South Africa* (ARISA).

early 2000s. Even though the bibliographic essays in *ARIA* did not necessarily capture all the important published texts within the covered time-frames, they continue to serve as useful repositories that researchers cannot afford to overlook when researching and writing on South Africa's Muslim community.

SOUTH AFRICA'S MUSLIMS: A DIASPORIC COMMUNITY?

When speaking about or studying this community, the crucial question that should be posed is: Can one still talk about them as if they -as a religious minority- regard themselves as a community that resides in the 'diaspora'? The issue of 'diaspora' remains a debatable term depending on one's understanding and interpretation. It may be argued that it is a concept that cannot be considered, as the report seems to suggest, simple and straightforward; over the past few years, social scientists have pointed out that it is a term that has been associated with those who are transnational migrants and refugee communities; others advocated the notion that it is connected with the process of de-territorialization.[14]

While many from within the established Muslim community accept that their ancestors hailed from Southeast and South Asia respectively, they too realized that they belong to the seventh or eighth generation that have gone through a process that involved bouts of acculturation. Since their forebears were de-territorialized generations ago, they do not regard themselves to be part of the 'diaspora community' at all but an established religious minority. Even the idea of being a 'solid diaspora' community would be considered an indigestible term factoring in their social history.

As an established community, South Africa's Muslims draw a thick line between themselves and those who are relatively recent immigrants. They see themselves different from the Somali refugees, Senegalese migrants, Congolese wayfarers, and North African entrepreneurial wanderers[15] all of whom found their way to South Africa during the past two and a half decades (circa 1995-2020).

Earlier it was stated that they - as an established community - would not describe themselves as belonging to the 'diaspora'. From their perspective, they do not know any other 'national identity' except being 'South Africans'. Even though some of them are aware that some of their fellow citizens hold dual citizenship (i.e. being South African and British/Portuguese), they do not see themselves belonging to those groups; one may argue that they see themselves apart from them culturally and religiously.

The question as to what is understood by the 'diaspora' is indeed critical and open for debate. One should, however, be clear who should be included and excluded within this category and what criteria one should apply when doing so. Factoring in these observations, it is now the opportune moment to turn to the report's contents.

REPORT'S CONTENTS

Casting this matter aside and turning to the report's contents, the research team divided it into seven parts. They split their introduction (pp.4-20) into two sections; the first provided a synopsis of South Africa and the second an overview of 'Islam in South Africa'; here one would have preferred their use of the noun

[14] Waltraud Kokot, Khachig Tölöyan, Carolin Alfonso (eds.), *Diaspora, Identity and Religion: New Directions in Theory and Research,* Routledge Press, London 2004.

[15]Though reference is only made to one recent text, one should add that many other postgraduate studies have been undertaken that reflect on various Muslim communities that have trekked from various parts of Africa to South Africa. The following work is one of the most detailed studies: Samadia Sadouni, *Muslims in Southern Africa: Johannesburg's Somali Diaspora,* Palgrave MacMillan, London 2019.

'Muslims' rather than 'Islam.' Nevertheless, while one does not wish to quibble about whether to have inserted 'Islam' or not as part of the sub- section, one needs to make the point that the focus is not so much the community's ideals but on their existential realities as a community.

Worded differently, the report's crucial reflections are on the 'Muslims' and it is not 'Islam' as a 'religious tradition.' In this sub-section, one wonders from where the team extracted the data on the 'chronology' (pp.18-20). It is assumed that they unearthed much of the information from Ebrahim Mahida's dated text and they added what they - via their informants - identified as salient ones during the post-apartheid era. Unfortunately, this chronology consists of incorrect dates such as Muslim Judicial Council's establishment in 1946 instead of 1945 and unclear entries such as 'the 2003 Family Eidgah Controversy.' Though they may be viewed as minor, they are important events that should be correctly recorded since others would rely on these for further research.

SA MUSLIM DEMOGRAPHICS

Having set the backdrop for this report, the team then offered a 'demographic profile' (pp.21-26) in the second section; this appeared before they analysed the 'Views on Migration and Integration' (pp.27-40) in the third. The latter was based on their surveys rather than on some of the extant literature that would have been informative. Since both sections included a variety of sub-themes, their titles caused some discomfort. Under section 'Migration and Integration' that was satisfactorily covered, one wish to express a degree of concern regarding the first variable for different reasons; one of these was referred to under section 4 above.

Firstly, the 'established Muslim community' should not be viewed as 'a diaspora community' but they should be categorized as 'a settled community'; one that is markedly different from those (such as the Somalis as discussed by Sadounia 2019) that trekked from their countries of birth to South Africa during the past two and a half decades. Secondly, they should also have been clearly distinguished from the 'emerging Muslim community' that consider themselves tied to but apart from 'the established community' culturally.

Thirdly, 'the diaspora Muslim communities' that have gradually settled in during the past two decades see themselves different and separate from both the established and the 'emerging' ones; that being the case, one may state that they are the ones who would see themselves as 'diaspora communities'; here numerous groups - mentioned at the outset in this review essay and repeated here for emphasis - come to mind: Somali refugees, Egyptian entrepreneurs, Senegalese Sufi practitioners, and Bengali businessmen.

Shifting to the second section, one observes that it covered South Africa's Muslim demographic profile. Related to this profile, one again wishes to stress that the team would have benefitted from previously published demographic studies that interpreted the census data of 2001 and 2011, respectively. None of the published essays on Muslim demographics by Abdulkader Tayob, Haferburg, and Haron[16] were consulted by the team. If they had done so, then they would not only have beefed up their study, but they might have come up with slightly understanding pertaining to some of the recorded figures.

Notwithstanding these shortcomings, this section of the report contained some interesting information that are generally unknown that drifted from one sub-theme to the other. On page 24, for

[16] Abdulkader Tayob, "Counting Muslims in South Africa", *Annual Review of Islam in South Africa,* Centre for Contemporary Islam, University of Cape Town, 1996, Christoph Haferburg, "How many Muslims are in South Africa?", *Annual Review of Islam in South Africa*, 2000, No.3, pp. 33-34; Muhammed Haron, "Undercounting or Overcounting South Africa's Muslims: The Era of Democracy (Censuses of 1996 and 2001)", *Journal for Islamic Studies,* 2003, Volume: 23, pp.100-110.

example, it was reported that Fadhil's Muslim Foundation produced educational material that have been used in the UK and USA and that some of these have been translated into Spanish and Thai; if this is indeed so, then this says much about South Africa's Muslim educationists' creative contributions.

On the following page (i.e. p.25) of the report, the research team extracted data from their survey; herein they stated that 93% of the 400 that were interviewed laid emphasis on their religious identity. They too reflected that the community's identity was backed up and reinforced by their observance of their religious practices. The team attested to the fact that 49% attend the mosque (without indicating whether this was for one specific ritual prayer only or for each of the five daily ritual prayers). Whether one wishes to approve or disapprove the team's survey's results, one thing the report distinctly underlined was South Africa's Muslims deep religiosity.

Since the findings are not cast in stone but a mere survey, one would like to contest these findings. Being personally acquainted with this community based on one's own insights and studies, one finds the given percentage to be far too high. The reasons for stating this cannot be unpacked in this short review essay; an attempt shall have to be made in a separate study to counter this survey's outcome. A fact, however, that was well-known (as explained on pages 25 and 26) was that these Muslims (85.5%) are extremely conscious (incorrectly spelt in the G11 bar graph) when it comes to consuming *halal* (wholesome permissible) foods. This further underpinned the report's general conclusion; one that illustrated that the community possessed a thick religious profile despite their inherent shortcomings as displayed on different socio- political and economic levels over the decades.

SA MUSLIMS' POSITION AND VISIBILITY

The fourth and fifth sections respectively revealed the interviewees' 'perceptions on Socio-Economic Status' (pp.41-53) and the 'Attitudes of Visibility and Representation of Muslims' (pp.54-64). Here one would like to engage albeit briefly with both sections by commenting on a few elements that were touched upon. One agrees that those groups that the report classified as 'Malay Muslims' have specialized in various sectors of the building industry and have branded themselves as respected artisans; the industry has since undergone rapid changes and the respect that they once held has since dwindled.

Others such as Zimbabwean immigrants have come in and taken over; they have since been described as the reliable workers in the industry as compared to the Malay Muslims that were once held in high esteem. Another sector that the report did not mention and in which this group was quite influential was the clothing industry. Over the decades, members from this group revealed that they possessed outstanding skills as tailors and dressmakers; sadly, very few have specialized in these professions and for they have been heavily challenged by the cheap Chinese clothing imports. The overall outcome during the past two to three decades was that these industries -where Malay Muslims left a legacy of sorts- have been negatively affected and have fallen into disrepute.

One concurs with the report that these communities' younger generation shifted their sights to a range of other areas; some have ventured into setting up asset management companies, and others have opened up private Muslim educational institutions that included preschool to post-matric institutes (see p.53). Others among them have diverted their focus to business ventures in import/export and technology as well as the hospitality industry.

While one tend to support the view that the Muslims' share -those that are economically active and mobile- in the business is relatively sizeable in comparison to their numerical presence, one rejects the opinion that their contribution towards South Africa's Gross Development Product (GDP) is about 15% (p.44); this estimate is grossly exaggerated and seems to be based on speculative oral sources that should be debatable. The Muslims' actual contribution is much smaller than that recorded percentage. If one should, for example, compare the Jews' -a much smaller religious minority in South Africa- financial outputs, the difference between them and the Muslim community is huge and their contribution towards the country's GDP is staggering to say the least. One is thus very unsure on what basis Miran, who was one of the interviewees and on which the report based itself, reached these overstated generalizations.

OTHER ASPECTS

Leaving aside this concern, one would like to have interrogated the report's other fascinating findings that were based on their interviews and that were captured in their accompanying graphs. The report has brought to the fore important facts; some of which reinforced traditional understandings and others that forced one to view the status of Muslims in an ever-changing democratic environment differently.

Indeed, the South African environment has changed somewhat dramatically since 1994 when the first democratically elected government was voted into power. During that period and in the years that followed, it was not difficult to identify Muslim involvement in the country's socio-political affairs.[17] The report reinforced the opinions of other researchers that showed to what extent Muslim organizations backed the ANC during the struggle against apartheid and when the ANC, which has since transformed itself into a political party, played its role in from mid-1994 onwards.

The report, however, did not comment on the position of Muslim participants in other political parties such as the Pan African Congress and Inkatha Freedom Party; and nor did it make reference to political groups such as the extra parliamentary New Unity Movement in which few Muslims played a prominent role (ca 1994-2000). Though it mentioned the Africa Muslim Party, one would like the report to have also touched on other small Muslim parties such as Al-Jama-ah Party that emerged and challenged others;[18] so far, despite its smallness nationally, it has made its presence felt during the past three years (ca 2018-2020) that included the year the field work for this report was conducted. The report shared exciting insights from those who participated in its workshop and those that the team interviewed.

Though one may by and large concur with the results on the Muslim attitudes towards the secular media, one would like the report to have made some observations of the existential Muslim media and their contributions in giving Muslim visibility and emphasizing Muslim identity a largely secular surrounding.[19] Since the report quizzed its interviewees about their perceptions of Muslim NGOs, one

[17] Goolam Vahed - Shamil Jeppie, "Multiple Communities: Muslims in Post-apartheid South Africa", *The State of the Nation: South Africa 2003-2004,* (eds. J. Daniel - R. Southall, J. Lutchman), HSRC Press, Cape Town 2004, pp. 252-286. Numerous studies, which have covered various aspects of South Africa's Muslims, have appeared prior to and subsequent to this oft-quoted study; one may refer to this reviewer's "Experience of Muslims in the Republic of South Africa: Historical Perspectives", *Handbook of Contemporary Islam and Muslim Lives,* (eds. Mark Woodward - Ronald Lukens-Bull), Springer International Publishing, 2018. https://link.springer.com/referenceworkentry/10.1007/978-3-319-73653-2_22-4

[18] M.A. Mohamed Salih, "Islamic Political Parties in Secular South Africa", Interpreting Islamic Political Parties, (ed. M. A. Mohamed Salih), Ch. 9, Palgrave Macmillan Press, 2009, pp. 191-210. And see; Imraan Buccus and Lubna Nadvi, "Muslims, Participation and Local Government Elections in Durban", *Critical Dialogue*, 2007, Volume: 3, No.1, pp. 38-46.

[19] Farid Sayed, "From Survival to Sustainability: Can Community-Based Muslim Media meet the Challenge? The Case of Muslim Views (c. 1960-1986) and Muslim Views (circa 1986-2016)", Proceedings of the International Congress on Islamic Civilisation in Southern Africa, IRCICA Press, Istanbul 2009, pp. 65-74.

would like the report to have used one or two NGOs as case studies and to have assessed to what extent they appreciated the inputs of, for example, the Gift of the Givers (*Waqf al-Waqifin*); a NGO that has played a remarkable role over the years to such degree that the Ministry of International Relations partnered with it in extending humanitarian aid across Africa and elsewhere.[20]

The penultimate and final sections zoomed in on the 'Confidence in Relations among Muslim Communities' (pp.65-76) and 'Future Projects and Final Remarks' (pp.77-81). While the second last section concerned itself solely with inter-racial tensions that spilt-over from the Apartheid racist era into the post-Apartheid period among the Muslims, the final section proposed future projects that would enrich one's understanding of this community. The racial relations remained a reality during the democratic period and it continues to be an issue that is difficult to shake off since it is a dimension that is psychologically embedded. The report shared insights, through the interviews, to what extent the relationship among Muslims especially the African Muslims vis-à-vis the Indian Muslims was affected. Alongside this, one witnessed too the comparative tension between Malay Muslims and their African co-religionists elsewhere in the country; this happens, moreover, on a lesser scale.

The report's graph (no.41) reflected that about 60% underlined the need for the intra- Muslim relations to be improved. Its complementary graph (no.42) revealed that most of the interviewees acknowledged that 'cultural differences' was a variable that hampered their improvement. The second and third variables were 'differences among the congregations' and Muslim leadership. One assumes that the second is closely tied to the first and if taken together the percentage would cumulatively be 79.8%.

Unfortunately, the report did not clarify the nature of the differences. But if one was asked to deeply reflect on it, then the twin issues of ethnic and theological differences among Indian Muslims, for example, cannot be ruled out; on top of that, the ethno-theological differences between Malay and Indian Muslims should too be factored in. As the rapporteurs summed up the section, they emphasized that inter-racial contestation continues to be a major challenge. But even though one would have thought that the intra-communal pressures among the Muslims would have lessened in a post-Apartheid era, it seems not to be the case. And it appears that the diaspora Muslims' presence has unintentionally increased these pressures via outbursts of xenophobia.

TOWARDS A CONCLUSION

In concluding this review essay, one moves to the report's final section; herein it concluded with a few general observations about the future. It captured the core ideas using of two simple sociological terms; the first reflected on their 'optimistic' thoughts about what lays ahead and the second showed that some adopted a 'cautious' approach as regards how they view the future (pp.77-80). These two terms pinned down the general feelings of those individuals who were interviewed as well as those who enthusiastically participated in the workshops.

According the report's overall conclusions, many of the 400 interviewees were 'optimistic' while some were 'cautious' about the future and these the team produced graphically (see G43 p.78). Those that were hopeful and upbeat identified points that were catalogued, according to the team, as future indicators. And those, who adopted a less confident posture or one that underscored that they were

[20] Shafiq Morton, *Imtiaz Sooliman and the Gift of the Givers: A Mercy to All,* Bookstorm Press, Johannesburg 2014.

quite 'careful' about what lays ahead position', pointed to specifics; ones that will continue to challenge everyone as the years and decades unfold.

Being *au fait* with societies and communities, one would like the team to have shared their thoughts as 'outsiders' about the future of this minority through their sociological lenses. Based on their brief informative study as described and discussed in this report, one would like to have read their tentative predictions about this growing minority that live in a secular cum open environment where all strands of thinking were prevalent and where different structures represented various interests.

Though this was not to be, one would still want them to do so in a post-report essay since they come from a majority Muslim society that has been deeply affected by secularism and one that has undergone radical changes over the past two decades and more.[21] One is certain that they have some ideas about the future of their society as it faces the future and now that they have studied this community their future forecasts of where it will be in the next couple of decades would be of interest.

In the team's concluding paragraphs, they restated and underscored that South Africa's Muslims story is an inspiring one. They, however, were cognizant of the fact this religious minority would be facing challenges they have yet to overcome and this includes the interracial tension that continues to exist. And they pointed out that since 'the (Apartheid) past is still with us' -a quote that they acknowledged and extracted from Ishtiyaq Shukri's *The Silent Minaret*- they suggested that the Muslim community -along with the rest of the former oppressed society- should devise strategic ways of overcoming the Apartheid legacy by upholding and perpetuating democratic values that include empowerment and transparency.

One wishes to concur with the team's remarks in the final paragraph (p.81) and in which they argued that many other Muslim communities across the world may be able to draw lessons from this religious minority's socio-historical and political experiences. Despite their challenges and the difficulties that were faced, they succeeded to hold onto their faith and their Muslim identity. While one cannot ignore the fact that this community, like many others, has its dark spots and shortcomings, their story remains a fascinating one.

The team should therefore be commended for having produced a readable report and for having taken the initiative in undertaking this study within a short period of time. So despite this reviewer's critical observations, one cannot but praise the team for their significant study that should be of interest to social scientists and others that not only evaluate minority affairs but related issues that offer a fair insight into this community's make-up and identity in a highly secular democratic environment.

[21] Sena Karasipahi, *Muslims in Modern turkey: Kemalism, Modernism and the Revolt of the Islamic Intellectuals*, Library of Modern Middle East Studies, 2009; and Adil Ozdemir - Kenneth Frank, *Visible Islam in Modern Turkey*, Palgrave MacMillan Press, London 2000.

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