# Choosing our friends wisely

## Criteria for engagement with Muslim groups

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# Executive Summary

## Introduction

Preventing Violent Extremism, or PVE as it is known, is a key strand of the government's counter-terrorism strategy. It aims to channel resources to those organisations and individuals within Britain's Muslim communities able to divert youngsters away from dangerous militancy. A great deal of money has been invested in PVE – at least £90 million over three years – and in official circles many reputations are riding on its success.

The concept behind PVE is a sound one: the authorities cannot afford to adopt a *laissez-faire* attitude while extremists target young British Muslims for indoctrination and recruitment as foot soldiers in a misconceived 'clash of civilisations'. The government deserves praise for recognising this fact, and acting upon it.

The problem is that PVE – however well intentioned – isn't working. Not only is it failing to achieve its stated objectives, in many places it is actually making the situation worse: a new generation is being radicalised, sometimes with the very funds that are supposed to be countering radicalisation.

This document demonstrates how PVE is backfiring. Furthermore, it explains why, because of flaws in both theory and practice, this is happening. Finally, it proposes a series of measures to recalibrate PVE, allowing it to achieve its proper objectives.

## Flawed in theory

The central theoretical flaw in PVE is that it accepts the premise that non-violent extremists can be made to act as bulwarks against violent extremists. Some within government and the police service believe that only non-violent radicals – otherwise known as 'political Islamists' – possess the necessary 'street cred' to control angry young Muslims. Genuine Muslim moderates are regularly dismissed by key authority figures as 'spoken for', and thus marginalised.

Non-violent extremists have consequently become well dug in as partners of national and local government and the police. Some of the government's chosen collaborators in 'addressing grievances' of angry young Muslims are themselves at the forefront of stoking those grievances against British foreign policy; western social values; and alleged state-sanctioned 'Islamophobia'.

PVE is thus underwriting the very Islamist ideology which spawns an illiberal, intolerant and anti-western world view. Political and theological extremists, acting with the authority conferred by official recognition, are indoctrinating young people with an ideology of hostility to western values. This strategic error on the part of officialdom is born of a poverty of aspiration: the belief of the authorities that they cannot reasonably ask angry Muslims for much more than a pledge not to use violence in Britain. The effect has been to empower reactionaries within Muslim communities and to marginalise genuine moderates, thus increasing inter-community tensions and envenoming the public space.

The linkage between non-violent and violent extremism is habitually underplayed in official documents produced by central government, local government and the police. Even MI5 publicly affirms that it does not currently deal with non-violent subversive threats.

In addition, PVE is characterised by an excessive veneration of the local – and this lack of central oversight means the authorities are often 'flying blind' at a grassroots level. Even when PVE partner groups transgress the boundaries of acceptability,

there appears to be no elaboration of the criteria for determining the circumstances whereby funds or advisory roles might be cut or terminated.

## Flawed in practice

The two key front-line delivery mechanisms for picking Muslim partners under PVE – local government and the police – are unsuited to that task. Both are traditionally apolitical public services. As such, they often have great difficulty in making sophisticated ideological and theological choices. Local councils and police forces have made many mistakes in selecting PVE partners. Funds have too often been granted to groups claiming to 'represent' Muslims without gold-plated efforts to check their credentials or affiliations.

When selecting recipients of PVE funding and recognition, many officials confuse form with content. Exotically-clad Abu Hamza-style ranters are unlikely to be favoured, but plausible and well-mannered radicals, often representing themselves as 'moderate', are welcomed with open arms, however hard-line their underlying philosophy.

By giving the complex and crucial task of selecting PVE partners to local government and the police without providing the tools to do proper due diligence, the government risks plunging these agencies into controversy when they embrace sectarian partners whose values are at variance with the stated ethos of the public sector. The police are particularly vulnerable here since their principal concern is short-term security. They are therefore often indiscriminate in the partners they seek, providing there is a lowest-common-denominator commitment to avoiding terrorist attacks.

In part, this reflects flaws in government's own stated criteria for engagement with Muslim groups for the purposes of funding and ministerial endorsements. These are so vague and open-ended as to be almost meaningless – terms such as 'respect for others' and 'the rule of law' are used. Strangely, given the Prime Minister's commitment to reinvigorating Britishness, there is almost no reference in PVE documents to the national narrative. In fact, there is a distinct lack of willingness to set the terms of trade in dealing with Muslim groups.

## Mistakes are being made at all levels

The implementation of PVE has been beset with errors at all levels. Serious mistakes have been made. These include:

- Prevent schemes such as the Faith Communities Capacity Building Fund (FCCBF) being used to provide funding to Islamist-influenced organisations, such as the United Kingdom Islamic Mission, the Muslim Council of Britain and the Islamic Society of Britain.
- West Midlands Police indulged an extremist preacher in the hope that the promotion of his fundamentalist version of Islam might act as a safety valve for young men who might otherwise be attracted to terrorism. Subsequent investigations by Channel 4 revealed that he was preaching an incendiary message against the West, women and homosexuals.
- The Metropolitan Police selecting advisers with Islamist agendas – including one who supports the creation of an Islamic state and is the subject of an Interpol 'red notice'.
- The government inviting Islamist pressure groups such as the Muslim Council of Britain and the Muslim Association of Britain to help run the Mosques and Imams National Advisory Board (MINAB).
- Tower Hamlets Council awarding a substantial grant to the Cordoba Foundation, an Islamist pressure group,

which in turn offered a platform to Hizb-ut-Tahrir, a group Tony Blair vowed to ban after 7/7, to promote the message that democracy is forbidden in Islam.

- The City of Bradford Metropolitan District Council granting a significant share of PVE-PF monies to a project that was organised in partnership with the Islamic Society of Britain.
- Authorities in Lambeth engaging in Prevent activity in partnership with a hard-line Salafist from Brixton Mosque in the belief that this constituted the best antidote to violent extremism.
- Redbridge Council working with a former press officer from the Islamist-influenced MCB as consultant PVE Project Manager.

### Change is now required urgently

There are signs that influential elements within central government are waking up to PVE's shortcomings and negative consequences, but there is little evidence that this has percolated down to grassroots level where key functions of PVE are delivered.

Despite the best efforts of some ministers, such as Hazel Blears, the current Communities Secretary, there are still too few rewards for good behaviour and too little punishment for bad behaviour – as exemplified by the government's silence over the Muslim Council of Britain's decision to resume its boycott of Holocaust Memorial Day.

PVE is characterised by opaque and jargon-filled language – employing terms that are too often left undefined. Key documents speak of a search for 'mainstream voices' and 'trusted community leaders' without ever explaining how terms such as 'mainstream' and 'trusted' are measured and arrived at.

Accountability for decisions taken under PVE remains rudimentary. Not only are there incomprehensible and overlap-ping chains of command – a case of 'too many cooks …' – but decision-making is left largely to council officials and police officers rather than elected politicians. The most representative groups of all, MPs, have been almost completely bypassed as to what is done under PVE in their own constituencies. This represents a power shift away from the elected to the unelected state. For example, a key element on the Prevent Oversight Board for the Metropolitan Police Service is the controversial Muslim Safety Forum. Why were they chosen, and by what criteria?

Police Authorities also show a marked unwillingness to challenge decisions by local constabularies: indeed, the Metropolitan Police Authority could not cite a single instance in which it had persuaded the Metropolitan Police to terminate a relationship with an unsuitable Muslim partner. If the police are to lead on this highly political and controversial terrain, traditional notions of 'operational independence' (which apply to their law enforcement functions) will have to be reviewed.

### Recommendations

1. The recasting of Preventing Violent Extremism to Preventing Extremism.
2. The creation of a short, sharp, independent inquiry to examine where funds have been allocated, and to what end, under PVE.
3. The new criteria for engagement should be adopted across government and the public sector, creating a consistent and coherent framework across institutional lines.
4. The PVE strategy should be simplified and made more transparent.
5. Single group funding should be the exception rather than the rule. Where it is awarded, funding allocation should be clearly explained.
6. All Prevent-related activity must be subjected to rigorous 'Equality Impact

Assessments', which consider the activity by their impact on society as a whole.

7. Members of Parliament must be put into the heart of the decision-making process for Prevent and given oversight positions which allow them to adequately audit its delivery.

8. Government must create a cross-departmental Select Committee with responsibility for auditing, accounting and overseeing the Prevent strategy.

9. The Department for Communities and Local Government must establish an in-house Due Diligence Unit which will develop an open source central information resource on the array of different groups operating around the country.

10. The government must promote and incentivise good behaviour – and disincentivise bad behaviour.

### New Criteria for Engagement

1. Government must not engage with organisations or individuals that support or condone the deliberate targeting of civilians (as defined by the Geneva Conventions) anywhere in the world.

2. Government must not engage with individuals or organisations that call for, or condone, attacks on British soldiers and their allies anywhere in the world or against any forces acting under a UN mandate.

3. Government must not engage with people or groups that call for or condone the destruction of UN member states.

4. Government must not engage with people or organisations that give a platform to, deny, or are apologists for crimes against humanity, including genocide.

5. Government must not engage with groups or individuals who support or condone terrorism anywhere in the world.

6. Government must not engage with groups or individuals that present a threat to rights and freedoms protected by the ECHR and discriminate or advocate discrimination on the basis of religion, religious sect, race, sexual orientation or gender in any aspect of public life or public policy.

7. Government must not engage with organisations that oppose Armed Forces' recruitment because they selectively oppose wars that the state, under the authority of the democratically elected parliament, is currently fighting.

Where decisions are made to engage with a group:

8. Government should only engage with organisations that declare any and all sources of foreign funding.

9. Government should only fund incorporated associations.

# Foreword

## by Rt Hon Ruth Kelly MP

There are some issues that are always going to be controversial. How to prevent extremism and win the hearts and minds of young Muslims is always likely to be one of those.

They were issues at the forefront of Tony Blair's mind when, as Prime Minister, he came to create a new department for Communities and Local Government and charged me as its first Secretary of State with the task of creating communities 'able to challenge robustly the ideas of those extremists who seek to undermine our way of life' .

It was a challenge I took seriously from the start. One that appeared to me to strike at the very essence of who we are as a community and a country. What we stand for. What we believe.

I inherited little government resource or architecture for the task. The Faith Unit at the Home Office which transferred over to the new department consisted of a very small, if dedicated, team, consisting of just one director, two senior civil servants and some support staff. As far as I am aware, none had been asked to work exclusively on the Prevent strand of the government's counter-terrorism strategy known as Contest. It was imperative that the new department's expertise on preventing extremism be built up so that it was fit for purpose.

But during my time at Communities and Local Government I personally also spent a considerable amount of time thinking both about the nature of the threat we face and what shape our response should take.

I did this by talking to representatives from different Islamic traditions, to Muslims from different countries of origin, to people who had been members of organisations like Hizb-ut-Tahrir who

have been de-radicalised and by consciously reaching out to women and younger people as well as established community leaders.

> **❝** This vacuum of leadership had left the door open to a generation of charismatic, but insidious hate-preachers, and to individuals and groups who created the conditions in which resentment and hatred could thrive.**❞**

Almost all of the people I talked to believed that on the whole Britain was a good place to be a Muslim. It is a country where all have the opportunity to practise their religion freely – whether Christian, Muslim, Jew, Sikh or Hindu – and where people of all backgrounds and faiths live overwhelmingly side by side in peace and harmony.

I came to believe that the significance of foreign policy in the process of radicalisation was often overstated; that instead there was generally a mix of personal, religious and political causes. It also became clear to me that traditional Muslim leaders were failing in any sense to reach out to the young. This vacuum of leadership had left the door open to a generation of charismatic, but insidious hate-preachers, and to individuals and groups who created the conditions in which resentment and hatred could thrive.

I decided early on that our approach to Muslim communities had to change radically.

First, there needed to be a clearer conceptual distinction between policies designed to prevent extremism and those to build community cohesion – even if some of the vehicles and levers for change

might overlap. Indeed, some genuinely well-motivated attempts to foster a sense of belonging in British society by glossing over differences of outlook or ideology were in danger of fostering attitudes which could lead to more rather than less extremism. This challenge was particularly acute at local authority level, where many leaders and chief executives of local councils were initially reluctant to single out and challenge the ideology of one group of people living in their community. We needed to be clear about the purpose of any intervention, dialogue or funding and evaluate them against clear criteria.

Second, we needed to develop a new kind of engagement with Muslim and other minority ethnic communities. Given the failure of traditional religious institutions and organisations to connect with young people and deal with their sense of alienation from British society, the state could not in any sense rely on what Policy Exchange has described as 'gatekeeper' organisations to speak for Muslim communities.

> ❝ Developing 'rules of engagement' was always going to be a difficult and controversial task, as the rules were designed to send a clear signal about the sort of society Britain is and about what is considered acceptable and unacceptable. ❞

These beliefs were confirmed and enriched by the contributions of Policy Exchange and others who provided much stimulating and thought-provoking material.

As a society we already drew a clear line between people promoting violence, planning or implementing violent attacks and the decent law-abiding majority. But the insight of writers from Policy Exchange was that government – at all levels – and society have a broader role: that the dealings government has with both individuals and groups can act to 'legitimise' or 'delegitimise' those individuals or groups.

Not only did we need to tackle the radicals, we needed to address the underlying conditions encouraging radicalisation. To create a framework within which there were incentives to 'behave' well and disincentives for the reverse.

As I set out in October 2006, it was not 'good enough merely to sit on the sidelines or pay lip service to fighting extremism'. We needed to 'rebalance' our relationships with Muslim communities significantly towards those organisations that were taking a proactive leadership role in tackling extremism and defending our shared values. It was only by defending our values – upheld staunchly by the vast majority of moderate Muslims – that we would prevent extremists radicalising future generations of terrorists.

This led to an attempt to draw up some basic rules of engagement which could be observed across government and serve as a template for other tiers of government too. This didn't mean that we should not engage with Muslims on the basis of their faith; but that our engagement should be 'values based', helping young Muslims to construct a positive sense of what it means to be Muslim in Britain today.

Developing 'rules of engagement' was always going to be a difficult and controversial task, as the rules were designed to send a clear signal about the sort of society Britain is and about what is considered acceptable and unacceptable.

The guidelines which were set out for departments to follow inevitably generated much comment and debate within government. They were never intended as a final statement or a definitive view, more as a starting point for debate and an aide for decision-makers. They will inevitably evolve over time, as our knowledge and experience of tackling and preventing

extremism increases. This pamphlet is an important contribution to that debate.

The success of any guidelines, and the success on any more sophisticated version in the future, however, will depend less on their finality and more on the wisdom, judgement and courage of the decision-makers involved.

I have been hugely impressed by the courage shown by my successor at CLG, Hazel Blears, in seeing through and developing the approach I initiated while at the department.

Courage will be sorely needed if the threat of terrorism is to be defeated.

*Bolton, March 2009*

# Introduction

Before 9/11, the government was largely indifferent to Muslims in Britain. After 7/7 it became obsessed. Councils, panels, working groups and advisory task forces proliferated. At the same time an alphabet soup of bodies with representative-sounding names emerged, each claiming to speak on behalf of British Muslims and to stand as a barrier to violent extremism.

Trying to distinguish between these groups can seem an impossible task, and it is worth making a brief point about terminology at this stage. This study is concerned with Islamism, a term which refers to the politicised form of the Muslim faith. The religion of Islam, its rituals, spirituality and adherents are not the focus of our inquiry. Islamism is a broad concept covering a spectrum of different groups from the avowedly violent terrorists of al-Qaeda to those groups which pursue almost exclusively political means to achieve their ideological goals. It is a shared belief in those ideological ends that unites all Islamists (for a more detailed definition see pages 18-19). The distinction between Islam and Islamism is often poorly understood, adding to the apprehension of many to discuss an already difficult subject.

> ❝ Who are the real bulwarks against radicalisation and who are the bogus ones? And by what criteria should those partners be chosen? ❞

All of this raises several key issues: who should be the government's Muslim partners? To which groups should ministers and officials accord recognition? Which are worthy recipients of taxpayer funding? Who are the real bulwarks against radicalisation and who are the bogus ones? And by what criteria should those partners be chosen? These are amongst the hardest questions the British state has to face today.

Although the current violent threat is Islamist in form, the deeper, more fundamental difficulty revolves around the ability of liberal parliamentary democracy to resist the propagation of illiberal ideology by non-violent means. The task is complicated when that illiberal ideology is used to justify terrorism – at least overseas in the name of 'resistance' or 'defensive *jihad*'. This raises the prospect, tempting to those whose main interest is security, of using the non-violent extremists against their violent cousins.

Curiously, non-violent Islamists have been seen by elements within the British state as the solution to al-Qaeda violence, as if the cure lies in the ideological poison itself. The practical effect of this has been to engage and empower non-violent exponents of this ideology who, while expressing opposition to the terrorism of bin Laden and his cohorts, hold values and views that are antithetical to mainstream British society.

This tendency is exemplified by the term, 'Preventing Violent Extremism', the banner under which the government's counter-radicalisation process currently operates. As this name suggests, a premium is placed on ensuring that there is no violence on British shores. The manner in which this objective is achieved has been deemed to be of little or no importance. The result is that Islamists – who may not advocate violence against the British state but whose views are none the less extreme and often in conflict with the values of our liberal democracy – have been enlisted as official, public partners in the hope that their co-operation might reduce the terrorist threat.

Yet on whose terms, and at what price, is the assistance of Islamists being sought?

Is it right that the state should engage with those whose values would otherwise be deemed abhorrent? And where should the line be drawn between those with whom we can 'do business' and those with whom we cannot?

These issues were dramatically spotlighted in the summer of 2008 by a significant intra-governmental row. Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government Hazel Blears was presented with a dilemma. Several Labour colleagues, including Shahid Malik, MP for Dewsbury and then a junior minister at the Department for International Development, sought to attend the IslamExpo event at Olympia, billed as 'Europe's largest celebration of Islamic culture', with up to 50,000 visitors in attendance.

Although IslamExpo claimed to be moderate, its directors included Azzam Tamimi, who had stated his desire on BBC television, to be a suicide bomber,[1] and Anas Altikriti, founder of the Cordoba Foundation, an Islamist pressure group.[2] The debates and lectures at IslamExpo focused almost exclusively on the promotion of political Islam and igniting passions over Palestine and Iraq. Obviously, not everyone who attended IslamExpo would have sat through the round-table discussions and talks, some no doubt preferring the art workshops and poetry recitals, but those who did so would have imbibed an Islamist-inspired worldview intent on radicalising Muslims.

For these reasons, Blears argued that IslamExpo was not a platform any government minister should endorse through his or her participation. Later, in a speech at Policy Exchange in July 2008, Blears explained her reasons for advising against involvement in IslamExpo:

> I was clear that because of the views of some of the organisers, and because of the nature of some of the exhibitors, this was an event that no minister should attend.

Organisers like Anas Altikriti, who believes in boycotting Holocaust Memorial Day. Or speakers like Azzam Tamimi, who has sought to justify suicide bombing. Or exhibitors like the government of Iran ... The organisers were trying to influence the audience in certain directions. And by refusing to legitimise the event for these specific reasons, we would hope to isolate and expose the extremists and ensure they were not part of the event next year. Our policy is designed to change behaviour.[3]

In adopting this view, Blears was supported by two leading Labour Muslim MPs, Khalid Mahmood and Sadiq Khan. She also obtained support from the then Chief Whip and the Cabinet Secretary. Ultimately, Blears was successful in invoking Cabinet Office guidelines on engagement with Islamic groups: ministers were not permitted to attend IslamExpo.

Blears' decision was not merely courageous – it was also invested with profound political and ideological significance. She was indicating that opposition to al-Qaeda and al-Qaeda-inspired violence, as expressed by many of the organisers of IslamExpo and the speakers at the conference, was not enough. Nor was it enough to be against violence in the UK. A new precedent was established, drawing a line against ostensibly 'non-violent extremists' or 'political Islamists' *as well as* against the violent extremism of al-Qaeda.

The importance of taking a stance against non-violent extremism is something that the Conservative leader, David Cameron, has also emphasised. In a speech to the Community Security Trust in 2008, he raised the issue of the suitability of certain Muslim organisations to be in receipt of government funding, ostensibly in order to tackle extremism:

> One of the organisations [government] has given thousands of pounds to is a

1. Tim Sebastian, 'Dr Azzam Al-Tamimi', BBC HardTalk, 5 November 2004. http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/programmes/hardtalk/3985403.st

2. Cordoba Foundation website. http://www.thecordobafoundation.com/about_us.php.

3. Policy Exchange seminar led by Rt. Hon. Hazel Blears MP, Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, on 'Preventing Violent Extremism: the Government's Approach', 17 July 2008. http://www.policyexchange.org.uk/Events.aspx?id=688.

4. David Cameron speech to the Community Security Trust, 3 March 2008.

5. *Parliamentary Debates*, House of Commons, 30 January 2008, Columns 307-308.

6. Baroness Neville-Jones speech to Counter Terror Expo 2009, 'Society's Role in Preventing Terrorism', 10 February 2009. http://www.conservatives.com/News/Speeches/2008/12/Pauline_Neville-Jones_Societys_Role_in_Preventing_Terrorism.aspx.

7. 'Tackling Terrorism-Behaviours Unacceptable in the UK', Home Office Press Release, 24 August 2005. http://press.homeoffice.gov.uk/press-releases/Tackling_Terrorism-Behaviours_Un?version=1 Accessed on 17 September 2008.

8. *Parliamentary Debates*, House of Commons, 7 February 2008, Column 1390W. See also: Jenny Booth, 'Muslim outrage as Yusuf al-Qaradawi refused UK visa', *The Times*, 7 February 2008; John Stevens, *Not for the faint hearted* (London, 2006) p 359.

9. For the original list of 'unacceptable behaviours' see, 'Tackling Terrorism-Behaviours Unacceptable in the UK', Home Office Press Release, 24 August 2005. http://press.homeoffice.gov.uk/press-releases/Tackling_Terrorism-Behaviours_Un?version=1.

front for the Muslim Brotherhood called the Cordoba Foundation ... Even the most basic research would reveal that the Cordoba Foundation has close connections to people with extremist views, including Azzam Tamimi, the UK representative of Hamas. In the weeks ahead I will be making proposals to isolate extremists and make certain they cannot obtain public grants or get invited to sit on public bodies.

The message should be clear: to those who reject democracy; to those who preach hate; to those who encourage violence; you are not part of the mainstream. You will not get public funding. You are not a welcome part of our society. We will only defeat the extremist mindset if we understand and confront it.[4]

Cameron's speech to the Community Security Trust had been preceded by fierce exchanges in the House of Commons earlier in the year, when he had pressed Gordon Brown on whether the government would allow the Qatar-based cleric, Yusuf al-Qaradawi, to visit Britain. Cameron told the Prime Minister, 'This guy wants to come to our country, and we do not think that he should be allowed in ... Let me explain what this man, Yusuf al-Qaradawi, believes. He thinks that gay people should be executed, and encourages people to turn their bodies into bombs.'[5] Cameron's robust stance has been echoed by his shadow security spokesperson, Baroness Neville-Jones, who recently said that the Conservative Party believes, 'It is necessary to tackle extremism itself.'[6] She correctly identified that our understanding of who and what an extremist is will inevitably shape the way we meet this challenge.

Partly in response to yet another furore over the proposed admission of al-Qaradawi, it was announced in late 2008 by the Home Secretary, Jacqui Smith, that the government would toughen the way in which the criteria

for deciding whether an individual should enter the country could be used. These criteria were originally issued by the then Home Secretary Charles Clarke following the 7/7 terrorist attacks. Clarke had announced the creation of a list of 'unacceptable behaviours' which would be used to guide the Secretary of State when deciding whether to deport or exclude a foreign national whose behaviour was judged to be 'not conducive to the public good'.[7] This list had not granted the Home Secretary new powers in addition to those already in existence to prohibit the entry of undesirable foreign nationals into the UK. It was, none the less, illustrative of the kinds of behaviour judged unacceptable by those seeking to enter the country. Since the list's creation, 79 people have been excluded from the UK. The decision to bar al-Qaradawi in February 2008 was simply a more high-profile example of a wider trend.[8]

Clarke's criteria for 'unacceptable behaviour' that can lead to exclusion include, but are not limited to, individuals who use any means or medium such as:[9]

- Writing, producing, publishing or distributing material
- Public speaking including preaching
- Running a website
- Using a position of responsibility such as teacher, community or youth leader

to express views which:

- Foment, justify or glorify terrorist violence in furtherance of particular beliefs
- Seek to provoke others to terrorist acts
- Foment other serious criminal activity or seek to provoke others to serious criminal acts
- Foster hatred which might lead to intercommunity violence in the UK

On 28 October 2008 Jacqui Smith told the House of Commons that these criteria were to be strengthened and that hence-

forth they would 'create a presumption in favour of exclusion' when considering those whose behaviour is caught by the existing guidelines.[10] She also stated that a 'presumption to inform the public'[11] would exist in cases where an individual had been excluded, marking a significant and commendable shift towards greater transparency.

In announcing this shift towards a more open, yet also more stringent policy, Jacqui Smith effectively confirmed her tilt towards a more robust approach to the preventing extremism debate. Further confirmation of this was provided at the annual Prevent Conference held in December 2008, when she talked of the need to oppose an 'anti-democratic ideology' and also emphasised the importance of challenging 'extremists', not just 'violent extremists'.[12]

The positions outlined by Hazel Blears, Jacqui Smith and David Cameron are powerful ones – and all the more striking because the three of them are very different politicians. Their shared outlook has nothing to do with 'criminalising' different opinions or Islamist political perspectives. They are simply saying that if the state is to fund and partner Islamic or any other groupings, thus bestowing legitimacy upon them, then the state has the right to ask whether those bodies uphold the core values of British society.

In this context, *legality* should not be confused with *legitimacy*. Legality is an essentially neutral term, primarily concerned with the strict operation of the letter of the law; whereas legitimacy connotes value, worth and even approval. When it comes to conferring legitimacy on groups, the British state is entitled to impose a far higher set of standards.

Recognition of this principle inevitably raises the question of what those standards should be – and of the criteria to be applied when judging engagement with an individual or organisation. It is striking

that in this regard there is a 'clarity deficit' in government and official circles.

Welcome as Hazel Blears' decision on IslamExpo was, it is worth noting that the grounds on which she took it remain far from obvious: what were the Cabinet Office guidelines that Blears invoked in order to make her case against participation? They certainly do not appear to have been well understood beforehand by ministers. Indeed, to this day they have not been published. Some say that the guidelines are not an established list of criteria, just a loose collection of principles and aims, open to a variety of interpretations. The Department for Communities and Local Government, the Home Office and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office have only offered vague utterances on the criteria and they have yet to explain their operation in detail. Why should so much secrecy surround such a vital part of the government's work?

Perhaps one reason for this is that the government as a whole has not come to a settled view on this subject; it does not speak with one mind and is riven with different viewpoints. The debate *within* government is far from over. Instead, the matter remains highly contentious and it is clear that not all ministers or senior officials were happy with Blears' IslamExpo decision.

When it was announced that another Islamist event, the Global Peace and Unity (GPU) conference, was to be held in late October 2008, there was a massive 'push-back' by some senior Cabinet ministers against the line Blears took on IslamExpo. Jack Straw questioned Blears' assertions about the views held by some of the invited speakers – and was supported in this by David Miliband. Indeed, Straw and Miliband chose to turn a blind eye to many of the public utterances of some of those involved in GPU. On this occasion, Blears lost the argument and some government ministers, together with representatives of the other main political

10. *Home Office Exclusions Review*, 28 October 2008. http://press.homeoffice.gov.uk/documents/wms-exclusions-review?view=Binary.

11. Ibid.

12. Home Secretary Jacqui Smith's speech at the Conference on Preventing Violent Extremism, 10 December 2008. http://press.homeoffice.gov.uk/Speeches/hs-speech-violent-extremism.

parties, attended the GPU event. Blears retreated to fight another day, but as a parting shot she set a new series of benchmarks, seeking reassurances from the organisers that no extremist exhibitors or materials would be allowed. As we examine below, she was right to be concerned (see pages 75-7).

It is in the context of this continuing debate as to who our Muslim partners should be that this pamphlet considers the government's strategy for engagement. The existing situation is considered and possible problems identified. This is coupled with close scrutiny of the current mechanisms for delivering the wider Preventing Violent Extremism initiative, and the lack of transparency under which it operates.

In addition, an attempt is made to develop a new set of criteria that could be used to help identify genuinely progressive partners for official engagement, allowing government to find their way through the 'grey areas'. They still give ministers and officials considerable flexibility: they tie no one's hands, but they do constitute a starting point for injecting some much needed clarity and rigour into the debate.

# 1

## The Challenge:
## Islamists in Britain

Within the British state a significant body of opinion holds that non-violent political Islamists can be a useful – and sometimes necessary – bulwark against terrorism. The idea is that only they have the 'street cred' needed to prevent young men from embracing violence. Some even go as far as to suggest that radical politics might actually be desirable, acting as a kind of safety valve, dissipating otherwise violent energies. To understand the fallacy of this view and its potentially devastating consequences, it is worth considering the following analogy.

Imagine if members of the violent neo-Nazi group Combat 18 were to begin a terrorist campaign against the state and Britain's ethnic minorities.

How would the British state respond? By arresting and imprisoning members of Combat 18, refusing to tolerate the burning of mosques, synagogues and other institutions. The state would also rebut Combat 18's most purist conceptions — including the idea that Britain could ever revert to being a 'pristine white homeland'. But imagine if, in order to bring this campaign of white neo-Nazi violence to an end, the state decided to co-opt an element of the white nationalist movement, precisely because its 'grievance' narratives were widely believed amongst the white population. Broad swathes of Whitehall, not least the Security Service and police, would argue that 'alienated' and 'excluded' white youth must be persuaded that they, too, can enjoy a stake in the political system.

Imagine further that in order to rebut Combat 18's narrative – that participation in the political process is pointless because mass immigration and multiculturalism will continue whichever major political party is in office – the state turned to non-violent 'political' fascists for help, including the most prominent of these, the British National Party and its leader, Nick Griffin. Officials might be impressed by Griffin's growing 'maturity'. He does not advocate violence on these shores, instead encouraging his angry young white supporters to participate in the political process in order to stop mass immigration. Precisely because of his previous racist pronouncements, officials might reckon that he possesses the 'street cred' needed to appeal to those drawn to terrorism. But what price might Griffin demand in order to charm angry young recruits away from Combat 18? What 'narrative' would the British state encourage him to peddle in order to achieve success?

Would the Department for Communities and Local Government begin funding Griffin and assorted white 'community' groups to bolster their non-violent message? Would they start 'capacity building' initiatives in white neighbourhoods? Griffin might demand substantial policy changes such as more 'white history' being taught at schools and universities by 'suitably qualified' white teachers. He would obviously insist on dramatic reductions in immigration and an end to multiculturalism, the 'root causes' of white 'alienation'. Griffin could also stipulate that the government must not show 'double standards' in its foreign policy by overthrowing regimes in Afghanistan and

Iraq while ignoring the plight of white farmers in Zimbabwe. Perhaps at Griffin's behest, the Foreign Office could start a series of 'roadshows' led by foreign 'scholars' such as David Duke. This might be supported by a new inter-departmental government body, the Research, Information and Communications Unit (RICU), which addresses grievances and rebuts Combat 18's conspiracy theories, but often in white nationalist terms.

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Ridiculous? Yes, but this far-fetched scenario parallels much of the government's existing policy for tackling Islamist violence. If the word 'Muslim' is substituted for 'white' then the above scenario serves as a fairly close summary of the government's current strategy. The enemy is defined quite narrowly as al-Qaeda without fully appreciating the divisive ideology that inspires the group's actions. The British government, in its desperation to prevent violence, has ended up legitimising the very ideas that fuel it.

### What is Islamism?
### Who are the Islamists?

Islamism (or 'Political Islam') is a worldview which teaches its adherents that Islam is a comprehensive political ideology and must be treated as such.

Its proponents believe that Islam must be placed at the centre of an individual's identity, as either the overriding or the only source of that identity. The Islamist outlook is one that essentially divides the world into two distinct spheres: 'Muslims' and 'the rest'. Crucially, it is this binary division of the world that makes accom-

modation between Islamism and liberal democracy so difficult. The individualism and pluralism that lie at the heart of the latter run counter to the notion of a discrete communal-faith bloc that must be preserved, and for this reason Islamists often reject liberal democratic principles.

Muslims are presumed to be members of a de-territorialised, globalised *ummah*, in which allegiance is defined through the fraternity of faith alone.[13] Islamists suggest that Muslims are under constant attack, and it is this perceived perpetual danger that drives the Islamist narrative of victimhood and grievance.

The practical consequences of such an outlook are varied, differing from group to group. It is true that, for the most part, it is linked to a belief that *Shari'a* (Islamic law) should be implemented, either within existing nation-states or in the context of a pan-Islamic theocracy (often referred to as the 'Caliphate'). The absence of a purist Islamic state is judged to be responsible for the current problems of the Muslim world, and only if such an entity is re-established, it is argued, will the Muslim world be restored to global pre-eminence. Furthermore, the conception of *Shari'a* law venerated by such groups typically calls for a return to what is imagined to be a literalist, 'puritanical' and unchanging Islam, based on the earliest generations of Islamic history.

On neither count is this exclusively the case; there is no single 'mode' of Islamist expression. The manner in which different strands of Islamism seek to achieve their aims is subject to significant variation. Some, clearly, are violent; but equally clearly Islamist movements are not always – or even mainly – terrorist in nature. And non-violent Islamism is represented by individuals and organisations of widely differing hues. So while there are those groups that engage in political activity and wish to gain political power to achieve their aims, there are others that reject such

13. Olivier Roy, *Globalized Islam: The Search for a New Ummah,* (London, 2006).

political engagement and instead pursue grassroots community work. For the latter, an Islamic identity is to be promoted from the bottom up, via education and prose-lytisation, rather than being imposed from the top down, through the application of state power. Both variants, though, are subsumed within the designation of 'Islamism' offered here.

Almost always, Islamists project their view of Islam as the 'true Islam' and pass off disputed theology as uncontested truth. They presume to constitute the whole of the faith, rather than just a faction within it. Yet, it is of paramount importance to distinguish between the two – Islam and Islamism – particularly when far-right political parties such as the BNP seek to deny this distinction and conflate all Muslims with Islamists, stoking the fears of an apprehensive population.[14]

Broadly speaking, Islamist groups currently operating in Britain originate from two major revivalist networks that emerged in the early twentieth century: the Muslim Brotherhood, which started in Egypt, and the Jamaat-e-Islami, whose origins lie in colonial India. Both are extremist and anti-western in orientation.

## The Muslim Brotherhood

The Muslim Brotherhood is an Islamist revivalist movement, founded in 1928 in Egypt by a schoolteacher, Hassan al-Banna. One of the group's main ideologues was Sayyid Qutb, author of *Milestones*, a short, crisp call-to-arms for Islamist radicalism, analogous to *The Communist Manifesto*.[15] He argued that because Muslim governments failed to implement sufficiently strict forms of *Shari'a* law they became as illegitimate as the pre-Islamic Arabian rulers overthrown by Muhammad.[16] He implored Muslims to replace those governments with new Islamic theocracies, first in the Middle East, and then elsewhere.

Although the movement originated in Egypt, most of its leading members fled to Saudi Arabia during the late 1950s when Gamal Abdel Nasser's administration cracked down on their activities. This influx of Muslim Brothers served as a useful bulwark for the House of Saud's conservative version of Islam against Nasser's ambitious plans for pan-Arab socialism.

In 1961, the Islamic University of Madinah was created with the assistance of Jamaat-e-Islami founder Maulana Abu al-A'la al-Mawdudi (see below), who 'played a part' in its inception.[17] Months later Saudi Arabia founded the Muslim World League, 'the first coherent and systematic institution whose avowed intent was to "Wahhabise" Islam worldwide and thereby negate the influence of Nasser's Egypt. The league was managed by members of the Saudi religious establishment, working with other Arabs who either belonged to the Muslim Brothers or were close to them, along with *ulemas* from the Indian subcontinent connected to the Deoband schools or to the party founded by Mawdudi.'[18] They succeeded in projecting their message across the world as the university attracted increasing numbers of foreign students, who constituted nearly 85 per cent of the student body in the 1980s.[19] Interaction with students from beyond the Middle East was important in broadening the horizons of the Brotherhood, exposing them to a wider range of Islamist causes.

Today, the Muslim Brotherhood is an international movement with an established presence in most of the Muslim world, as well as parts of Europe and North America. Like many Islamist movements, it did not initially conceive a vision for its activist work in the West, believing that its efforts would be primarily focused in the Levant before targeting the wider world for Islamist conversion. That plan changed with the large-scale migration that brought many immigrants of Muslim background

14. Liam Fox, the Conservative Shadow Secretary of State for Defence, recently drew attention to this during a debate in the House of Commons. *Parliamentary Debates*, House of Commons, 10 December 2008, Column 638.

15. Sayyid Qutb, *Milestones,* (New Delhi, 2007).

16. He employs the term *jahiliyya*, a term used to describe pre-Islamic Arabia, usually translated as 'period of ignorance' or 'barbarism'.

17. Syed Vali Reza Nasr, *Mawdudi and the making of Islamic Revivalism,* (Oxford, 1996).

18. Gilles Kepel, *Jihad: the trail of political Islam,* (London, 2002).

19. Al-Jazeera, 7 September 2001.

to Europe in the second half of the twentieth century. As increasing numbers of Islamists found themselves exiled from the Arab world in the late 1980s they developed strategies to further their aims within western society.

An insight into the ultimate objective of the Muslim Brotherhood's cadres in the West has been provided by recent evidence presented in a US court case. In November 2008, a US Federal Court in Dallas convicted members of the Holy Land Foundation, an Islamic charity based in North America, of providing material assistance to terrorism.[20] During the trial, the Department of Justice submitted as evidence a document purportedly authored by the Brotherhood in 1991 which revealed their political strategy.[21] Significantly, the judge accepted the document's authenticity, satisfied that it met the required standard for admissibility of evidence in a Federal trial. The 'explanatory memorandum on the general strategic goal for the group in North America' urges:

> The Ikhwan [Muslim Brotherhood] must understand that all their work in America is a kind of grand Jihad in eliminating and destroying the Western civilization from within and 'sabotaging' their miserable house by their hands and the hands of the believers so that it is eliminated and God's religion is made victorious over all religions.[22]

The language here may be hyperbolic, but this does not make the document any less credible; revolutionary movements tend to express themselves in such terms. They understand that the change they want is substantial and will take a long time to come about. But they also believe that God, or history, is on their side and are therefore undaunted by the scale of the task.

The Muslim Brotherhood's explanatory memorandum states that their goal in the United States is to establish 'an effective and a stable Islamic Movement led by the Muslim Brotherhood which adopts Muslims' causes domestically and globally, and which works to expand the observant Muslim base and aims at unifying and directing Muslims' efforts.'[23] This is to be done by creating 'Islamic centres' to be the 'axis' of the movement in each city. The movement is to act as a hub for 'organisations that are connected with our movement and which fly in our orbit and take orders from our guidance. The document provides a list of organisations – political, educational, media and social – all named either innocuously, or as if they were organisations representing all types of Muslims and not just the Muslim Brotherhood faction. They are called things like 'The American Organisation for Islamic Political Action', 'the Muslim Attorneys Society', the 'Islamic Foundation for Defense [sic] of Muslims' rights' and so on. It also names a number of American Muslim organisations under the heading 'A list of our organisations and the organisations of our friends', adding, 'Imagine if they all march according to one plan.'[24]

## Islamists in Britain I

In the UK, the former European spokesman for the Muslim Brotherhood, Kemal el-Helbawy, helped to establish the Muslim Association of Britain (MAB) in 1997.[25] Peter Bergen, Osama bin Laden's biographer, described the MAB in a sympathetic article as a 'Muslim Brotherhood group'.[26] Others have described the MAB as an 'offshoot of the Arab Muslim Brotherhood'.[27] Azzam Tamimi is a former spokesman.[28] He currently serves as director of the Institute for Islamic Political Thought and is the founder of al-Hiwar ('Dialogue') TV which broadcasts to the Arab community in London.[29] And, as has already been mentioned (see above, pages 13-14), another former spokesman for the MAB, Anas Altikriti, now heads the Cordoba Foundation.

20. US Department of Justice, 'Federal Jury in Dallas Convicts Holy Land Foundation and Its Leaders for Providing Material Support to Hamas Terrorist Organization', Press Release, 24 November 2008. http://www.usdoj.gov/opa/pr/2008/November/08-nsd-1046.html.

21. Department of Justice Exhibit GX 3-85, 'An explanatory memorandum on the general strategic goal for the group in North America', 22 May 1991. Official court translation into English accepted as evidence.

22. *Ibid.*

23. *Ibid.*

24. Ibid. All quotes in this paragraph from the 'Explanatory Memorandum.'

25. Mahan Abedin, 'How to Deal with Britain's Muslim Extremists? An Interview with Kamal Helbawy', Spotlight on Terror, Vol 3, Issue 7, 8 August 2005. http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no_cache=1&tx_ttnews[swords]=8fd5893941d69d0be3f378576261ae3e&tx_ttnews[exact_search]=how%20to%20deal%20with%20britain%27s%20muslim&tx_ttnews[tt_news]=539&tx_ttnews[backPid]=7&cHash=6579924364

26. Peter Bergen and Paul Cruickshank, 'The Unraveling: The jihadist revolt against bin Laden, *The New Republic,* 11 June 2008. http://www.tnr.com/politics/story.html?id=702bf6d5-a37a-4e3e-a491-fd72bf6a9da1.

27. Richard Phillips, 'Standing together: the Muslim Association of Britain and the anti-war movement', *Race and Class*, Vol 50, No 2, p 101.

28. Azzam Tamimi 'The right to rule ourselves', 7 January 2005, http://ww.guardian.co.uk/world/2005/Jan/07/iraq.comment

29. Institute of Islamic Political Thought website. http://www.ii-pt.com/.

Another group is the British Muslim Initiative (BMI). In the past the BMI helped organise demonstrations against Israel's 2006 war in Lebanon against Hezbollah,[30] and called for western forces to leave Iraq.[31] When the government opted to prevent Sheikh Yusuf al-Qaradawi from entering the UK, because of his extremist views (as criticised by David Cameron amongst others), the BMI described this decision as 'disgusting and outrageous'.[32]

The BMI, together with the MAB, recently played a role in co-ordinating protests against Israel's Gaza offensive.[33] Significantly, in an interview with an Egyptian newspaper, Kemal el-Helbawy, one of the MAB's founding members, has confirmed that the international organisation of the Muslim Brotherhood played a key role in planning the Gaza rallies in London, including the protests directed at the Israeli embassy.[34]

The exact nature of the relationship between the MAB and the BMI is unclear.[35] Anas Altikriti, who is involved in both (and is also the Chief Executive of the Cordoba Foundation), has described the two organisations (and his own position within them), in the following terms:

> The MAB is a grassroots organisation established almost 11 years ago, and I had the honour of being amongst its founding members. I am a member of MAB and was its president in 2004, although I no longer hold a leading post within it. BMI is a political organisation founded by a group of activists in 2006. It does not have a membership, nor does it cover aspects of a British Muslim's life beyond politics (such as MAB does). I am one of the founding members, and currently spokesman for BMI.[36]

This is not to say, it should be stressed, that groups such as the BMI and the MAB follow orders from an Islamist equivalent of the Comintern. Indeed, the MAB has attempted to show some independence from the Muslim Brotherhood abroad. During Al-Tikriti's tenure as President, the MAB released a statement that said:

> [The] MAB reserves the right to be proud of the humane notions and principles of the Muslim Brotherhood, who has proven to be an inspiration to Muslims, Arab and otherwise for many decades. We also reserve the right to disagree with or divert from the opinion and line of the Muslim Brotherhood, or any other organization, Muslim or otherwise on any issue at hand.[37]

Yet it is clear that groups like the MAB consider themselves to be in step with a broader movement, which adheres to Islamist ideology.

Furthermore, this strand of political Islamism has struck a chord in certain quarters in the West. According to this line of reasoning there is now a 'moderate Muslim Brotherhood' with whom the West can do business.[38] Robert Leiken and Steven Brooke have argued that because some branches of the Muslim Brotherhood reject violence and are consequently condemned by jihadists, this presents 'a notable opportunity for engagement' for policymakers in the West.[39] One former MI6 Officer, Alastair Crooke, has also spoken of the importance of dealing with 'those groups or individuals who have legitimacy, credibility and influence' and argued that the West should engage in dialogue with the Brotherhood on that basis.[40] Central to such a belief is the notion that government should deal with political Islamists who, despite not sharing the methods of violent jihadists, share their aims. Even respected authors on al-Qaeda such as Lawrence Wright have suggested that a 'new' form of political Islam is emerging and that Osama bin Laden's terror network is now 'unravelling' under the weight of its own internal dissent.[41] The future, on this reading, belongs to the political Islamists.

30. 'British Muslim Initiative demo', 22 July 2006. http://www. bminitiative.net/BMI/EN/ Details.aspx?ID=5&table=sub.

31. 'National Demonstration Manchester', organised by BMI, Stop the War Coalition, CND, 23 September 2006. http://www. bminitiative.net/BMI/EN/Details. aspx?ID=11&table=sub.

32. 'BMI regards Government ban of Al Qaradawi a "Disgusting and Outrageous"'. http://www.bminit iative.net/bmi/en/details_home.aspx ?ID=261&table=sub.

33. 'National Demonstration: End the Siege of Gaza', 24 January 2009. http://mabonline.net/?p= 240. 'BMI and British Organisations call for a National Demonstration', 3 January 2009.http://www.bminitiat ive.net/BMI/EN/details_home.aspx? ID=287&table=sub.

34. 'Former leader in the International Organisation reveals the co-ordination between the Brotherhood and Jewish move- ments in the Gaza demonstrations', *Al-Masry al-Youm*, (Egypt), 1 February 2009. http://www.almasry -alyoum.com/printerfriendly.aspx ?ArticleID=197210.

35. Richard Phillips, 'Standing tog- ether: the Muslim Association of Br- itain and the anti-war movement', *Race & Class*, Vol 50, No 2 (2008), p 109.

36. Anas Al-Tikriti, 'Live Dialogue', *IslamOnline*, 5 May 2008.

37. 'MAB Responds To Vile Attack', 13 August 2004. http://www.ihrc. org.uk/show.php?id=1216.

38. Robert Leiken and Steven Brooke, 'The Moderate Muslim Brotherhood', *Foreign Affairs* March/April 2007. http://www. foreignaffairs.org/20070301faessay 86208/robert-s-leiken-steven-bro oke/the-moderate-muslim-brother- hood.html.

39. Ibid.

40. See, for example'Should the West dialogue with Islamists?', Alastair Crooke interviewed by Abdullah Faliq, The Cordoba Foundation, October-December 2006. http://conflictsforum. org/2007/should-the-west-dia- logue-with-islamists/.

41. Lawrence Wright, 'The rebellion within: an al-Qaeda mastermind questions terrorism', *The New Yorker*, 2 June 2008. http://www .newyorker.com/reporting/2008/06 /02/080602fa_fact_wright. For a critical reply see: Shiraz Maher, 'The future of unholy war', *Standpoint Magazine*, November 2008. http://standpointmag.com/the- future-of-unholy-war-november.

42. Census, April 2001, Office for National Statistics; Focus on religion (ethnicity). http://www.statistics.gov.uk/cci/nugget.asp?id=957.

43. 'The Founder', Jamaat-e-Islami. http://www.jamaat.org/overview/founder.html

44. Sayyid Abul A'la Maududi, 'The Islamic Law', The Islamic Law and Constitution, trans. Khurshid Ahmed, (Lahore, 1969), p140. See also: http://www.jamaat.org/overview/founder.html.

45. Jihad Fi Sabilillah (Jihad in Islam), translated by Khurshid Ahmad. http://www.ukim.org/dawah/jihad.pdf.

46. Ibid.

47. Ibid.

48. A number of Mawdudi's works are available for purchase from the Islamic Foundation's online bookshop. Several of these are published by the IF itself. Sayyid Abul Ala Mawdudi, Let Us Be Muslims (Islamic Foundation, 1985). http://sitecreator.siteberry.com/Appdata/build/paltop.asp?GoForFeature=Store&GoForAction=DETAIL&Product_Id=267&W_ID=1&P_ID=3; Abul Ala Mawdudi, Islam A Historical Perspective (Islamic Foundation, 1978). http://sitecreator.siteberry.com/Appdata/build/paltop.asp?GoForFeature=Store&GoForAction=DETAIL&Product_Id=274&W_ID=1&P_ID=3; Abul Ala Mawdudi, The Islamic Way of Life (Islamic Foundation, 1986). http://sitecreator.siteberry.com/Appdata/build/paltop.asp?GoForFeature=Store&GoForAction=SEARCH&W_ID=1&P_ID=3&CurrentPage=2&txtSearch=mawdudi&CAT_SUB_ID=-1.

49. Vali Reza Nasr, The vanguard of the Islamic revolution: The Jama'at-i Islami of Pakistan (London, 1994) p. 61-62. See also: http://www.jamaat.org/overview/facts.html

50. Gilles Kepel, Allah in the West: Islamic movements in America and Europe (Stanford, 1997), p 133.

51. http://www.charity-commission.gov.uk/ShowCharity/RegisterOfCharities/ContactAndTrustees.aspx?RegisteredCharityNumber=263371&SubsidiaryNumber=0. See also: http://www.senate.gov.pk/ShowMemberDetail.asp?MemberCode=431&CatCode=0&CatName=.

## Jamaat-e-Islami

Approximately two-thirds of British Muslims have their origins in the Indian subcontinent, making the presence of Islamist movements from South Asia particularly relevant to the lives of the Muslim community here.[42] The most significant Islamist movement to have emerged in the Indian subcontinent is the Jamaat-e-Islami (known as Jamaat), a revivalist group created by Maulana Abu al-A'la al-Mawdudi (1903-1979).[43] Mawdudi spent the early part of his life as a journalist, and later became a religious leader after founding the Jamaat in 1941. He was also a trustee at the Islamic University of Madinah (see above page 19) and it is hardly surprising that his Jamaat movement shares goals similar to those of the Muslim Brotherhood, particularly in its call for an Islamic state.[44]

Mawdudi held to a politicised view of Islam, which he described as not being a religion in the 'accepted (western) sense'.[45] Instead, he argued that Islam was

a revolutionary ideology which seeks to alter the social order of the entire world and rebuild it in conformity with its own tenets and ideals. 'Muslims' is the title of that 'International Revolutionary Party' organized by Islam to carry out its revolutionary programme. 'Jihad' refers to that revolutionary struggle and utmost exertion which the Islamic Nation/Party brings into play in order to achieve this objective.[46]

According to Mawdudi, Islam was to be understood as a universal political ideology:

Islam wishes to do away with all states and governments which are opposed to the ideology and programme of Islam. The purpose of Islam is to set up a state on the basis of this ideology and programme, regardless of which nation assumes the role of standard-bearer of Islam, and

regardless of the rule of which nation is undermined in the process of the establishment of an ideological Islamic state. Islam requires the earth – not just a portion, but the entire planet – not because the sovereignty over the earth should be wrested from one nation or group of nations and vested in any one particular nation, but because the whole of mankind should benefit from Islam, and its ideology and welfare programme.[47]

Since the 1960s a number of groups influenced by his teachings have emerged in Britain, of which the Islamic Foundation (IF) in Leicester is among the most important.[48]

## Islamists in Britain II

Established by members of Jamaat to serve as a quasi-autonomous hub for their activities, promoting Islamist ideas throughout the West and providing support for the Jamaat's global political activism,[49] the Islamic Foundation remains linked to the organisation.[50]

Professor Khurshid Ahmad is currently chairman of the Islamic Foundation board of trustees.[51] He is also the Vice-President of the Jamaat in Pakistan and a senator for the Mutahida Majlis-e-Amal (MMA), a Pakistani Islamist coalition of which the Jamaat is a part. When the MMA took power in the North West Frontier Province, the International Crisis Group described it as 'vowing to Islamise state and society through Taliban-like policies'.[52] Four years later, Human Rights Watch concluded that it had largely lived up to these promises: '[it] does not appear to believe in basic freedoms such as equal rights for women, freedom to worship according to one's conscience, or freedom of expression.'[53] While the MMA was in power, Professor Ahmad wrote a number of robust defences of its political agenda. He argued on a website that, '[To] target in the name of condemning theocracy [the]

Islamic way of life, its law, its social values, political commands, economic regulations and the cultural limits and targets, and to say that religion was a private affair, is no simple deviation; it is open rebellion.'[54] Clearly, not everyone was convinced by Ahmad's arguments. In the 2008 elections the voters of the NWFP, perhaps the most conservative province in Pakistan, removed the MMA from office.

Today, the British organisation with which Khurshid Ahmad is involved, the Islamic Foundation, is the main translator and publisher of Mawdudi's works in the UK. Indeed, the French academic Gilles Kepel has suggested that the Institute's influence is not just limited to Britain and that in the 1990s it became 'one of the most important centres for the propagation of militant Sunni thinking in the world'.[55]

The Foundation operates the Markfield Institute of Higher Education (MIHE) which offers postgraduate degrees in Islamic studies accredited by the University of Loughborough,[56] and is essential to helping the Foundation develop the Jamaat's political ideas.[57] Khurshid Ahmad states on his official Pakistani senatorial website that he is the current rector of the MIHE.[58]

In 2007 the then Department for Education and Skills (DfES) overlooked Britain's many professors of Islamic studies at the UK's top universities, and appointed Dr Ataullah Siddiqui, Director of the MIHE[59] and a Senior Research Fellow at the Islamic Foundation[60] to advise the Government on Islamic studies at British universities. Were his recommendations to be followed, his report *Islam at Universities in England*[61] would appear partially to shift university Islamic studies departments, from traditional western institutions of academic inquiry for everyone's benefit, to vehicles for propagating specific views of Islamic doctrine to Muslim students.

The report effectively calls for an 'instrumentalist' approach to the provision of Islamic studies. It envisages universities as *de facto* transmission belts, communicating aspects of Islam that are 'relevant to contemporary faith'.[62] One goal of this is to improve the 'quality of Muslim leadership within the country'.[63] The report also suggests that universities be tasked with raising 'public awareness among non-Muslims about Muslims'.[64] Siddiqui argues this can 'provide a service to a faith community, and help empower their growth'.[65]

While the report states that Islamic study should be undertaken 'without loss of academic rigour',[66] through a 'critical and rigorous' process, this message is not its dominant theme.[67] Instead, the report advocates the spreading of knowledge about Islam to Muslims, *as* Muslims.[68] Thus it argues 'the upcoming young Muslims in this country need to relate to their religious and cultural heritage…'[69] and therefore 'need access to the unifying and diverse legacy of Islam'.[70]

To this end, the report recommends that universities appoint 'competent scholars' who are 'trained in traditional Islamic routes'.[71] It seems Siddiqui is referring here to were those who have undergone a traditional *madrassah*-style education, focused solely on the *Qur'an* and Prophetic traditions (the *Sunnah*). The report also suggests that universities 'connect' with these and other Muslim institutions so the former can provide 'quality assurance' and accreditation to the latter.[72] This is a somewhat curious recommendation, given that Siddiqui acknowledges elsewhere in the report that *madrassahs* typically present Islam 'in an atmosphere of reverence, not critical scepticism'.[73]

This is an educational approach that seems to be somewhat removed from conventional western approaches centred on social context and textual criticism. It is rather like asking universities to promote

52. International Crisis Group, *Pakistan: The Mullahs and the Military, Asia Report No 49*, 20 March 2003. http://www.crisis group.org/home/index.cfm?id=1 628&l=1.

53. Human Rights Watch, *Commentary: Pakistan's Musharraf is Playing with Fire*, 13 March 2006. http://www.hrw. org/en/news/2006/03/13/pakista ns-musharraf-playing-fire.

54. Khurshid Ahmad, Isharat from Tarjumaan-ul-Quraan: Musharraf, Taliban and Implementation of Shariah Bill in NWFP, Jamaat-e-Islami website, July 2003. Accessed 24 November 2008. http://www.jamaat.org/Isharat/is h0703.html.

55. Kepel, *Allah in the West,* p.133. See also, the Islamic Foundation's online bookshop, which stocks the work of Sayyid Qutb and Hassan el-Banna. http://sitecreator.siteberry.com/A ppdata/build/paltop.asp? GoForFeature=Store&GoForActi on=SEARCH&W_ID=1&P_ID=3& CurrentPage=2&txtSearch=qutb &CAT_SUB_ID=-1; http://site creator.siteberry.com/Appdata /build/paltop.asp?GoForFeature =Store&GoForAction=DETAIL&Pr oduct_Id=443&W_ID=1&P_ID=3.

56. The website states that 'MIHE represents the latest aca-demic project of the Islamic Foundation'. http://mihe.org.uk /html/islamicfoundation.htm.

57. Nasr, *The vanguard of the Islamic revolution,* p..61-.2

58. Current positions held by Khurshid Ahmad. http://www. senate.gov.pk/ShowMember Detail.asp?MemberCode=431&C atCode=0&CatName= .

59. '*Preventing Violent Extremism – winning hearts and minds'*, DCLG, 5 April 2007, p 6. http://www.communities.gov.uk/ publications/communities/pre ventingviolentextremism.

60. Ataullah Siddiqui, *Islam at universities in England: meeting the needs and investing in the future*, 10 April 2007. http://www.islamic-founda-tion.org.uk/pdfs/siddiqui_report2 007.pdf.

61. Ibid.

62. Ibid p. 14. See also, p. 63.

63. Ibid p 6, 22.

64. Ibid p 11.

65. Ibid p 38.

66. Ibid p.20.

the study of Christianity by employing lecturers educated in extremely conservative seminaries and Bible colleges. Certainly, it is a world away from the definition of Islamic studies given by Neal Robinson, a Professor in Islamic Studies and one of the UK's leading authorities on Islam:

> As is the case with all religious traditions, the academic study of Islam requires a balanced combination of empathy and critical distance. The easiest and best way to achieve this is by Muslims and non-Muslims studying together under the guidance of scholars who are aware of the problems and strive to overcome them by using approaches to the subject that are as far as possible religiously neutral. In any case, in publicly-funded universities in the UK, lecturers and professors of Islamic Studies should be appointed on the basis of their track record as teachers and researchers without reference to their personal religious beliefs or affiliation. Well-tried approaches to the subject include history, philology, literary criticism, sociology, anthropology, political science and the phenomenology of religion – all of which are rigorous academic disciplines. In most parts of the Muslim world, they have as yet had little impact on the study of Islam. In madrassahs in particular the emphasis is placed instead on the so-called traditional sciences in which putative facts are transmitted on religious authority.[74]

Dr Siddiqui's report seemed to suggest a departure from the basic academic principle of disinterested academic inquiry, and implicitly called for the marginalisation of non-Muslims in the study of Islam at British universities.[75] The then Minister of State at the Department for Education and Skills,[76] Bill Rammell, welcomed the report's findings. Furthermore, Rammell assured the House of Commons that

Siddiqui did not have connections to the Jamaat and was, in any case, appointed purely in his personal capacity.[77] It would be good to know the process by which Rammell reached this conclusion. Should it not be put in the public domain?

## Ineffective Communalism

In the British context, there must be a concern that the authorities have too often allowed themselves to be deceived into accepting the agenda of political Islamists as the authentic voice of Islam. Distinguishing between real Muslim progressives and those who present themselves as such is a difficult task. The result is that the British state has, on occasion, ended up, whether by accident or design, giving support (often financial) to some of the more reactionary elements from within the Muslim community in the UK.

Even more important to Islamists than government funding is the need to establish themselves as legitimate arbiters of what Muslims want and need. Both the Muslim Association of Britain and Muslim Council of Britain ensured that they were involved in official consultations over the creation of the Mosques and Imams National Advisory Board (MINAB),[78] a body created after 7/7 to regulate mosques. Despite protests by two Conservative MPs, the Shadow Minister for Communities and Local Government, Paul Goodman, and David Heathcoat-Amory, these groups continue to comprise two of MINAB's four stakeholders in the scheme.[79] Participation in this scheme gives them an unrivalled ability to influence the future of British mosques and imams in line with their own particular brand of Islam, far in excess of their current support among British Muslims.

At the heart of the Islamist strategy is a clear agenda: to mould the future direc-

67. Ibid p 29.

68. Ibid p 32-4.

69. Ibid p 36.

70. Ibid p 62.

71. Ibid p 14, 36, 63.

72. Ibid p 7, 9-10, 37, 42.

73. Ibid p 9, 26.

74. Neal Robinson interview with Policy Exchange, 3 March 2009.

75. Ataullah Siddiqui, *Islam at universities in England: meeting the needs and investing in the future*, 10 April 2007. http://www.islamic-foundation.org.uk/pdfs/siddiqui_report2007.pdf. accessed on 21/09/08

76. This department was split in two by Gordon Brown in June 2007. The Department for Children, Schools and Families and the Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills took over its responsibilities.

77. *Parliamentary Debates*, House of Commons, 25 May 2006, column 1761W.

78. MINAB founders. http://www.minab.org.uk/information/founders.

79. *Parliamentary Debates*, House of Commons, 20 May 2008, column 155.

tion of British Islam and the Muslim community in Britain. They tell government that only they can reach the 'disenfranchised'; that they have 'respect' and 'credibility' among the youth; that they are recognised leaders. But polling conducted for Policy Exchange by Populus in 2007 revealed how a mere 6 per cent of Muslims thought the Muslim Council of Britain represented them, while 51 per cent said that no Muslim institution does so.[80] An Ipsos MORI poll in November 2007,[81] commissioned by Ken Livingstone, revealed that Muslims in London consider crime reduction, clean streets, education and affordable housing to be their primary concerns – issues far removed from the Islamist obsessions of Palestine and Iraq. It demonstrated the unremarkable fact that the majority of Muslims have ordinary, essentially secular hopes and fears. The lessons for government are urgent. It must find new ways to engage these Muslims without the intermediary of Islamist-infused 'gatekeeper' organisations which reinforce separatist communal identities. Their aspirations are not the same as those of the constituents they claim to represent.

> ❝ The lessons for government are urgent. It must find new ways to engage these Muslims without the intermediary of Islamist-infused 'gatekeeper' organisations which reinforce separatist communal identities ❞

This raises the question: what constitutes a real 'community leader'? When David Cameron visited Birmingham in 2007, he was advised to visit the Birmingham Central Mosque and its chairman, Dr Mohammed Naseem. But who does Dr Naseem actually represent? In the 2005 election he ran as a Respect candidate in Birmingham Perry Barr hoping to capitalise on anger over the Iraq war against the Labour incumbent Khalid Mahmood, who campaigned on an impeccably non-sectarian platform. In the event, Mahmood retained his seat by securing 47 per cent of the vote, while Naseem received a mere 5.6 per cent.[82] By this most significant measure of political legitimacy in a democratic society, Naseem had failed to establish himself as a leader of his community.

80. Munira Mirza, *Living Apart Together: British Muslims and the paradox of multiculturalism* (London, 2007). http://www.policyexchange.org.uk/images/libimages/246.pdf.

81. 'Muslim attitudes - the real story', Ipsos-MORI. http://www.ipsos-mori.com/content/muslim-attitudes-the-real-story.ashx. See also, Riazat Butt, 'Muslims more proud of local area, says poll', The Guardian, 13 November 2007. http://www.guardian.co.uk/uk/2007/nov/13/religion.london.

82. Birmingham Perry Barr, General Election, 2005. http://politics.guardian.co.uk/hoc/constituency/0,,-720,00.html.

# 2

## The Prevent Strategy: Aims, Priorities and Existing Criteria

83. *Countering International Terrorism: The United Kingdom's Strategy* (July 2006) Cmnd.6888.

84. For an analysis of this aspect, see Frank Gregory, 'The UK's Domestic Response to Global Terrorism: Strategy, Structure and Implementation with Special Reference to the Role of the Police', Real Instituto Elcano, 18 June 2007. http://www.realinstitutoelcano.org/wps/portal/rielcano_eng/Content?WCM_GLOBAL_CONTEXT=/Elcano_in/Zonas_in/International+Terrorism/DT+27-2007.

85. See for example the reasons given for why radicalisation occurs in *Countering International Terrorism: The United Kingdom's Strategy* (July 2006), p 10.

86. 'Letter from Prime Minister to Ruth Kelly', 9 May 2006. http://www.communities.gov.uk/archived/general-content/corporate/388681/prime-minister-letter.

87. *The Prevent Strategy: A Guide for Local Partners in England; Stopping people becoming or supporting terrorists and violent extremists*, June 2008.

88. Toby Helm, 'Back British values or lose grants, Kelly tells Muslim groups', *Daily Telegraph*, 12 October 2006. http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/1531226/Back-British-values-or-lose-grants,-Kelly-tells-Muslim-groups.html.

89. 'Muslim plea over foreign policy', BBC News Online, 12 August 2006. http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/4785893.stm; Inayat Bunglawala, 'It's undeniable: British foreign policy is endangering all of us', *The Times*, 12 August 2006. http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/comment/columnists/guest_contributors/article606726.ece; 'Full text: Muslim groups' letter', BBC News Online, 12 August 2006. http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/4786159.stm.

### The Prevent Strategy

At present, the government's framework for meeting the challenge posed by the terrorist threat is known as the Contest strategy, which has four main components:[83]

- Prevent
- Pursue
- Protect
- Prepare

Of these, the last three are more concerned with what might be termed 'hard' power responses to immediate security issues.[84] 'Prevent', by contrast, represents an attempt by the government to deploy 'soft' power in the struggle against a violent threat.

In its earliest conceptions, the Prevent strand of the Contest strategy revealed a conspicuous lack of innovative thinking about the causes of radicalisation. Indeed, the first overall exposition of the Contest strategy downplayed the role of ideology as a factor in the spread of extremism.[85]

Today, responsibility for the implementation of the Prevent strategy lies primarily with the Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG). This was created in May 2006 as a successor to the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister and sections of the Home Office, with Ruth Kelly appointed as the first Secretary of State. The Prime Minister explained that DCLG's principal role in this sphere is to enable '[local communities] to challenge robustly the ideas of those extremists who seek to undermine our way of life'.[86] Its stated aim is to lead a 'community-based response to violent extremism'.[87]

Under its first Secretary of State, DCLG worked to achieve a 'fundamental rebalancing' of the government's relationship with Muslim organisations. From October 2006, Kelly asserted that the authorities would only work with groups and individuals that accepted and promoted a set of 'non-negotiable values'.[88] This resulted in a move away from working solely with national 'gatekeeper' groups, such as the Muslim Council of Britain (MCB), which government had previously hoped would act as a bulwark against Muslim radicalisation. Ruth Kelly indicated that on these issues the government was no longer convinced of the MCB's fidelity. The turning point followed the discovery of a plot to blow up several transatlantic airliners in August 2006. Within days of the arrests in that case, the MCB, together with other Islamist-oriented organisations and individuals, sent an open letter to Downing Street calling for 'urgent' changes to British foreign policy – held by them to be the principal cause of Muslim radicalisation.[89] The MCB was felt to have endorsed a narrative of victimhood and grievance that fed into the motivations underpinning Islamist violence, and new questions were therefore raised about its position. As a result, Ruth Kelly sought to reach over the heads of groups like the MCB, creating a new approach which emphasised local, rather than national, organisations.

In April 2007 DCLG announced a 'new action plan to step-up work with Muslim

communities to isolate, prevent and defeat violent extremism'.[90] A document called *Preventing violent extremism – Winning hearts and minds*, was released to explain the four key pillars on which this policy was based:[91]

● Promoting shared values
● Supporting local solutions
● Building civic capacity and leadership
● Strengthening the role of institutions and leaders

The essence of the new strategy, as launched by Ruth Kelly, was that it looked to local authorities to take the lead in preventing violent extremism. This shift in approach has been maintained and expanded under Kelly's successor at DCLG, Hazel Blears, who was appointed by Gordon Brown in June 2007.

The latest and most authoritative statement on Prevent is *The Prevent Strategy: A Guide for Local Partners in England*, which was released in June 2008. It defines Prevent as a 'long-term programme of work' to tackle 'violent extremism', with the latter said to be caused by a combination of factors:[92]

● an ideology which justifies terrorism by manipulating theology as well as history and politics
● radicalisers and their networks which promote violent extremism through a variety of places, institutions and media
● individuals who are vulnerable to the messages of violent extremists
● communities, which are sometimes poorly equipped to challenge and resist violent extremism
● grievances, some genuine and some perceived, and some of course directed very specifically against government

On this basis, the five 'key strands' of the Prevent strategy are defined as follows:

● challenging the violent extremist ideology and supporting mainstream voices
● disrupting those who promote violent extremism and supporting the institutions where they are active
● supporting individuals who are being targeted and recruited to the cause of violent extremism
● increasing the resilience of communities to violent extremism
● addressing the grievances that ideologues are exploiting

> ❝ In its earliest conceptions, the Prevent strand of the Contest strategy revealed a conspicuous lack of innovative thinking about the causes of radicalisation ❞

To this are added two 'cross-cutting work streams' which tie in to the five strands listed above:

● developing understanding, analysis and information
● strategic communications

Taken together, these objectives, the so-called 'five plus two' formula, constitute the government's Prevent strategy as it currently stands.

Work targeted at achieving these objectives cuts across a range of government departments including, among others: Communities and Local Government; the Home Office; the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO); the Department for International Development (DfID); the Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills (DIUS); and the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF).[93] It was partly for this reason that a new Office for Security and Counter-Terrorism (OSCT) was created in July 2006. Under its current Director-General, Charles Farr,

90. *Preventing Violent Extremism - Winning hearts and minds*, Department for Communities and Local Government, 5 April 2007.

91. *Ibid.*

92. *The Prevent Strategy: A Guide for Local Partners in England; Stopping people becoming or supporting terrorists and violent extremists*, June 2008.

93. *Ibid.*

94. 'Appointment Of Director General Of The Office For Security & Counter-Terrorism', Home Office Press Release, 6 July 2007. http://press.home office.gov.uk/press-releases/appointment-dir-general.

95. Philippe Naughton, 'Brown orders NHS review after failed bomb attacks', *The Times*, 4 July 2007. http://www.times online.co.uk/tol/news/uk/article20 25887.ece; Michael Evans, Philip Webster and Richard Ford, 'MI5 asked to check foreign medical workers', *The Times*, 5 July 2007. http://www.timesonline.co.uk/n ews/uk/crime/article2028724.ece.

96. The Rt. Hon. Hazel Blears MP, 'Preventing Extremism: Strengthening Communities', speech to the Preventing Extremism Conference, 31 October 2007. http://www.communities. gov.uk/speeches/corporate/prevent ingextremism. See also, 'Major increase in work to tackle violent extremism', Department for Communities and Local Government, 31 October 2007. http://www.communities.gov.uk/ne ws/corporate /529021.

97. Ibid.

98. 'MPS Prevent delivery strategy', Metropolitan Police Authority, 24 July 2008. http://www.mpa.gov .uk/committees/mpa/2008/080724 /08.htm

99. *The Prevent Strategy: A Guide for Local Partners in England; Stopping people becoming or supporting terrorists and violent extremists,* June 2008, p 49. See also, '£12.5 million to tackle radicalisation and help prevent extremism in communities', Department for Communities and Local Government, 3 June 2008. http://www.communities.gov.uk/ news/corporate/827570.

100. 'Home Secretary Jacqui Smith: "Prevent strategy: background and next steps – speech to the BCU Commanders' Conference"', Home Office Press Release, 16 April 2008. http://press.homeoffice.gov.uk/Sp eeches/bcu-conference-speech.

101. *The Prevent Strategy: A Guide for Local Partners in England; Stopping people becoming or supporting terrorists and violent extremists,* June 2008, p 51.

102. '£12.5 million to tackle radicalisation and help prevent extremism in communities', Department for Communities and Local Government, 3 June 2008. http://www.communities. gov.uk/news/corporate/827570.

OSCT develops, coordinates and oversees the UK counter-terrorist strategy and operates across government departments and agencies.[94] Its real achievement has been to impart, not just to the machinery of Whitehall, but to the public services more generally, a sense of greater urgency and purpose in their approach towards counter-terrorism issues. Although the situation is not perfect, the OSCT has succeeded in altering the 'nothing to do with me, Guv' culture that previously reigned supreme on these matters. This was demonstrated most dramatically in 2005 after the 7/7 terrorist attacks when government asked universities to monitor extremist activity on their campuses more closely. Vice-chancellors initially seemed to resist the move, saying it would infringe academic freedoms and free speech. Similar attitudes were evident when it emerged that an NHS doctor was involved in the plot to bomb targets in London and Glasgow in 2007. The Prime Minister insisted on tougher checks for foreign doctors entering the country, but was not fully supported in this regard by NHS officials.[95]

One of Hazel Blears' first steps as Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government was to announce that the original level of financial support for tackling extremism would be increased. £25 million is therefore being made available for national schemes aimed at this goal from April 2008 to March 2011.[96] Over the same period £45 million will also be provided to local partnerships to tackle extremism.[97]

In addition to this, in April 2008 the Home Secretary announced that extra resources were being made directly available to police forces in the wake of the Comprehensive Spending Review process for 2008-11. Already, police forces were expected to contribute to Prevent-related activities from their existing police grant and, following the 2007 Comprehensive Spending Review, the Metropolitan Police Service had been given funds to recruit four chief inspectors to act as Prevent co-ordinators.[98] Now the government has provided significant additional funding – in 2008-09 alone this amounts to over £18 million, specifically targeted at the 24 forces with areas most at risk from 'violent extremism'.[99] Over the course of the three years for which funding has been provided, the money will be used chiefly to create more than 300 dedicated Prevent officers.[100] These will be responsible for 'community engagement and Counter-Terrorism Intelligence Officer roles'.[101]

Finally, in June 2008, the Home Secretary also revealed that a further £12.5 million was being made available by the Home Office in 2008-09 'to support more projects in local communities, prisons, schools and youth justice system'.[102] This announcement was made in conjunction with the release of the official 'Guidance' for local authorities on the Prevent strategy.

These major increases in energy and funding on the part of the government, although well-intentioned, raise crucial new questions about the way in which taxpayers' money is being spent. Which groups and individuals are benefiting from the increase in Prevent funding? What criteria are being applied to the allocation of government grants? How are results and performance assessed?

More broadly, it is worth asking how the British state decides with whom it should engage – on any number of levels – within the Muslim community. What are the criteria for engagement? What should the parameters for such engagement be? And how can the state ensure that its engagement cultivates only genuine moderates, rather than extremists?

### Existing criteria

At present there are no very precise guidelines across Whitehall explaining how gov-

ernment should pick its partners from within the Muslim community. Individual departments seek to retain a large measure of responsibility for establishing their own yardsticks.

The June 2008 document, *The Prevent Strategy: A Guide for Local Partners in England*, goes into considerable detail about emerging structures for countering the threat of violent extremism and emphasises the importance of working only with 'those groups who uphold our shared values of tolerance, respect and equality and who reject and condemn violent extremism'.[103] However, a mere three pages are devoted to explaining how the government proposes that its 'local partners' should pick those with whom they work from among Muslim communities – and even then this information is relegated to the appendix.[104]

What is said there confirms that, rather than having a clear and precise framework for engagement, the government continues to employ a vague set of aims, open to a variety of interpretations which are poorly understood by some ministers.

The current criteria for government engagement are:[105]

1. The organisation actively condemns and works to tackle violent extremism. Factors to consider as part of this criterion include whether the organisation:
   - publicly rejects and condemns violent extremism and terrorist acts, clearly and consistently
   - can show evidence of steps taken to tackle violent extremism and support for violent extremism
   - can point to preventing violent extremism events it has supported, spoken at or attended
   - can show that its actions are consistent with its public statements

   - can show that its affiliated members or groups to which it is affiliated meet these criteria

2. The organisation defends and upholds shared values including:
   - respect for the rule of law
   - freedom of speech
   - equality of opportunity
   - respect for others
   - responsibility towards others

The document also lists a number of indicators which it says will help local partners judge how well an organisation meets these two criteria. These may include:

   - its stated aims
   - the nature of its work
   - public statements made by its representatives or members
   - the consistency with which this is evident in its internal practices and its engagement with wider society

What these minimalistic criteria reveal is the extent to which the government, despite its professed determination to tackle ideology, continues to focus on means rather than ends. In other words, it accentuates the importance of finding those who can contribute to the preventing of *violent* extremism, as opposed to extremism overall. Ideology is judged important, in so far as it pertains to violence in the UK. Those who eschew such violence, but who none the less purvey a radical message, are not placed beyond the pale by such an approach.

On the contrary, the existing criteria effectively create a space in which the mistakes that were made at national level – and which Prevent was meant to correct – are now being repeated locally.

The government's published list does not assist it with deciphering the ideological persuasion of its potential partners. This is crucial, because those operating at

103. *The Prevent Strategy: A Guide for Local Partners in England; Stopping people becoming or supporting terrorists and violent extremists*, June 2008, p 14.

104. Ibid p 59.

105. Ibid p 60.

the local level, whether local authorities or police, are being asked to make the most sophisticated of decisions about who is a suitable 'partner'. Moreover, these are decisions with the potential to tip the balance of power within communities in one direction or another, because the adoption of a group or individual as an official partner almost invariably bestows legitimacy and respectability on it. It can therefore serve as a crucial tool of empowerment or, indeed, disenfranchisement.

This makes Prevent the most deeply political and ideological strand of the Contest strategy. Despite this, it has been given wholly insufficient direction from government. Many of its criteria, such as 'responsibility towards others' and 'respect for the rule of law', are simply too vague to be meaningful. Others are inadequately explored or left open to interpretation. There is very little about loyalty to the British state. This ambiguity is remarkable given that Gordon Brown insisted that the idea of 'Britishness' would be a cornerstone of his premiership. And it is this imprecision that creates discord across government and gives rise to the kind of ambiguity that divided ministers over IslamExpo and the GPU event.

Despite this, the criteria listed above provide the most comprehensive information publicly available on this vital aspect of the government's counter-terrorism agenda. It is as if the government, having awoken late to the importance of an ideologically-driven focus, continues to lack confidence in what it is trying to achieve. The limited and tentative nature of its pronouncements on this subject betrays its broader uncertainty. In line with this, it is perhaps significant that the June 2008 Prevent strategy guidance devoted so little space to the question of 'criteria for engagement' and, furthermore, that the information was relegated to one of the appendices of the document.

An examination of the various sub-strands of the Prevent agenda yields little in the way of further criteria; these are listed below in alphabetical order, rather than under the lead department via which funds for them are allocated.

## The Channel Project

The Channel Project is a multi-agency initiative designed to promote early identification and intervention in the case of vulnerable individuals. Although it involves 'partnership working' between police forces, local authorities and local communities, primary responsibility for the implementation lies with the police.[106] The scheme was awarded £600,000 for 2007-08, when it was piloted in two areas in London and Lancashire. The Home Office allocated a further £1 million to expand the project in 2008-09, rolling it out over an additional eight areas in West Yorkshire, the Midlands, London and Bedfordshire.[107]

Channel relies on local and community-based referrals; when individuals begin to associate with extremists or adopt their ideas, joint risk assessments are made between the police and whichever local partner (for example a school or youth service) made the referral before an intervention strategy is created. This can be implemented either by local partners or the police, depending on the circumstances.[108]

The integration of the police with local and community partners for delivery of this project necessitates a rigorous assessment of just who those partners should be. At present, however, the Channel Project comes under the government's Prevent strategy and the suitability of partners is therefore only assessed against the vague and ineffective criteria under which it currently operates. This can pose serious problems to the project, which relies critically on community partners to make that first referral after identifying a vulnerable individual. Indeed, what is it

106. Ibid p 28.

107. *Parliamentary Debates*, House of Commons, 22 July 2008, Column 1373W.

108. *The Prevent Strategy: A Guide for Local Partners in England; Stopping people becoming or supporting terrorists and violent extremists,* June 2008, p 28.

that these partners are being told to look out for? In their analysis of Channel, a report by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC) and the Audit Commission found that, 'the focus is on preventing radical beliefs escalating to violent extremism and not on preventing individuals, groups or places from expressing radical or extreme views or behaviour.'[109] Thus, the potential link is not made between violent *jihad* and the ideology that underwrites it.

## The Community Leadership Fund (CLF)

The Community Leadership Fund was launched in June 2007 under the Preventing Violent Extremism agenda. It is a relatively small national grants programme (only £650,000 was allocated to it in 2007-08),[110] which is administered centrally and focuses on building 'the capacity of individuals, organisations and communities to take the lead on tackling violent extremist influences'.[111]

Guidance notes on the Community Leadership Fund list eligibility criteria for potential applicants, but only stipulate the practical and legal requirements needed to make an application, including the need for organisations to have a legal personality, constitution and management committee.[112] There is nothing, however, about the values these groups should be explicitly promoting.

A brief description of the kind of projects that might be funded through the CLF scheme talks only of 'mechanistic' rather than 'substantive' criteria. In other words, there is reference to the need to improve the 'tools and skills' of imams, to enable them to 'participate fully within their immediate communities' and 'communicate particularly with young people'.[113] But nothing is said about the worldview of these imams that will better help them integrate on the right terms in this country.

## Countering Terrorism and Radicalisation Programme

The Countering Terrorism and Radicalisation (CTR) programme is an initiative funded by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office through its Strategic Programme Fund (SPF). Initially conceived in 2003,[114] the SPF was launched to 'support the government's international goals', which includes 'counter terrorism, weapons proliferation and their causes'.[115] This policy goal involves all aspects of the Contest strategy, although the FCO concedes that 'a large balance of resources will lean towards projects that fit into preventing extremism'.[116] The CTR has therefore been established as the primary delivery mechanism for achieving those goals and has had at least £20 million allocated to it for project funding during 2008-09.[117]

A number of these projects currently take place in 'priority regions' which the FCO lists as:[118]

- Middle East and North Africa
- East and Horn of Africa
- South East Asia
- South Asia

The specific aims the FCO hopes to achieve through its Prevent programme are to develop:[119]

- civil society
- good governance
- education
- human rights
- rule of law
- platforms for challenging extremists' narratives
  … in key countries where the lack of these areas creates grievances that drive radicalisation.

To achieve this, the FCO has published on its website a list of criteria that it considers when assessing the suitability of potential projects for either funding or partnership.

109. *Preventing Violent Extremism Learning and Development Exercise: Report to the Home Office and Communities and Local Government*, October 2008, p 46.

110. Background to PVE, Improvement and Development Agency. http://www.idea.gov.uk/idk/core/page.do?pageId=7946870.

111. 'Community Leadership Fund', DCLG. http://www.communities.gov.uk/communities/preventingextremism/communityleadershipfund/.

112. *Preventing Violent Extremism: Community Leadership Fund Guidance*, DCLG, April 2008.

113. Ibid.

114. It then operated under the name 'Global Opportunities Fund'.

115. 'Strategic Programme Fund', Foreign and Commonwealth Office. http://www.fco.gov.uk/en/about-the-fco/what-we-do/funding-programmes/strat-progr-fund/.

116. Ibid.

117. Ibid.

118. Ibid.

119. 'Preventing extremism', FCO. http://www.fco.gov.uk/en/fco-in-action/counter-terrorism/counter-terrorism/preventing-extremism/.

A successful project must meet one or more of the following objectives which echo the overall Prevent strategy:[120]

- challenge extremist ideology and support mainstream voices
- disrupt the ideologues and strengthen vulnerable institutions
- support individuals who are being targeted
- increase the resilience of communities against violent extremists
- address the grievances which ideologues are exploiting such as a lack of human rights and rule of law
- improve our understanding of the causes of radicalisation
- communicate our aims and work

In workign towards these ends, the FCO's remit is not limited to international projects, and it declares that, 'some projects originate from organisations based in the UK'.[121] One of its most high-profile domestic projects is called the Radical Middle Way (RMW). Creating the RMW was one of the key recommendations to emerge from the 'Preventing Extremism Together' review process held immediately after 7/7.[122] Its guiding impulse was that there needed to be:[123]

A national campaign involving influential international and national mainstream scholars and thinkers – run by Muslim youth organisations – to theologically and intellectually tackle extremist interpretations of Islam.

The RMW pilot project was launched in late 2005 with support from the Home Office, the FCO and DCLG, together with Muslim 'community organisations'.[124] The organisations given responsibility for the RMW were the Muslim newspaper, *Q-News*, the Young Muslim Organisation and the Federation of Islamic Student Societies (FOSIS).[125]

The scheme consists of a travelling 'road-show' of Islamic scholars who tour the country to challenge 'violent extremist ideology'. It is hoped they will provide 'platforms for mainstream Islamic voices in the UK'.[126] In the first instance, the Radical Middle Way was concentrated in areas judged to be especially vulnerable to extremism: London, Birmingham, Bradford, Manchester, Kirklees, Leicester and Luton. Beyond its domestic role, the RMW is also tasked with speaking to Muslim communities abroad in order to promote a better image of the UK.

In December 2006 Kim Howells, Minister of State at the FCO, confirmed in the House of Commons that, 'The Radical Middle Way initiative ha[d] received funding totalling £350,000, of which £250,000 was provided by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and £100,000 by Home Office.'[127] This confirms the broader role being played in domestic affairs by the FCO under the aegis of Prevent.

Furthermore, this in turn raises a number of questions about how the Prevent strategy is currently operating, and more specifically, the RMW's role in it. For example, why is a project supposedly aimed at young British Muslims so reliant on 'importing' foreign clerics? Indeed, at least 19 of the 27 speakers listed on the RMW are from outside the UK.[128] In what way are they best suited to 'connect' with young British Muslims?

More troubling is the fact that a number of the speakers invited by the RMW are connected to organisations opposed to many – if not all – of the FCO's openly stated goals for its Countering Terrorism and Radicalisation Programme. For example, one of the RMW's guest speakers last year was Kemal el-Helbawy, who was previously a spokesman for the Muslim Brotherhood.[129] Another invited guest was Catherine Heseltine, who describes herself as the 'National Campaigns Manager' for the Muslim Public Affairs Committee-UK (MPACUK).[130] The Report of the All-

120. Ibid.

121. 'Strategic Programme Fund - Countering Terrorism & Radicalisation (CTR) Programme' http://www.fco. gov.uk/en/about-the-fco/what-we-do/funding-programmes /strat-progr-fund/strat-pro-fund-terrorism.

122. *Preventing Extremism Together: Working Group Report*, August-October 2005.

123. Ibid.

124. 'Partners and Supporters', The Radical Middle Way. http://radicalmiddleway. co.uk/partners_supporters.php. See also, 'About Us', The Radical Middle Way. http://www.radicalmiddleway.co. uk/about_us.php.

125. *Preventing Extremism Together: Working Group Report*, August-October 2005.

126. *The Prevent Strategy: A Guide for Local Partners in England; Stopping people becoming or supporting terrorists and violent extremists,* June 2008.

127. *Parliamentary Debates*, House of Commons, 4 December 2006, Column 196W.

128. Radical Middle Way website. http://www.radicalmid dleway.co.uk/scholars.php. Document1

129. For more on Helbawy see above, p.2o; ; also see http://radicalmiddleway.com/eve nts.php?id=2&art=8.

130. Catherine Heseltine, Radical Middle Way. http://www.radicalmiddleway.co. uk/scholars.php?id=1&art=27.

Party Parliamentary Inquiry into Anti-Semitism found that MPACUK is one of 'a minority of Islamist extremists in this country [who] do incite hatred towards Jews'.[131] The National Union of Students (NUS) has deemed the MPACUK's message to be so aggressive and intimidating that it has banned the organisation from college campuses.[132] On what basis were these speakers deemed suitable for participation in conferences designed to curb radical sentiments? How exactly were these people chosen? By whom? And to what end?

## Faith Communities Capacity Building Fund (FCCBF)

The FCCBF ran from 2006 to 2008 and is no longer active. None the less, it played an important role during the early phases of Prevent and is worth considering in that regard. The fund's purpose was to build capacity within local groups, encouraging them to engage more broadly with society and the authorities, and promoting community cohesion. The promotion of interfaith work was another integral part of FCCBF in the hope of encouraging understanding and respect.

A total of 140 Muslim groups were awarded government funding amounting to £13 million over two separate funding rounds.[133] Among those who received funding were the East London Mosque and London Muslim Centre, the Islamic Foundation in Leicester, the UK Islamic Mission and the Muslim Council of Britain.[134] It remains unclear why these groups were chosen by the government. Furthermore, in response to a written parliamentary question asked on 2 June 2008, the then Under Secretary of State at the Department of Communities and Local Government, Parmjit Dhanda, stated that with regards to the FCCBF, 'The Government will not be reviewing the allocation of funding.'[135]

## The Preventing Violent Extremism-Pathfinder Fund (PVE-PF)

The 'Preventing Violent Extremism Pathfinder Fund' (PVE-PF) was launched in October 2006 by DCLG.[136] It is at the heart of the government's Prevent strategy and forms the centre-piece of the 'Preventing Violent Extremism: Winning Hearts and Minds' action plan that was launched in April 2007 (see above, page 27).[137]

The aim of the fund is 'to support priority local authorities in developing programmes of activity to tackle violent extremism at the local level'.[138] The scheme was initially awarded £5 million for the financial year, 2007-08, although this was subsequently increased to £6 million, funding projects in 70 different local authorities around the country.[139] In July 2007 it was announced that a further £45 million would be made available for the years 2008-11.[140]

The strategic objectives for PVE-PF are to develop communities in which Muslims:[141]

- identify themselves as part of a wider British society and are accepted as such by the wider community
- reject violent extremist ideology and actively condemn violent extremism
- isolate violent extremist activity, and support and co-operate with the police and Security Service
- develop their own capacity to deal with problems where they arise and support diversionary activity for those at risk

To this end, local authorities were urged to 'involve local partners, particularly the police, and local communities' to produce detailed programmes that would contribute to efforts to combat violent extremism.[142] Such programmes, it was stated, *must make clear how they will specifically tackle violent extremism* [emphasis in original]'.[143] Yet, beyond such vague injunctions, no concrete instruction

131. See 'Report of the All-Party Parliamentary Enquiry into Anti-Semitism', *All-Party Parliamentary Group against Anti-Semitism,* September 2006, p 30. http://thepcaa.org/Report.pdf.

132. Ibid. p 29.

133. *Parliamentary Debates*, House of Commons, 16 July 2008, column WA156. See also 'Faith, Cohesion and Community Development', Community Development Foundation. http://www.cdf.org.uk/POOLED/articles/bf_docart/view.asp?Q=bf_docart_307765

134. Ibid. (see annex A). See also, http://www.cdf.org.uk/SITE/UPLOAD/DOCUMENT/Projects/Round1LONDONregion.pdf; http://www.cdf.org.uk/SITE/UPLOAD/DOCUMENT/Projects/Round1WESTMIDLANDSregion.pdf; http://www.cdf.org.uk/SITE/UPLOAD/DOCUMENT/Projects/Round1EASTMIDLANDSregion.pdf; http://web.archive.org/web/20070325031613rn_1/www.communities.gov.uk/pub/495/FaithCommunitiesCapacityBuildingFundlistoforganisations_id1508495.pdf.

135. *Parliamentary Debates*, House of Commons, 2 June 2008, column 541W.

136. *Preventing Violent Extremism – winning hearts and minds,* DCLG, 5 April 2007.

137. Ibid.

138. *Preventing violent extremism pathfinder fund 2007/08: Case studies*, April 2007.

139. Ibid.

140. *Parliamentary Debates*, House of Commons, 29 November 2007, column 679W.

141. *Preventing Violent Extremism Pathfinder Fund: Guidance Note for Government Offices and Local Authorities in England*, February 2007, p 7.

142. Ibid. p 3.

143. Ibid. p 6.

was provided as to what local authorities were expected to do. Neither were detailed criteria laid down, stipulating those groups and individuals who were to be engaged under the new scheme. This deficit was not remedied in the subsequent document of project 'case studies' that was produced.[144] As we have seen, this paucity of advice was not dramatically improved upon by the June 2008 launch of *The Prevent Strategy: A Guide for Local Partners in England*, a document not produced until a year and a half into the operation of PVE-PF. Although, this did articulate specific 'criteria for engagement', these were so vague as to be virtually meaningless.

Grants made through PVE-PF were initially ring-fenced to prevent local councils from spending them in other areas of their work. To qualify for PVE-PF, participating local authorities were required to adopt a performance indicator – National Indicator 35 (NI:35) – which monitored the way these funds were spent.[145]

At a practical level, NI:35 aims to measure local resilience to violent extremism and lays out four criteria for doing this which broadly relate to the seven core objectives of Prevent. These criteria are used to assess the effectiveness of local authorities and are:[146]

- Understanding of, and engagement with, Muslim communities
- Knowledge and understanding of the drivers and causes of violent extremism and the Prevent objectives
- Development of a risk-based preventing violent extremism action plan, in support of delivery of the Prevent objectives
- Effective oversight, delivery and evaluation of projects and actions

For each of these points, performance is scored on a scale ranging from 1 to 5, and each of the four criteria above have separate

definitions for how scores are to be awarded. For example, the guidelines state that for the first objective which measures 'understanding of, and engagement with, Muslim communities', a score of 1 will apply where:[147]

> Community [is] engaged on an ad hoc basis and through wider faith/minority groups. Mechanisms and engagement is/are not self sustaining or productive. Understanding of the make-up of the local Muslim community is limited and superficial.

A score of 5 applies in cases of:[148]

> A self-sustaining, dynamic and community driven engagement which takes place on a number of different levels and in a number of different ways, with innovative approaches to communication and engagement of all groups. Sophisticated understanding of local Muslim communities is used to drive policy development and engagement.

However attempts to safeguard the integrity of PVE-PF through ring-fencing the funds and tying them to NI:35 in this way appear to have failed. Several councils have been extremely reluctant to adopt the indicator as intended because they believe that monies obtained under the banner of 'Preventing Violent Extremism' are somehow tainted. This includes local authorities in key target areas such as Luton, Bradford, Oldham, Calderdale, Kirklees, Wakefield and Leeds.[149]

The recent 'mapping exercise' of PVE-PF projects for 2007-08, carried out by DCLG, reveals a 'concern among some [councils] that the receipt of PVE funding could be perceived as negative, and could create a backlash against Muslims'.[150] For some councils, to accept PVE-PF is to invite stigmatisation.[151]

The creation of the Reading Muslim Preventing Violent Extremism Crisis Group,

144. *Preventing violent extremism pathfinder fund 2007/08: Case studies,* April 2007.

145. *The Prevent Strategy: A Guide for Local Partners in England; Stopping people becoming or supporting terrorists and violent extremists,* pp. 52-4.

146. Ibid. p 55-8.

147. Ibid.

148. Ibid.

149. 'Fears over extremism role', *Local Government Chronicle,* 6 March 2008. http://www.lgcplus.com/News/2008/03/fears_over_extremism_role.html

150. *Preventing Violent Extremism Pathfinder Fund: Mapping of project activities 2007/08,* p 54.

151. *Preventing Violent Extremism Learning and Development Exercise: Report to the Home Office and Communities and Local Government,* October, 2008, p 11, 50.

in response to a decision by the local council to accept PVE-PF funds, demonstrates the kind of hostile response that can follow.[152] The Reading group says it wants to expose 'the dangers that this misguided [PVE-PF] agenda poses to community relations'.[153]

In an attempt to circumvent these problems, the government announced that from 2008 there would be a change to the way in which PVE-PF would be paid. Payments are now being administered through the 'Area Based Grant' which is part of the wider allocation of funding that local authorities receive from central government after negotiating their Local Area Agreements (LAAs).[154]

In practice, this means that PVE-PF monies will no longer be ring-fenced, thereby allowing them to be spent more widely. As a result, money that was supposed to be focused solely on preventing violent extremism can now be spent in broader areas such as 'community cohesion'.

When asked about this in parliament, the Leader of the House, Harriet Harman, confirmed this was the case, claiming that the government had shifted its position to 'allow [local authorities] more power to make decisions about the way in which they spend resources locally'.[155]

Yet this new regime means that acceptance of NI:35 is no longer a precondition for the receipt of PVE-PF. Indeed, the Conservative Shadow Minister for Communities and Local Government, Paul Goodman, has asserted that this development marks the collapse of the PVE-PF scheme as originally conceived.[156]

152. Reading Muslim PVE Crisis Group. http://pvecrisisgroup .com/initial-rmpve-cg-commit-tee/.

153. Reading Muslim PVE Crisis Group. http://pvecrisisgroup. com/about/.

154. *Leading the preventing violent extremism agenda: engaging, supporting and funding community groups*, November 2008, p 35.

155. *Parliamentary Debates*, House of Commons, 6 March 2008, column 1920.

156. Ibid.

# 3

## The Problem of Prevent I: The Local Authorities' Dilemma

157. *Preventing Violent Extremism Pathfinder Fund: Guidance Note for Government Offices and Local Authorities in England*, February 2007, p 3.

158. *Preventing Violent Extremism Pathfinder Fund 2007/8 (List of Groups Funded).*

159. 'Frequently Asked Questions', East London Mosque and London Muslim Centre. http://www.eastlondon mosque.org.uk/?page=faqs.

160. Ed Husain, *The Islamist* (London, 2007); The Charity Commission also lists Mohammed Abdul Bari as a trustee of the East London Mosque and the Muslim Council of Britain Charitable Foundation. http://www.charity-commis-sion.gov.uk/ShowCharity/Registe rOfCharities/ContactAndTrustees .aspx?RegisteredCharityNumber =1122613&SubsidiaryNumber=0 &TID=1316309.

161. *Preventing Violent Extremism Pathfinder Fund 2007/8 (List of Groups Funded).*

162. David Cameron Speech to the Community Security Trust, 3 March 2008.

163. 'Has Political Participation Failed British Muslims?' 26 February 2008, Cordoba Foundation. http://www.thecordobafoundatio n.com/events.php?id=1&art=15.

164. Martin Bright, *When Progressives Treat with Reactionaries: The British State's flirtation with Radical Islam*, Policy Exchange, 2006, p. 28 and p 70.

165. 'Controversial Hizb ut-Tahrir debate to go ahead after all', *East London Advertiser*, 22 February 2008. http://www.east londonadvertiser.co.uk/content/ towerhamlets/advertiser/ news/story.aspx?brand=elaonlin e&category=news&Brand=northl ondon24&tCategory=newsela&it emid=WeED22%20Feb%202008 %2017%3A37%3A39%3A153.

The substantial commitment of resources and energy to the Prevent strategy reflects the government's awareness of the importance of this subject. The aim is clear: to reduce the threat from violent extremism. However, as some Prevent practitioners have recognised, this goal is not one that is easily achieved. Without question, mistakes have been made and many of these raise questions about the entire viability of the Prevent agenda as currently in operation.

### Picking Partners: Who should councils work with?

The Preventing Violent Extremism-Pathfinder Fund (PVE-PF) is the flagship scheme of the government's Prevent strategy, with the onus placed on local authorities to develop programmes of activity that will 'specifically tackle violent extremism and show a clear link to the overarching objective of creating a situation where Muslim communities reject and actively condemn violent extremism and seek to undermine and isolate violent extremists'.[157]

Serious questions must be asked, however, about the way the scheme has performed thus far, especially in relation to some of the groups and individuals who have been engaged as a result of it.

In the London Borough of Tower Hamlets, for example, one of the partnership groups involved in PVE-PF projects funded by the local council was the London Muslim Centre.[158] This vast building was built with the aid of money from Saudi Arabia and adjoins the East London Mosque (ELM).[159] The ELM is home to several leading activists from the Muslim Council of Britain (its Secretary-General, Muhammad Abdul Bari is Chairman of the mosque) and has been described by Ed Husain, author of *The Islamist*, as being dominated by British affiliates of the radical South Asian Islamist party, the Jamaat-e-Islami.[160] Despite this, the London Muslim Centre has been provided with money to establish 'schools conferences' and a 'Muslim Youth Council'.

Another group funded by Tower Hamlets is the Cordoba Foundation.[161] As David Cameron observed in his speech to the Community Security Trust, this organisation is headed by Anas Altikriti.[162] Shortly after the Cordoba Foundation was awarded £19,000, it held a public seminar at which one of the invited speakers – Dr. Abdul Wahid, UK Chairman of Hizb-ut-Tahrir (HuT) – told the audience that 'political participation has failed British Muslims'.[163] HuT is a group the government pledged to ban after 7/7 and, although this has not yet happened, the situation remains under 'constant review'. Indeed, Martin Bright's study of leaked government documents show that it is deeply divided over the issue of what to do next.[164] Whatever the government's final view, it is perverse that public funds – particularly those earmarked for Prevent initiatives – should be used in this way to provide a platform for the extremists of HuT.[165]

Though less sensational, there are numerous other examples of questionable awards being made by local authorities. In

Luton, for example, one body working with the Council under PVE-PF is the Muslim Education Forum.[166] This is an independent grassroots organisation set up by local women in 2005 to tackle the 'disengagement of Muslim youth'. It categorically states that it is not affiliated to any political or religious organisation.[167] That might be so, but one of its current projects seeks to implement some of the MCB's proposed national guidelines for schools called *Meeting the Needs of Muslim Pupils in State Schools*.[168] The integrity or character of the MEF is not at stake here, however that organisation does appear to endorse an agenda that is, in some respects, not far removed from that of the Islamist-infused MCB.

The Islamic Society of Britain (ISB) is another group that has benefited from partnership arrangements with local authorities under PVE-PF. In Bradford, for example, the ISB was engaged in a project that received £38,500 of Prevent funding to create a programme to 'actively engage with young people to discuss their identity and to become active role models in local and national democratic institutions'.[169]

At present the Acting President of the ISB is Ahtsham Ali; he succeeded the outgoing president, Zahoor Qurashi, member of the Central Working Committee of the MCB, who resigned in November 2008.[170] The ISB, as a group, is an affiliate of the MCB,[171] and the organisation was one of those identified by Ed Husain as being in some way imbued with Islamist ideology.[172]

Furthermore, the ISB is, according to its website, the group behind Islam Awareness Week (IAW), an initiative launched in 1994 to 'raise awareness and remove misconceptions surrounding Britain's second largest faith group'.[173] The IAW's website states, 'There is no concept of the secular in Islam.'[174] Among the events held under the IAW's aegis in 2008 was a talk entitled 'Shared Values' given by Tahir

Alam, then Assistant Secretary-General of the MCB and the chair of the MCB's Education Committee.[175] Interestingly, Alam is also a trustee of the al-Hijrah Trust.[176] The al-Hijrah School, which is a subsidiary of the al-Hijrah Trust has also been a PVE-PF partner of Birmingham city council.[177]

The 2008 national co-ordinator for the ISB's Islam Awareness Week was Tahmina Saleem.[178] Saleem is the Secretary of the 'Redbridge Forum against Extremism and Islamophobia' and a consultant Preventing Violent Extremism (PVE) Project Manager with Redbridge Council.[179] Previously, Saleem was a press officer for the MCB.[180]

All this demonstrates, therefore, the extent to which PVE-PF, judged by its own terms of reference as first defined by Ruth Kelly and then Hazel Blears, is falling short of the mark. It was set up to break the monopoly of the MCB, its leaders, and other national 'gatekeeper' organisations. By looking beyond them, the government hoped it would empower a new set of voices. This has not materialised as Kelly or Blears would have hoped, largely because a range of Islamist organisations have been able to adapt their *modus operandi* to capitalise on the new emphasis on localism.

There are other problems too. These arise in cases where it seems that local councils have actively sought out some of the more extreme elements of the Muslim community in a belief that they can deliver results.

In Lambeth money has been given to the STREET project, founded by Abdul Haqq Baker, who is also the Managing Director of the project.[181] STREET stands for 'Strategy to Reach, Empower, and Educate Teenagers' and the scheme aims to help those young Muslims who may be susceptible to violent extremism. In early 2009, STREET won the Preventing Violent Extremism Innovation Award.[182] Yet why did Lambeth Council approve the award of funding to a man like Baker?

166. *Preventing Violent Extremism Pathfinder Fund 2007/8 (List of Groups Funded)*.

167. 'About Us', Muslim Education Forum, http://www.muslimeducationforum.com/about/index.html.

168. 'Our Projects', Muslim Education Forum, http://www.muslimeducationforum.com/about/projects.html. See also, 'Guidelines for Schools', Muslim Education Forum. http://www.muslimeducationforum.com/schools/guidelines.html

169. *Report of the Deputy Chief Executive to the meeting of the Executive to be held on 11 November 2008: City of Bradford Metropolitan District Council*. http://councilminutes.bradford.gov.uk/council_minutes/docs/executive/Exec11NovDocBK.pdf.

170. 'Announcement: Dr. Zahoor Qurashi', Islamic Society of Britain. http://www.isb.org.uk/docs/Z%20Qurashi%20-%20ISB%20announcements2.pdf. For Qurashi's membership of the Central Working Committee of the MCB, see 'CWC Members', Muslim Council of Britain. http://www.mcb.org.uk/comm_details.php?heading_id=105&com_id=1.

171. 'List of Affiliates', Muslim Council of Britain. http://www.mcb.org.uk/affiliates.php.

172. Husain, *The Islamist*.

173. 'Activities', Islamic Society of Britain. http://www.isb.org.uk/pages06/activities.asp. See also, 'About IAW', Islam Awareness Week. http://www.iaw.org.uk/about-iaw.

174. 'Understanding Islam', Islam Awareness Week. http://www.iaw.org.uk/islam-in-britain/what-and-why-islam.

175. '2008 Events', Islam Awareness Week. http://www.iaw.org.uk/this-years-theme/2008events-1. See also, 'Tahir Alam: Profile', Comment is Free. http://commentisfree.guardian.co.uk/tahir_alam/profile.html.

176. 'Al-Hijrah Trust', Charity Commission website. http://www.charity-commission.gov.uk/ShowCharity/RegisterOfCharities/ContactAndTrustees.aspx?RegisteredCharityNumber=1018850&SubsidiaryNumber=0.

177. 'About Us', al-Hijrah Secondary School. http://www2.al-hijrah.org/secondary/about_us.html. 'History of Al-Hijrah', Al-Hijrah School. http://www.alhijrahschool.co.uk/vision_history.php. See also, Preventing Violent Extremism Pathfinder Fund 2007/8 (List of Groups Funded)

178. 'Guest CV: Tahmina Saleem', IslamOnline. http://www.islamonline.net/LiveDialogue/English/Guestcv.asp?hGuestID=7PO37z.

179. Ibid. For an example of an event organised by the Redbridge Forum Against Extremism and Islamophobia, see the website of Mike Gapes MP: 'Tackling Extremism and Islamophobia', Mike Gapes MP, 21 October 2007. http://www.mikegapes.org.uk/?p=126.

180. Tahmina Saleem, 'The Muslim community has increasingly more effective leadership', The Guardian, 30 November 2004. http://www.guardian.co.uk/uk/2004/nov/30/islamandbritain.

181. 'Community Safety Project scoops prestigious award', London Borough of Lambeth website, 18 February 2009. http://www.lambeth.gov.uk/publicsites/cScape.Lambeth.GenericTemplates/PressReleaseHTML.aspx?NRMODE=Published&NRNODEGUID=%7B2A5BC55D-41ED-4D3A-9F2F-91F0E323913B%7D&NRORIGINALURL=%2FNews%2FPressReleases%2F180209CommunitySafetyProjectScoopsPrestigiousAward.htm&NRCACHEHINT=NoModifyGuest.

182. Ibid. See also, Christopher Warren, 'Award for Street Project', Streatham Guardian, 23 February 2009. http://www.yourlocalguardian.co.uk/news/local/streathmnews/4146782.Award_for_Street_project/.

183. 'Brixton Mosque and Islamic Cultural Centre', Charity Commission. http://www.charity-commission.gov.uk/ShowCharity/RegisterOfCharities/ContactAndTrustees.aspx?RegisteredCharityNumber=1064768&SubsidiaryNumber=0.

184. 'The Mosque', Brixton Mosque and Islamic Cultural Centre. http://www.masjidit.co.uk/index.php?page=1.

185. Abdul Haqq Baker, 'A view from the inside', Criminal Justice Matters, 73, September 2008, p. 24.

Baker is Chairman of the Brixton Mosque and Islamic Cultural Centre,[183] which is committed to propagating 'the true call of understanding Islam, through the Quraan and Sunnah of the Prophet (sallallahu alayhi wassalam) upon the understanding of our pious predecessors'.[184] In other words, the ethos of the mosque is Salafist: it encourages an emulation of the spirit and ways of 'al-Salaf al-Salih' (the 'pious predecessors'). Typically, Salafists advocate one of the most austere and literalist forms of Islam and a range of values that are not always compatible with liberal democracy.

The significance of this in relation to Preventing Violent Extremism has been laid out by Abdul Haqq Baker himself in a 2008 article for the magazine *Criminal Justice Matters* in which he acknowledged that, 'Salafist ideology is considered by many to be one of the significant contributory causes to violent extremism.' He went on to state that, 'Adherents of this particular branch of Islam' – which as the comment above indicates, includes himself – 'consider their practices mainstream, away from the extreme spectrums of both liberalism and violent extremism.'[185] Was Baker therefore judged to be an appropriate partner precisely because of his commitment to Salafism?

Some policemen are clearly thinking along such lines. One supporter of this kind of approach, Robert Lambert, has argued, 'Salafis and Islamists often have the best antidotes to al-Qaida propaganda once it has taken hold.'[186] Yet, as Baker has admitted, their ability to administer this 'antidote' in practice is not necessarily proven. In an interview with CNN about Richard Reid, the would-be 'shoe-bomber' who had worshipped at the Brixton Mosque, Baker stated, 'He came because he said that we were teaching the pure form of Islam and that we should show him the straight and narrow sort of view of Islam and practice of Islam –

which is the orthodox Islam. He was happy that we weren't going to be feeding him rhetoric or erroneous beliefs.'[187] Clearly, then, Reid's experience of the Salafist brand of thinking did not steer him away from the path of jihadi terrorism; his encounter with non-violent extremism failed to defuse his potential for violent extremism.

For these reasons, it seems clear that in some areas the PVE-PF programme has not functioned as intended. In particular, there appears to be a risk that mistakes previously made nationally are now being repeated at the local level. Indeed, when Hazel Blears was asked about this in the House of Commons, she was unable to confirm that PVE-PF funds had not fallen into the hands of separatists or extremists.[188] This is something Blears herself has been very worried about and raises serious questions about the way PVE-PF – and the Prevent strategy more broadly – has operated to date. How much control do ministers really have? Who are the plethora of groups and consultants in receipt of PVE money?

At the heart of all this is the critical issue of who local authorities are deciding to work with, and this, in turn, says much about the government's current 'criteria for engagement' when picking partners.

The fact is that, by placing local authorities at the centre of the Prevent strategy, government is asking municipal worthies to take the lead role in making extremely sophisticated decisions about ideological questions relating to the struggle against radical Islamism. Not only are they tasked with the job of rooting out extremists in the absence of a complete 'intelligence' picture, but they are also meant to identify genuine moderates with whom they can work.

One initiative that did aim to tackle the problems faced by local authorities in this regard involved the creation of Improvement and Development Agency

(IDeA) accredited 'peers'.[189] These were to be specialist advisers, who could assist councils to make informed decisions about who they should or should not be working with or funding. The idea was that a group of volunteers would be trained to act as 'consultants' to those local authorities in receipt of PVE-PF monies and advise them on how best to utilise the funds. The IDeA peer scheme, however, adopted a purely technocratic approach to the issue of training the would-be mentors. In other words, people were not given the necessary skills to make informed decisions about the way PVE-PF is being used. They were taught the mechanics of how the process operated, but there was little or no training on the issue of who constituted suitable partners for local authorities.

## The Enigma of 'Prevent': What is it for?

The original guidance documents produced to accompany the launch of the Prevent strategy were long on rhetoric and short on substance. The motivating spirit was that local authorities must engage, while the mechanics of what this meant in practice were left markedly open-ended. The government's more recent pronouncements continue to offer little in the way of clarity on this vital issue.

A report produced by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC), together with the Audit Commission, in the wake of the 'Learning Development Exercise' they conducted into Prevent, is replete with the language of ill-defined 'faith leaders and trusted community leaders'.[190] The report states that 'community leaders' are to be 'credible and respected', 'influential and respected', 'key community representatives' and 'key individuals'.[191] But there is almost no exploration of what such terms might

mean. Who are these people? Who defines 'credible and respected'? On what basis are these decisions made? And who is making the selection?

The report also refers to the importance of authorities developing 'a rigorous process of evaluating bids' for PVE-PF funding, but there is no description as to what this might entail.[192]

It is not always Whitehall that exhibits this noticeable lack of clarity. A glossy document produced by the Local Government Association (LGA), entitled *Leading the preventing extremism agenda: a role made for councillors*, points to the key role that can be played by local councillors in forging 'strong links between local authorities and community groups'.[193] But there is little explanation of what is meant by the phrase 'community groups'. Instead, reference is made to 'local partners' and 'key community organisations' without any serious description of what these mean.[194] A similar pattern emerges across several LGA publications.[195]

As with the HMIC-Audit Commission report, councils are told by the LGA that they should 'avoid the inadvertent engagement with or support provided to inappropriate organisations'. The LGA also states that if a mistake is made, then 'it is important that local authorities are able to take prompt action to withdraw funding or terminate funding agreements,'[196] yet there is no description of how this termination process might occur. Similarly, there is no direction on what an organisation must do to be disqualified from this funding: what makes a group 'inappropriate'?

One of the most extraordinary aspects of the various LGA documents is the advice they give on how to select such 'community groups'. The reader is directed to the main Prevent criteria (listed above on page 29) and to an accompanying leaflet, *Leading the preventing violent extremism agenda: engaging,*

186. Robert Lambert, 'Ignoring the lessons of the past', *Criminal Justice Matters*, 73, September 2008, p. 23.

187. 'London Mosque leader recalls bomb suspect', CNN.Com, 26 December 2001. http://archives.cnn.com/2001/WORLD/europe/UK/12/26/baker.cnna/index.html.

188. *Parliamentary Debates*, House of Commons, 15 January 2008, column 771.

189. 'Support for councils and practitioners', Improvement and Development Agency. http://www.idea.gov.uk/idk/core/page.do?pageId=7946996.

190. *Preventing Violent Extremism Learning and Development Exercise: Report to the Home Office and Communities and Local Government,* October 2008, p 5.

191. Ibid. p 5, 10, 31, 32, 37, 39, 43, 46, 57.

192. Ibid. p 19.

193. *Leading the preventing violent extremism agenda: a role made for councillors*, Local Government Association, November 2008, p 13.

194. Ibid. p 9, 10.

195. *Preventing Violent Extremism Learning and Development Exercise: Report to the Home Office and Communities and Local Government*, October 2008, p 5.

196. *Leading the preventing violent extremism agenda: a role made for councillors*, November 2008, p 37.

197. *Leading the preventing violent extremism agenda: engaging, supporting and funding community groups,* November 2008.

198. *Ibid.*

199. *Preventing Violent Extremism Learning and Development Exercise: Report to the Home Office and Communities and Local Government,* October 2008, p 32.

200. *Preventing Violent Extremism Pathfinder Fund 2007/08: Case studies,* April 2007, p 7.

201. *Preventing Violent Extremism Pathfinder Fund: Mapping of project activities 2007/08,* December 2008, p 8.

202. Ibid. p 13.

203. *Leading the preventing violent extremism agenda: a role made for councillors,* November 2008, p 15.

204. *Commission on Integration and Cohesion: Our Shared Future,* June 2007, p 111. See also, p 64, 66, 86.

205. *Preventing Violent Extremism Learning and Development Exercise: Report to the Home Office and Communities and Local Government,* October 2008, p 10.

*supporting and funding community groups.*[197] The latter states that, when considering requests for funding, in the first instance 'local authorities should consult their police partners and trusted community partners on the suitability of groups or individuals tendering to receive Prevent funding or support.'[198] But who are these 'trusted community partners'? By what process, and against what measure, were they elevated to this position? Paradoxically, it seems as though the literature is suggesting that local authorities should ask 'trusted community partners' to advise them on who their 'trusted community partners' should be!

The HMIC-Audit Commission report appears to confirm this: 'Councils and the police at the LDE [learning and development exercise] sites place great value upon individuals within communities who are knowledgeable about the Prevent approach and who can provide advice on effective community engagement.'[199]

The report produced by DCLG in the wake of its 'mapping exercise' of the 2007-08 Pathfinder programme, also reflects the continuing uncertainty that exists within government on this key issue of engagement. That document concedes that the central authorities still do not fully appreciate how relationships are forged at the grassroots and suggests that 'further research is required to identify how partnerships are forged on the ground'.[200]

The significance of all this emerges more fully when one asks the straightforward, but far from simple, question: what is Prevent for? What do local authorities understand this programme of work to be about? What is the purpose of Prevent according to the government?

The government's guidance on this crucial issue is strikingly unclear. The broad objectives of the strategy have been noted above (see page 27); so too, the aims of PVE-PF specifically (see pages 33-4). With regards to the latter, DCLG's mapping exercise report states that, of the four main themes under which projects could be categorised, most – some 64 per cent – could be classed as being about 'promoting shared values'.[201] Yet in the document there is no discussion of how such values are to be defined. Elsewhere it is noted that one of the strategic objectives of the programme was to develop a community in which Muslims 'identify themselves as a welcome part of a wider British society', but, again, there is little discussion of what this means in practice.[202]

On this point, the documents produced by the LGA look to the creation of a 'shared future vision and sense of belonging'.[203] The reader is also directed to the 2007 report by the Commission on Integration and Cohesion, *Our Shared Future.* Beyond that, however, there is no elaboration on what this language actually means. Furthermore, the Commission on Integration and Cohesion's document itself displays an enormous reluctance to discuss the composition of British values. Talk of 'shared values' does not move beyond vague platitudes, with talk of 'civility, social capital and meaningful contact'.[204]

There is never any elaboration of what government understands these shared values to mean. Yes, there are references to ideas such as 'respect for the rule of law' and 'respect for others' scattered across the different publications – but what does any of this mean in practice? What exactly are the government's ambitions in this regard? Significantly, the HMIC-Audit Commission report criticises the government in this regard, noting its lack of an overarching narrative.[205]

Against this imprecise background, it is clear that a range of activities have fallen within the remit of Prevent to this point – and the value of many of these is open to serious debate.

Consider how the HMIC-Audit Commission report recommends that councils might promote 'Islamic awareness among Muslim communities and local communities more widely', or 'culture, citizenship, faith and identity activities with Muslim communities'.[206] Again, it is far from clear what is meant by this. However an accompanying case study describes how Birmingham City Council has been working with local *madrassahs* to provide 'citizenship education'. It states that staff in 72 *madrassahs* have been trained in 'teaching and delivering the Islamic syllabus'.[207] A number of questions arise from this: what is the content of this 'citizenship education'?[208] In light of the vagueness that permeates most of the official publications on this subject, how is a good citizen defined? Moreover, who is training the *madrassah* staff? What does this entail? And who was responsible for delivering it? Above all, specifically why is it the duty of local authorities to promote 'Islamic citizenship'? Why is it not explicitly the duty of councils to promote Britishness, and even loyalty to the Crown?

Another frequently-invoked project is the scheme to promote the 'training of imams in English language'.[209] But to what end? Were not clerics like Abu Hamza, Omar Bakri Mohammed and Sheikh Faisal able to exploit their fluent English to win recruits? In fact, the provision of English-language training to imams with scant regard to what they might later say may actually help disseminate the kind of extremist ideas that the government wants to curb.

A broader question worth asking is: why does the government only try to 'engage' with its Muslim citizens primarily through faith-based initiatives? What is the logic behind subsidising 'Muslimah' projects in Birmingham or Wycombe that purport to empower women by 'strengthening' the role they play within their communities?[210] What if women do not want to play such a role? Can they be citizens *outside* their Muslim communities? What is the Prevent strategy doing for those who do not wish to define themselves by their faith? More broadly, why should it be the job of government to 'support and nurture civic *and theological* leadership[emphasis added]'?[211]

> **" Why is it not explicitly the duty of councils to promote Britishness, and even loyalty to the Crown? "**

In truth, this is typical of the way in which a number of Prevent projects have now been diluted into the wider (and not always related) agenda of 'community cohesion'. It means that many of the schemes initially launched to combat violent extremism are no longer sharply focused on achieving that goal. Indeed, in its 'mapping exercise' DCLG conceded that 'very few projects engaged with individuals or groups glorifying or justifying violent extremism'. In fact, there were only seven projects across the entire country which did so, just 3 per cent of the national total. This point was later reinforced again when it was baldly revealed that, 'There appeared to be a wide range of activities under way around community cohesion, citizenship, understanding different faiths etc, but relatively few projects tackling the more sensitive issues of extremism and terrorism.'[212] The HMIC-Audit Commission report also reached a similar conclusion, stating: 'The majority of PVE-PF activities have helped Muslim communities to engage in cohesion activity, particularly that involving young people and women.'[213]

There is therefore an ongoing uncertainty within local authorities as to the purpose of the funds they receive under the

206. *Preventing Violent Extremism Learning and Development Exercise: Report to the Home Office and Communities and Local Government*, October 2008, p 57, 15.

207 Ibid. p 16.

208. The DCLG Mapping Exercise report notes that amongst the largest projects currently being funded by the PVE-PF (understood to mean programmes in receipt of £20,000 and more) are 'an education programme promoting good citizenship'. Again, the question of how this is defined is left unanswered. See *Preventing Violent Extremism Pathfinder Fund: Mapping of project activities 2007/08*, December 2008. p 39.

209 Ibid. p 21-2; also see, p. 32.

210. *Preventing Violent Extremism Learning and Development Exercise: Report to the Home Office and Communities and Local Government*, October 2008, p 57, 16.

211. Ibid p 57.

212. *Preventing Violent Extremism Pathfinder Fund: Mapping of project activities 2007/08, December 2008*, p 54.

213. *Preventing Violent Extremism Learning and Development Exercise: Report to the Home Office and Communities and Local Government,* October 2008, p 15.

Prevent strategy. As the HMIC-Audit Commission report avers, 'Most councils position the Prevent approach within their cohesion strategy. This tends to focus on building resilience within communities rather than explicitly addressing the vulnerability of those who may become engaged in violent extremism.'[214]

As to why this should be so, it is worth re-examining the guidance produced by the Local Government Association. This declares that the point of the Prevent strategy is to avert radicalisation, defined as 'the act of moving towards violent extremism'.[215] This only confirms the extent to which radicalisation, in and of itself, is deemed unimportant; extremism only appears on the radar if it is violent.

What causes this 'violent extremism'? According to the LGA, there is no 'single radicalisation pathway' but rather a 'range of factors' leading to it. The first of those mentioned is 'social exclusion', which is said to include, amongst other things, unemployment, underemployment, 'real or perceived grievances ... about aspects of government policy (particularly foreign policy)', and discrimination, racism and lack of social mobility.[216] Next, there is reference to 'identity/citizenship-based factors' – by which is meant the problem of people (particularly the young) not feeling part of British society, or harbouring 'distrust of political structures'.[217] The next 'factor' on the list is 'international relations' – and it is said that radicalisers distort events 'to build a global extremist narrative' that supports violence.[218] At this point, there is a reference to 'theological distortions' as a cause of 'violent extremism' – the closest the guidance comes to any discussion of ideology. But even then it is simply to say that the extremists are misinterpreting what Islam means: 'The word "Islam" itself means peace and most Muslims interpret Islam as a force for dialogue and co-operation.'[219] Finally, the guidance points to 'community infrastruc-

ture, role models and leadership' as a factor driving radicalisation.

All this reveals the serious downplaying of ideology – to the point where it is almost neglected entirely – and the attendant 'foregrounding' of factors such as 'social exclusion', which inevitably work to a 'community cohesion' agenda. This is not to suggest that this is not a valid agenda in and of itself, but the whole point of the Prevent strategy is that it was meant to be geared towards different objectives. As the HMIC-Audit Commission report and that of DCLG's own mapping exercise reflect, however, it is clear that many local authorities have simply not understood the distinction.

This failure of understanding, as the LGA guidance literature illustrates, leads towards some very troubling conclusions. A classic example comes from the following invocation: 'Councillors and local authorities will want to work with mosques to help ensure that the management structure of mosques allow for the participation of women and young people.'[220] Why should local councils be doing this kind of thing? The aim here, it would seem, is to bind individuals into faith community structures, but with no reference as to the basis upon which this will occur, or indeed, whether this is a suitable basis on which to proceed. Again, why should young or female Muslims be treated as only being capable of fulfilment through the mosque?

A crucial subject here is language. Government has clearly spent significant amounts of time considering both the tone and language of its publications. The Local Government Association even dedicates a section in one of its publications to language and its role in the community. It suggests that

> terms such as Islamism, for example, have
> such varied meanings that it becomes
> difficult to use them effectively in serious
> contexts. Terms such as extremism and
> radicalisation also have their limitations as

214. Ibid p 4; see also, p 17.

215. *Leading the preventing violent extremism agenda: a role made for councillors*, November 2008, p 19.

216. Ibid.

217. Ibid. p 21.

218. Ibid. p 25. On this point, it is said that "Local authorities need to acknowledge the impact that international and national events can have within local communities and should, where possible, take proactive steps towards easing community tensions". Again, the obvious question is, what exactly does this mean.

219. Ibid. p 25.

220. Ibid. p 26.

many historical radicals are now praised in classrooms as brave shapers of civil society. It must be made clear that the threshold is crossed when extreme and radical views are expressed or threatened to be expressed through violence.[221]

This is an extraordinary passage. Not only does it accentuate the distinction between radicalism and violent radicalism, but this also gives rise to a further series of questions: why, for example, is the LGA issuing directives on such matters? When was it decided that 'Islamism' is a dangerous term, given that former (and indeed some current) Islamists use the term themselves? And how was this set of value judgments arrived at? The Local Government Association told Policy Exchange that 'the text for this part of the document was supplied by our contractor: Dilwar Hussain'.[222] In fact, Hussain was contracted by the LGA to write the entire guidance document which it then issued to local councils.[223] Dilwar Hussain is head of the Policy Research Centre based at the Islamic Foundation (IF).[224] Why was this component of the IF, a parent body with a not uncontroversial history, deemed to be the authoritative interpreter of what is linguistically and ideologically acceptable for local government? After all, he who controls language is half-way towards winning the ideological battle. He who offers guidance on language is well on the way towards seizing control of the commanding heights of the culture. When questioned by Policy Exchange, LGA officials repeatedly refused to elaborate on the process by which Hussain was appointed, demonstrating the difficulty of obtaining accurate information about the engagement strategy pursued by some key agencies.[225]

Sensitivities surrounding language were also noted the in the DCLG 'mapping exercise' which found that some local authorities expressed a dislike of the term "Preventing Violent Extremism"'.[226] Similar concerns were noted too by the HMIC-Audit Commission.[227] Indeed, as has already been discussed, it was precisely this kind of reservation that made some local councils reluctant to sign up for PVE in the first place.

To remedy this, the LGA suggests that local authorities should 'work with their communities to determine acceptable phrases and definitions for the Prevent agenda', but this should remain 'broadly in line with the overarching Prevent objectives'.[228] Such an approach, however, is likely to push Prevent further into the wider, more ambiguous and distinctly different terrain of 'community cohesion'. In fact, the HMIC-Audit Commission report has already discovered that many local authorities prefer to couch the language of Prevent in seemingly more 'neutral' terms, stressing ideas like 'citizenship', 'safer and sustainable communities', 'a sense of belonging', 'tolerance', 'resilience' or 'empowering communities'. In practice, this has resulted in the dilution of the urgent and specific needs of Prevent.

The real problem in all this is that central government does not offer enough concrete direction. This has resulted in Prevent initiatives largely stagnating in many parts of the country. One council chief executive observed that with all the added pressure placed on them by Prevent and its specific focus on eradicating extremism in Muslim communities, 'people are worried about saying the wrong thing and being labelled racist'.[229] This situation stems, in part, from the increasing demands being made on local authorities without adequate guidance.

This view is further bolstered by the HMIC-Audit Commission report which found: 'In some places we heard that the national narrative and the guidance from government departments is not always clear or easy to understand.'[230] The same report also said that in 2007-08 some councils had complained of being given 'insufficient and late guidance'.[231] In light of the ambitious scale and importance of Prevent, it is unsurprising that local councils are requesting

221. Ibid. p 31.

222. Email from Local Government Association to Policy Exchange, 2 February 2009.

223. 'Preventing Violent Extremism – Handbook for the Local Government Association', Policy Research Centre. http://www.policyresearch.org.uk /research.php#lga.

224. 'About Us', Policy Research Centre, http://www.policy research.org.uk/about_us.php. For more on the Islamic Foundation see p. 22-3;

225. Email exchanges between Policy Exchange and the LGA, 11 February 2009.

226. *Preventing Violent Extremism Pathfinder Fund: Mapping of project activities 2007/08*, December 2008, p 54.

227. *Preventing Violent Extremism Learning and Development Exercise: Report to the Home Office and Communities and Local Government*, October 2008, p 11, 50.

228. *Leading the preventing violent extremism agenda: a role made for councillors*, November 2008, p 32.

229. *Preventing Violent Extremism Learning and Development Exercise: Report to the Home Office and Communities and Local Government*, October 2008, p. 40.

230. Ibid. p 10.

231. Ibid. p 17.

some definitive guidance from central government. So far, this has not been forthcoming.

## Delivery and accountability: localism supreme

The current delivery mechanisms for Prevent rely heavily on local councils, which enjoy greater 'on-the-ground' proximity than officials in Whitehall. Too often, however, this has been used as a pretext by parts of the unelected, permanent state to shape the strategic vision of Prevent without the input of parliamentarians. MPs seem to have been largely excluded from the process concerning which groups in their constituencies are funded – a concern shared across party lines by Khalid Mahmood and John Spellar (while still a backbencher), from Labour, along with the Conservative Shadow Minister for Communities and Local Government. The latter, Paul Goodman, is the MP for Wycombe, a constituency in which Muslims make up almost 11 per cent of the electorate, and so represents more Muslim voters than any other Conservative MP.[232] Yet he was not even consulted about PVE funds being spent in his constituency.

This inversion of priorities is typified by the Local Government Association which states that Prevent is 'a role made for councillors'.[233] Unsurprisingly, parliamentarians are not mentioned once in any of the LGA's publications on Prevent. But even in the vast recesses of the government's own lengthy documents on Prevent, MPs are only ever given fleeting consideration – if at all.[234] This represents a notable democratic deficit in the current structure and delivery of Prevent initiatives.

Yet MPs are supposed to be the most representative of all. In a typical constituency they usually represent up to 80,000 people, whereas councillors can be responsible for as few as 8,000 constituents – often overwhelmingly from just one ethnic or religious group. Because of the narrower remit of their

responsibilities councillors can sometimes be prone to taking too restrictive a view of what is needed; MPs, by contrast, are inherently better placed to consider the broad breadth of perspectives among their different communities.

The reduced role for elected officials also means that too much of Prevent is being carried out under a veil of secrecy by the unelected state at national, regional and local levels (quite apart from the classified roles for the police and MI5 under Prevent). Consider the difficulties in obtaining information related to it. During her 2008 presentation at Policy Exchange, Paul Goodman asked Hazel Blears whether she would send him a copy of the government's ministerial guidelines on engagement. Assurances were given that she would do so, but it was later suggested to Policy Exchange by senior officials that the criteria are 'restricted' documents. When Goodman later requested to see the list of groups who were funded through PVE-PF, DCLG took almost six months to reply. A similar request from Goodman in 2009 elicited no greater sense of urgency.[235] This lack of transparency can create real problems in the delivery of Prevent initiatives and often defies a desire for greater clarity from those concerned.[236]

In its current form PVE is characterised by a touching faith in the prestige and efficacy of local government. But all too frequently, it would seem, an adherence to local expertise has meant an obeisance to local standards. Because central government is unwilling to create a values-based approach for Prevent, municipalities are afforded too much space to inflect their own local values at local level. This is regularly at the expense of national values which define British society as a whole, and which only national government can take the lead in projecting across the country. When this is coupled with a reluctance from Whitehall to clearly identify and name the Islamist ideology to which it is opposed, this confusion is accentuated further. As a result, local coun-

232. Paul Goodman MP, Queen's Speech debate, 15 November 2006. http://conservative home.blogs.com/torydiary/2006/11/islamism_and_th.html.

233. *Leading the preventing violent extremism agenda: a role made for councillors*, November 2008. See also, *Leading the preventing violent extremism agenda: engaging, supporting and funding community groups,* November 2008.

234. *The Prevent Strategy: A Guide for Local Partners in England; Stopping people becoming or supporting terrorists and violent extremists,* June 2008.

235. Private information.

236. The HMIC-Audit Commission report found that '[Community groups and the voluntary sector] wanted more transparency on the strategic decisions made by councils and police partners in selecting projects for Prevent funding.' See, *Preventing Violent Extremism Learning and Development Exercise: Report to the Home Office and Communities and Local Government,* October 2008, p18.

cils are essentially being asked to prevent the violent extremism of an undefined enemy by promoting vague and ambiguous values and language.

This raises the question: if so much responsibility for Prevent is being hived off to local authorities, just how is Prevent monitored and controlled? To whom are those municipalities accountable?

The current regime of assessment is largely concerned with only the methodology and process of Prevent (measured through NI:35 – see above, page 34), rather than actual results. The HMIC-Audit Commission report finds that 'outcomes were mostly measured by monitoring spend against budget and the timeliness of the completion of projects. We found few performance or success measures to judge the outcomes and achievements from PVE-PF projects.'[237] Government is therefore neglecting to account properly for the effectiveness of its projects and is instead preoccupied with 'quantitative input measures … such as the number of participants at events and whether projects were completed on time and within budget'.[238] The HMIC-Audit Commission report also found that government is too busy measuring the wrong things, obsessing about 'the Prevent delivery process rather than assessing the outcome'.[239] As a result of this startling revelation, it concluded that, 'assessing the success of Prevent activity is a significantly under-developed area. It is difficult to measure and define what works in preventing violent extremism.'[240] This must be urgently addressed.

At present, all the existing documents and official guidance on Prevent fail to clearly establish the precise lines of accountability. The HMIC-Audit Commission report makes reference to the 'West London Alliance' responsible for co-ordinating and overseeing PVE-PF funding across six different boroughs.[241] Yet no information is offered about what this alliance is. Who are its members and how were they selected?

What are their terms of reference? Most importantly, to whom is the West London Alliance accountable? Similarly, what is the 'West Midlands Prevent Board'?[242] Who are its members? What role, if any, is reserved for MPs? Despite requests for information, at the time of publication Birmingham City Council had not replied to our questions regarding this.

It is vital that clear lines of accountability be established, particularly as there are moves to add yet more layers of bureaucracy to the government's overall counter-terrorism strategy, known as Contest. These include the creation of regional Contest and Prevent oversight boards. In this regard, one proposal coming from the HMIC-Audit Commission report is for the establishment of a 'Prevent Programme Board' in each region whose 'members should be drawn from the council, police, community groups and voluntary sector'.[243] Notably, however, MPs appear to be overlooked yet again and there is no reassurance that space reserved for 'community groups' will not end up being dominated by the very people whose message the government is seeking to undermine.

The 'Contest Boards' in existence in some regions scarcely seem to have inaugurated a new approach. The role of MPs, and indeed that of locally elected officials, remains greatly diminished in favour of unelected groups and officials.

The situation in the North-West region offers a useful case study of the various oversight structures in place – and their shortcomings.

At the sub-regional level, each area within the North-West has its own Contest or Prevent Steering Group.[244] For example, the Greater Manchester PVE Steering Group includes senior level Government Office, police and Police Authority representation, together with local authority PVE Officers. It reports to the Association of Greater Manchester Authorities and upwards to the regional Contest board (see below). It is

237. Ibid. p 17.

238. Ibid.. p 49.

239. Ibid. p 50.

240. Ibid. p 6. Also see, p 49.

241. Ibid. p 32.

242. Ibid. p 33.

243. Ibid. p 33.

244. *North West Region CONTEST Group Proposal for Regional CONTEST Board.*

striking that little space is reserved for elected local authority members.[245] Instead the boards are constituted almost solely of civil servants, the police service and other related agencies such as the Prison Service and UK Border Agency. One group most definitely not mentioned is MPs.

Alongside these Steering Groups, local authority Prevent Co-ordinators (usually senior policy officers or assistant Chief Executives on a local council), are brought together via a regional 'PVE Co-ordinators Group' run by the regional Government Office. However it seems clear that the primary purpose of both the Steering Groups and the Co-ordinator Group is to ensure the harmonisation of Prevent work rather than to subject it to serious external and independent political scrutiny. The North-West Prevent team has confirmed to Policy Exchange that there is no dedicated regional oversight body for Prevent work.[246]

A 'CONTEST Regional Leadership Group' (Contest Board) has been created by the Government Office for the North-West to 'co-ordinate delivery across regional Government bodies and partner organisations of the four strands of the CONTEST Strategy'. The aim of this body, which meets quarterly, is to serve as a link both upwards, to Whitehall, and downwards, to the local authorities. Yet beyond vague references to its 'advisory and challenge role', the precise character of its oversight capabilities is far from clear. This is particularly so in relation to Prevent, because the group's terms of reference state, 'For delivery of PURSUE and the police elements of PREVENT, governance and accountability will continue to reside with regional ACPO [Association of Chief Police Officers]'.[247] It is therefore not obvious how much of a say this group can have on PVE matters.

Moreover, the membership of this board confirms a shortfall in democratically mandated representation. Space is reserved for one representative from each of the five

local authorities operating in the North-West, although their presence would still constitute only a minority of the board's overall composition.[248] Thus 'elected member representation' is referred to, but as only one component among many. Furthermore, sources from inside the North-West Prevent team have confirmed that elected member involvement in this work is sporadic, with little appetite for any expansion of their role. Once again, MPs are noticeable for their absence from these structures.

## Conclusion

The creation of the Prevent initiative, and in particular of PVE-PF, was motivated by noble instincts. As Ruth Kelly, the Secretary of State who oversaw the scheme's introduction, noted, 'Too often in the past, Whitehall has tried to provide all the solutions. It cannot. It is local communities who understand their areas best. And it is local authorities and their local partners, including the police, who have the experience, expertise and tools to tackle the problems at a local level.'[249] Prevent became defined through the mantra: 'local solutions to local problems'.[250]

This strategy was born out of Kelly's belief in the need to displace the MCB as the sole gatekeeper to the Muslim community. By recognising a broader spectrum of voices, she hoped to empower 'the silent majority' at the grassroots, reaching over the heads of groups like the MCB to local representatives in the hope of bolstering them and their position. In this regard she was perhaps overly optimistic, but not for the reasons many people suspect. The new dispensation offered by Kelly still played into the hands of Islamists. There are several reasons for this. Alternative Muslim groups did not always materialise at the local level as she might have hoped. Islamists turned out to be more capable than progressives of operating at the grassroots, partly because they are better

245. *Association of Greater Manchester Authorities Executive Strategy Group, 5 December 2008, p 4.*

246. Private Information.

247. *PSA 26 CONTEST Regional Leadership Group: Terms of Reference.*

248. *Association of Greater Manchester Authorities, Executive Strategy Group, 5 December 2008, p 3. See also: North West Region CONTEST Group Proposal for Regional CONTEST Board.*

249. *Preventing Violent Extremism Pathfinder Fund: Guidance Note for Government Offices and Local Authorities in England, p 1.*

250. Ibid. p 4.

funded. After all, Charles Allen has noted in his study of Wahhabism that since the 1970s the Saudi Kingdom has spent more than $70 billion on promoting its austere and narrow version of Islam – and this has had a massive impact on Muslim communities across Europe.[251] There are more obvious reasons too. Large sections of the Muslim community simply do not define their political identity through religion alone and have little interest in engaging with the state on those terms. Islamists, however, see themselves *only* in those terms, leaving them best placed to continue capitalising on the opportunities currently offered under Prevent.

The lack of clarity from central government shows just how fiercely contested the terrain remains. Certainly, some progress has been made. Compared with a few years ago, there is now a greater willingness to accept that 'ideology matters' – although the precise contours of that struggle remain largely unexamined. The space afforded to the Muslim Council of Britain, which operates as an umbrella body for mainly Islamist groups, has been greatly reduced. However, a number of its affiliates – such as the Islamic Foundation, FOSIS and the Islamic Society of Britain – continue to enjoy official recognition.[252]

If central government has found it difficult to grasp this, what hope for worthy aldermen? Yes, local councils enjoy on-the-ground expertise. But what kind of expertise is it? Can councillors and council officials properly distinguish between different Muslim groups, all with mainstream and representative-sounding names? Who trains them to do so? Above all, why are those people with the broadest mandate and therefore greatest legitimacy – Members of Parliament – not being put at the heart of Prevent activity?

To sum up, there are a number of key problems with Prevent. These exist because:

- Prevent has concerned itself largely with the prevention of violent extremism, rather than extremism *per se*.
- Many within local authorities have little idea how to identify genuinely moderate groups and individuals.
- Central government has not produced any serious or meaningful guidelines on criteria for local partners to use when assessing which groups or individuals to work with. A lack of conceptual and linguistic clarity in this regard has further complicated matters. In many cases, the ambiguity of phrases which have encouraged working with 'community leaders' has ended up empowering the very people Prevent was supposed to undermine.
- An excessive veneration of localism has meant acquiescing to the implementation of local standards in local areas, rather than developing national standards which are reflected across the country.
- There are no clear lines of accountability for any of the different Prevent strands. This means that taxpayers and parliamentarians are completely overlooked and left unable to scrutinise the efficiency of Prevent projects.

The result is that on a subject as critical as Prevent, where the greatest possible clarity is required from government, in terms of purpose, practice and oversight the status quo is defined only by its opacity.

Before considering how this situation might be improved, it is worth first examining how the Prevent agenda is also thrusting new roles and responsibilities on to the police.

251. Charles Allen, *God's Terrorists: The Wahhabi Cult and the Hidden Roots of Modern Jihad* (London: Abacus, 2006). See also: Evgenii Novikov, 'The World Muslim League: Agent of Wahhabi Propagation in Europe', *Jamestown Foundation*, Volume 3, Issue 9, 6 May 2005. http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no_cache=1&tx_ttnews[tt_news]=472.

252. 'List of Affiliates', Muslim Council of Britain. http://www.mcb.org.uk/affiliates.php.

# 4

## The Problem of Prevent II: The Role of the Police

The police have been given a key role in delivering the Prevent strategy. This much has been made clear by the Home Secretary, Jacqui Smith, and the Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO).[253] To this end, government has given the police significant extra resources and also the funds to create dedicated Prevent positions. These include oversight posts such as the Metropolitan Police Service's Prevent Co-ordinators (see above, page 28) and new Prevent Engagement Officers (PEOs) who are to operate at grassroots level. These posts have already come into existence in certain police forces – for example, Thames Valley Police – and the Met are in the process of creating a 'PEO network'.[254]

Prevent has now become such an essential part of the police's role that the Prevent Delivery Plan issued by ACPO's Terrorism and Allied Matters (TAM) 'Business Area' says that its 'overall vision will be to mainstream counter-terrorism PREVENT functions into everyday policing'.[255]

With all the extra burdens associated with integrating Prevent into everyday policing come a series of new and important questions, which have not yet been adequately explored by government. In particular, these considerations return to the question of 'criteria for engagement'. Who does the police work with? How does it pick its partners? And to what end? ACPO's 2008 Prevent Delivery Plan is less than reassuring on these crucial issues and – much like other Prevent documents – raises almost as many questions as it answers.

### Picking Partners: The Policing Imperative

The requirement for police forces to be involved in community engagement work is entirely in keeping with the requirements of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 – the legal manifestation of Tony Blair's best known slogan, 'tough on crime, tough on the causes of crime'. This foregrounded the importance of 'partnership' work and placed a statutory duty on police to work with 'a range of other local public, private, community and voluntary groups and with the community itself'.[256]

In some ways, this means that Prevent can be seen as merely an extension and reinforcement of the commitment to work with various partners at local level. But one effect of this is that the Prevent strategy documents focus heavily on 'community engagement' – effectively as a goal in itself – and give less consideration to what the *terms* of this engagement should be. As a result, many of the problems associated with Prevent delivery by local councils are replicated by the police.

The ACPO Prevent Delivery Plan reveals much about the indistinct nature of the police's corporate understanding of what Prevent requires. ACPO's contribution to this subject reiterates the kind of vague language seen elsewhere, with references to 'Key Individual Networks', 'Independent Advisory Groups' and 'community representatives'.[257] Again, these terms are not adequately explored; nor is any guidance offered about how such partners should be identified. In the

253. 'Home Secretary Jacqui Smith: "Prevent strategy: background and next steps – speech to the BCU Commanders' Conference"', Home Office Press Release, 16 April 2008; *PREVENT: The Policing Response to the Prevention of Terrorism and Violent Extremism Strategy & Delivery Plan*, April 2008.

254. 'Prevent Engagement Officers', Thames Valley Police. http://www.thamesvalley.police.uk/yournh/yournh-about-nh-pol/yournh-about-nh-pol-peo.htm; *'Delivery of Prevent: Report by Assistant Commissioner Robert Quick on behalf of the Commissioner'*, Metropolitan Police Authority, 29 January 2009, p 1.

255. *'Police Prevent Strategy – Partners briefing'*, Association of Chief Police Officers (Terrorism and Allied Matters)*, p 8. Also, see *PREVENT: The Policing Response to the Prevention of Terrorism and Violent Extremism Strategy & Delivery Plan*, April 2008.

256. *Crime and Disorder Act 1998, Section 17*. http://www.crimereduction.homeoffice.gov.uk/legislation26.htm.

257. *PREVENT: The Policing Response to the Prevention of Terrorism and Violent Extremism Strategy & Delivery Plan*, April 2008, p 10, 25, 39.

same document, the police do recognise as their first objective the need to undermine extremist ideology. Yet this is followed by the usual oblique references to 'mainstream voices' and the promotion of 'alternative narratives/messages'.[258] There is no discussion of what comprises a 'mainstream' or an 'alternative' voice: are these meant to be 'mainstream' in relation to Muslim communities, or 'mainstream' in relation to British society as a whole? Nor is there any discussion of the manner in which these people should be engaged. And while it is stated that 'Preventing violent extremism includes prevention of the funding of ideologues,' the question of who, or what, defines an ideologue is left unanswered.[259]

Even the Commanders Guidance issued to Basic Command Units (BCU), which is supposed to 'provide Police leaders at the rank of Superintendent or Police Staff equivalent with the relevant skills and knowledge to ensure delivery of the PREVENT agenda', says nothing on the vital question of criteria for engagement.[260]

This kind of imprecision is also evident in other documents, such as the report produced by the Metropolitan Police Authority (MPA) following a consultation process called 'Counter Terrorism: The London Debate'.[261] There too, the language is of 'community engagement' via 'vetted community members' and 'trusted community contacts' (with whom it is recommended that the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) share intelligence on forthcoming counter-terrorism operations in order to prevent a backlash).[262] But almost inevitably, there is no discussion of how such individuals might be selected.

The MPA have informed Policy Exchange that the Metropolitan Police Service does have a set of criteria that govern its engagement policy.[263] However it is far from clear how well-defined these criteria actually are. When asked about them, some senior police officers professed to be unaware of their existence, while

others suggested that, while they do exist, they do not constitute a 'rigid' set of criteria that must always be followed.[264] Instead, key decisions seem to be made by senior officers on a case by case basis – too often with little reference even to the minimalistic criteria set out by the government.

In line with this, senior police sources have stressed that Prevent should *not* entail drawing a 'firm line' between those with whom the authorities should and should not engage. It is claimed that the situation is not 'black and white', but one characterised by 'shades of grey'. This is at odds with Hazel Blears' recent call for 'moral clarity' and a 'clear dividing line between what we consider acceptable, and what we consider beyond the pale'.[265]

Furthermore, this attitude seems to be at variance with the police's general preference for a clear-eyed focus on legality/illegality.

It also reflects the extent to which the police fail to understand the profound political effect of decisions about whom they judge to be an appropriate partner. These decisions can alter the balance of power within communities – and impede the effort to integrate Muslim populations and induct them into the norms and values of British society.

The MPA has further intimated that, in so far as they are in place, the criteria take their cue from the Security Service, which vet individuals and groups as required. Yet, the Security Service have a narrow remit (see page 68), focusing on the prevention of violence against the British State. This hardly seems an appropriate yardstick for the police to use when assessing the suitability of its potential partners, as it sets a very high threshold for unacceptable behaviour and means that groups which espouse values antithetical to those of our society and way of life could be deemed legitimate, public, partners of the police service.

When asked which groups the MPA would deem it unacceptable for the MPS to work with, the only firm benchmark

258. Ibid. p 10. For similar language, see also appendix 4 of *MPS Prevent Delivery Strategy: Report by Assistant Commissioner Specialist Operations on behalf of the Commissioner*, Metropolitan Police Authority, 24 July 2008.

259. *PREVENT: The Policing Response to the Prevention of Terrorism and Violent Extremism Strategy & Delivery Plan*, April 2008, p 13.

260. Ibid. p 27; Also see, *BCU Commanders Guidance*.

261. *Counter-Terrorism: The London Debate,* February, 2007

262. Ibid. p 8, 43, 44.

263. Private Information.

264. Private Information.

265. Rt Hon Hazel Blears MP, 'Many Voices: understanding the debate about preventing violent extremism', London School of Economics, 25 February 2009. http://www.communities.gov.uk/speeches/corporate/manyvoices.

given was that the organisation should not advocate violence. When pushed as to whether this meant violence in the UK, or all violence, it was said that this was a 'movable feast', which appeared to indicate a willingness, in certain circumstances, to work with groups that might promote violence abroad, if not in the UK.[266]

At best, it might be said that much continues to be unclear about this process of engagement. Senior police sources argue that their experience to date has shown that this is 'not an exact science' and has involved substantial 'trial and error'.[267]

It is clear that there has been some consideration of the problems that might flow from this and of ways in which the police might be better prepared to fulfil their commitments under Prevent. For example, the ACPO document emphasises the importance of 'training of staff in faith and cultural skills'.[268] Alongside this, there are references to 'Intelligence and Community Engagement' training.[269] However this training is not designed to help police forces make decisions about their strategic partnerships.

Equally significant is the question of *who* the police service uses to train its officers. The ACPO Prevent Strategy Delivery report merely concludes that, 'experience shows that training should be delivered locally by staff who know their communities'.[270] Meanwhile evidence of the kind of groups being brought in from the outside to conduct such training, raises yet further issues.

For example, Operation Nicole is a police training event for Prevent recommended by ACPO.[271] The project has been developed jointly by ACPO's National Community Tension Team and the Lokahi Foundation.[272] However Lokahi's understanding of the issues that surround the threat from extremism seems to under-rate the role played by ideology. This much can be gleaned from an examination of the 'Campusalam' project also run by the

Lokahi Foundation.[273] This is 'a programme to provide university students and staff with a wide range of knowledge, skills and advice to support activities and engagement in matters of their faith'. On the question of what factors fuel extremism, the Campusalam website lists a number of things, including: 'anger over foreign policy'; a 'sense of grievance or victimisation from treatment by the media'; 'social exclusion and economic marginalisation'; and the 'experience of prejudice and hostility from outside the community: Islamophobia or discrimination'. Notably, Islamist ideology is not mentioned.[274] Indeed, elsewhere on their website, it is stated:

> Ideological or religious orientation does not necessarily determine whether the overall impact of people's interactions are constructive, or whether the people are 'radical' or 'extremist' Those who are not Muslim and lack experience and expertise in understanding Islamic thinking, belief and contemporary trends should not attempt to make judgments about the orientation of Muslim students or staff based on what they hear or observe. Judgments based on ideology, or fundamentals of Islamic behaviour or practice, can also miss the mark of serious potentially violent activity … Some individuals who wish to bring about a Caliphate in this country may have political aspirations that could be deemed 'radical'. However, so does the Socialist Workers' Party. Mere aspirations do not entail the intention to engage in violent acts for religious and political motivation … Trying to make blunt judgments based on ideology or fervour of religious practice can lead both to over-diagnosis and under-diagnosis, simultaneously casting suspicion on innocent people and missing those with serious intent to commit violence.[275]

266. MPA interview with Policy Exchange, 22 January 2009.

267. Senior Police Source.

268. PREVENT: The Policing Response to the Prevention of Terrorism and Violent Extremism Strategy & Delivery Plan, April 2008, p 22.

269. Ibid. p 10, 24.

270. Ibid. p 24

271. The Prevent Strategy: A Guide for Local Partners in England; Stopping people becoming or supporting terrorists and violent extremists, June 2008, p 39.

272. 'Case Studies', Lokahi Foundation, http://www.lokahi.org.uk/case; 'Report of the Chief Constable: Exercise Nicole Feedback', Hampshire Police Authority, 4 November 2008. http://209.85.229.132/search?q=cache:sIVOrPu2Tq8J:www3.hants.gov.uk/item_8_-_exercise_nicole_feedback.doc+%22lokahi+foundation%22&hl=en&ct=clnk&cd=22&client=opera..

273. Campusalam. http://www.campusalam.org/

274. 'How does it happen?', Campusalam. http://www.campusalam.org/cs/knowledge_central/knowledge_about_extr/14u78ttzu.html.

275. 'How can I tell if it's a problem?', Campusalam. http://www.campusalam.org/cs/knowledge_central/knowledge_about_extr/1yaypg4rz.html.

For an organisation that currently plays a role in educating police forces about their responsibilities under Prevent, this is a striking statement. If this is the kind of thing that police are being taught, then it would point to an approach to Prevent that is markedly out of step with recent government pronouncements.

In this context it is worth considering what guidance ACPO has offered on the rationale underpinning Prevent. Once more, there is clear synergy, as one would expect, with the language (and problems) of the wider Prevent strategy. For example, one objective is for police to 'increase the resilience of communities to engage with and resist violent extremists'. To this end, ACPO calls on them to help the creation of 'social structures' that 'exist with strong leadership and civic engagement, articulating shared values, isolating violent extremists and those who provide them with support'. Yet, typically, there is no description of what these 'shared values' might be.[276] Elsewhere it is stated that the police should take care to use 'appropriate language' when working on Prevent matters.[277] Again, the content of this language is not defined – nor is it clear who defined it for the police.

Even more opaque is the call for the police to ensure that 'genuine grievances that contribute to violent extremism are addressed effectively and perceived grievances rebutted'.[278] The document does add that, 'Grievances that are global or political in nature are not amenable to police intervention.' But it also reaffirms that 'The police do have a role, however, in understanding and addressing community grievances.' And there is a reference to their taking 'substantive action' to this end.[279] All this raises the question of what is meant here. What constitutes a 'grievance' that the police should be acting to resolve? What are the limits on the police's action? More broadly, why does it fall to the police force to tackle such profoundly political and ideological questions?

> **❝** Decisions taken by the police often influence other agencies similarly tasked with delivering Prevent initiatives and can therefore tilt the balance in municipalities considering their engagement strategy **❞**

A cautionary tale in this regard is provided by the recent controversy surrounding the decision of Sgt Amar Shakoor of Strathclyde Police to sign an open letter on behalf of the Strathclyde Muslim Police Association condemning Israel's actions in Gaza.[280] As Professor Tom Gallagher of Bradford University's Peace Studies Department has observed, 'However diligent a search in the annals of Glasgow police history, I doubt if it will be easy to discover a precedent for a serving officer taking such an overt political stand.'[281] As Gallagher noted, the danger of such actions is that it may lead to a serious loss in confidence in the impartiality of the police, with the result that 'Glasgow´s investment in anti-sectarian work' will go 'up in smoke'.[282]

This episode underscores the dangers arising from the absence of clear direction from government about what is expected from the police.

The effects of this can be far-reaching. Decisions taken by the police often influence other agencies similarly tasked with delivering Prevent initiatives and can therefore tilt the balance in municipalities considering their engagement strategy. One Westminster councillor told Policy Exchange that councillors frequently ask the police about their view on questionable groups and individuals. The police's concern with *violent* extremism alone means that groups which should not be adopted as Prevent partners regularly 'slip through the net' and dissenting voices at

276. *PREVENT: The Policing Response to the Prevention of Terrorism and Violent Extremism Strategy & Delivery Plan*, April 2008, p 17.

277. Ibid. p 21. See also, p. 39.

278. Ibid. p 18.

279. Ibid.

280. 'Scottish figures unite on action for Gaza', Scottish Islamic Foundation, 29 December 2008. http://www.scottishislamic.org/index.php?go=news&id=256

281. Professor Tom Gallagher, Unpublished letter to the Scottish *Herald*, supplied to Policy Exchange.

282. Ibid.

the local level are consequently overlooked. It means the police can sometimes be the weakest link in the chain.

In this respect, the involvement of the police in Prevent, particularly in relation to addressing grievances, is a charter for the politicisation of the police on matters which are beyond their competence. It is emblematic of the increasing pressures being placed on the police without any clear direction in policy coming from government.

## The Enigma of Prevent: What is it for?

After the police were attacked for enlisting the support of Islamists, former Assistant Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police, Andy Hayman, argued: 'The very people who are best placed to advise on how to reach those in the community who are most susceptible to extremism are those whose own backgrounds may present a security risk. This is where the dilemma sits. The most valuable advisers are those likely to fail the vetting process and be barred from Scotland Yard.'[283] Robert Lambert, one of the founders of the Muslim Contact Unit in the Metropolitan Police, goes further and advocates 'partnership with Muslim groups conventionally deemed to be subversive to democracy; and negotiation by those groups with Muslim youth drawn to Al Qaeda terrorism'.[284] This approach has come to define much of the outreach work currently being done by the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS).

At first glance it might seem attractive to enlist such groups in the fight against al-Qaeda. After all, a number of groups that could be classed as ideologically Islamist condemn terrorism in the UK and encourage their members to participate in the democratic process. They often want to participate in the political mechanisms of the state, appearing open

and progressive. But to what end? They usually do so in order to present themselves as interlocutors for British Muslims and to make sectarian demands on our liberal democracy, arguing we should become less liberal and less free in order to accommodate them.

One result of such beliefs was that it took years to arrest the notorious hate preacher, Abu Hamza. At his trial for soliciting murder, Hamza's defence counsel, Edward Fitzgerald, QC, told the court how an officer from the Metropolitan Police had previously given the defendant the all-clear: 'You have freedom of speech. You don't have anything to worry about so long as we don't see blood on the streets.'[285]

The police and Security Service made a 'pragmatic' judgement. They left preachers like Abu Hamza alone and used them as 'clerical honeypots' to gather intelligence on their movements, supporters and networks. Quite a few believed that, in many cases, these groups were not really that dangerous, but were instead led by loud-mouthed hotheads, buoyed by the cocksure exuberance of youth. The rantings of Abu Hamza were even deemed by some senior officers of the era as a 'safety valve' for letting off steam.

The police and Security Service were wrong. Among those who studied under Abu Hamza at the old Finsbury Park Mosque are Zacarias Moussaoui, the 'twentieth hijacker' who pleaded guilty to conspiring to fly a plane into the White House on 9/11; Richard Reid, who tried to blow up a flight from Paris to Miami using a bomb concealed in his shoes; Djamel Beghal, who pleaded guilty in France to planning a suicide attack on the US embassy; and Nizar Trabelsi, once a professional footballer in Germany, who was convicted in Belgium for planning a suicide attack against a NATO base.[286]

Clearly, Abu Hamza was not the harmless radical many thought he was – nor was he the only one to enjoy a degree of tolerance

283. Andy Hayman, 'Comment: The risk of good policing intelligence', *The Times*,16 December 2008. http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/uk/crime/article5348490.ece.

284. Robert Lambert, 'Empowering Salafis and Islamists Against Al-Qaeda: A London Counterterrorism Case Study' in *PS: Political Science & Politics*, Vol.41, No. 1, January 2008, p 31-5.

285. *The Times*, 8 February 2006. http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/comment/columnists/guest_contributors/article728330.ece.

286. The case study of all these men connected to Hamza is listed in Sean O'Neill and Daniel McGrory, *The Suicide Factory: Abu Hamza and the Finsbury Park Mosque* (London, 2006).

on the part of the British state. This acqui-escence partly stemmed from the belief that a 'covenant of security' would prevent terrorists attacking the UK, while their rage was directed abroad. Indeed, the situation became so bad that the former head of the Metropolitan Police's Counter-Terrorism Command, Peter Clarke, revealed at the inaugural Colin Cramphorn memorial lecture at Policy Exchange in 2007, that, 'By and large, in 2003, the UK was a net exporter of terrorism.'[287]

The belief endures, in Whitehall and in many police forces, that radicals can be controlled, and that they, in turn, can control angry young men. It was precisely this kind of thinking that led to the creation of the Muslim Contact Unit (MCU) by the Metropolitan Police Service, shortly after 9/11. The purpose of the MCU was to foster new relationships with the Muslim community, and its work has continued to be shaped by the belief that there is a value in working with non-violent extremists. Robert Lambert has even argued that the police should adopt 'a non-judgmental approach [to] persuade young Muslims that al-Qaeda propaganda is wrong'.[288]

It is a view whose advocates urge the state to refrain from making value-judge-ments about the nature of political Islamists and their beliefs, in the hope that this trade-off will deliver security. The logic, as argued by Lambert, is that genuine Muslim moderates have 'neither religious nor political credibility'.[289] As a result, he declares: 'Let's be clear who it is that can keep London safe in the run-up to the Olympic Games.'[290]

The apotheosis of this approach has been the Channel Project, which aims to promote the early identification of, and intervention with, vulnerable individuals at local level (see above, pages 30-1).[291] To this end, many police forces are prepared to co-operate with, and occasionally even support, some of the most sectarian

elements within our society, in the belief that only they can deliver security.

> **many police forces are prepared to co-operate with, and occasionally even support, some of the most sectarian elements within our society, in the belief that only they can deliver security.**

At some level this approach might sound reasonable, but it has profound implications for the nature of our democracy. Consider the bizarre and damaging consequences that this policy produced when West Midlands Police decided to report Channel 4 to Ofcom, the broadcast-ing regulator, over fears that its investigation into hate preachers in some British mosques might have harmed 'community cohesion'.

In January 2007 Channel 4 broadcast 'Dispatches: Undercover Mosque', which showed the results of a covert investigation into sermons delivered in British mosques. It captured one imam, Abu Usama, preach-ing a message of vicious sectarianism, discrimination and intolerance at the Green Lane Mosque in Birmingham. During one meeting he told the congregation that Osama bin Laden is 'better than a million George Bushes and a thousand Tony Blairs'.[292] He described all non-Muslims as 'pathological liars' and in other sermons described women as 'deficient'.[293] Abu Usama also said, 'Take that homosexual man and throw him off the mountain.'[294] Undercover filming elsewhere revealed that the London Central Mosque (also known as the Regent's Park Mosque) was selling a video by Sheikh Feiz, a Saudi-trained cleric, who told his congregation that Jews are pigs and will have to be killed. 'They [Jews] will be (snorting), all of them, every single one of them.'[295]

After the programme was broadcast, Roger Godsiff, Labour MP for Sparkbrook

287. 'Learning From Experience – Counter Terrorism in the UK since 9/11', The Colin Cramphorn Memorial Lecture delivered by Deputy Assistant Commissioner, Peter Clarke, 24 April 2007.

288. Lambert, 'Empowering Salafis and Islamists Against Al-Qaeda: A London Counter-terrorism Case Study', p 32.

289. Lambert cited in Seumas Milne, 'We need to listen to the man from special branch', The Guardian, 14 February 2008. http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2008/feb/14/uksecurity.terrorism.

290. Ibid.

291. Parliamentary Debates, House of Commons, 22 July 2008, Column 1373W.

292. 'C4's Dispatches reported to Ofcom', Channel 4 News, 8 August 2007. http://www. channel4.com/player/v2/player.jsp?showId=8236; 'Dispatches reported to Ofcom', Channel 4 News, 8 August 2007. http://www.channel4.com/news/articles/arts_entertainment/film_tv/dispatches+reported+to+ofcom/660762; see also, Transcript from 'Undercover Mosque, Hardcash Productions, January 2007.

293. Transcript from 'Undercover Mosque, Hardcash Productions, January 2007.

294. Ibid.

295. Ibid.

and Small Heath in whose constituency some of the featured mosques are located, wrote to the Chief Constable of West Midlands Police and the Director of Public Prosecutions, urging them to investigate the preachers whose extremist views had been uncovered.[296]

West Midlands Police (WMP) looked into the matter, but later abandoned its investigation, claiming that it had insufficient grounds for prosecution. Remarkably, the WMP then switched the focus of its attention from the preachers identified by the programme to the programme-makers themselves. There followed a new investigation into whether the broadcaster could be prosecuted for showing material likely to stir up racial hatred. Finally, when this too failed to uncover sufficient evidence for prosecution, West Midlands Police made a formal complaint to Ofcom over the editing of the programme.[297] An accompanying complaint from the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) claimed that the documentary had been a 'heavily edited television programme', which had taken 'out of context aspects of speeches' and thereby presented a 'completely distorted' picture of what the speakers had actually said.[298] West Midlands Police stated the material broadcast by Channel 4 had been 'sufficient to undermine community cohesion'.[299]

In November 2007 Ofcom cleared Channel 4 of any wrong-doing. Given the damage done to its reputation, Channel 4 then announced it would sue the Crown Prosecution Service and West Midlands Police for libel. In May 2008 the case was resolved out of court when the CPS and police agreed to issue a full apology and paid £100,000 in damages.[300]

So, how did this extraordinary sequence of events come to pass?

It is easy to dismiss all this as an example of 'political correctness gone mad', a tabloid caricature of British police forces in a post-Macpherson world.[301] However, a serving officer has told Policy Exchange:

'What you have to understand is that Abu Usama is the last person young Muslim men meet before they go off the deep end.'[302] Therefore, to ensure that people don't 'go off the deep end', it would appear that preachers like Abu Usama at the Green Lane Mosque were more than just tolerated. It is a policy which suggests that it is precisely the most reactionary elements in the Muslim community that should be engaged with – because only they can 'deliver' security. If this is the case, does it mean that we now have a form of state-sanctioned bigotry for what the police believe are security reasons?

Was this part of a quite deliberate policy undertaken by West Midlands Police, under PVE, to show local Muslims that it was 'impartial'? Was it intended as a conciliatory gesture towards elements in the community, after West Midlands Police had only a few months before, uncovered a terrorist plot to behead a serving Muslim soldier in Birmingham – thus allegedly placing the community under pressure? But whose advice did the West Midlands Police take, either within Birmingham City Council or the regional Prevent team? Did they believe there was a need to 'even up the score'? When Policy Exchange sought clarification from the West Midlands Police Authority on these matters, they said they were 'unable to comment'.[303]

So what lessons did West Midlands Police derive from this affair? In evidence given to the Home Affairs Select Committee in November 2008, by Deputy Chief Constable Phil Gormley (who had earlier carried out a review of the 'Undercover Mosque' controversy), he largely declined to go into detail. He admitted that the police had 'got it wrong' and lessons had been learnt. But to this point it remains indeterminate precisely what the police understand their 'mistakes' to be – and therefore, what lessons they have learned. Indeed, the only substantive

296. Jasbir Authi, 'MP urges probe over extremists mosques: Call to police after hardline preachers exposed on TV', *Birmingham Mail*, 17 January 2007.

297. Adam Sherwin, 'Muslim outrage at Channel 4 film prompts new inquiry by watchdog', *The Times*, 9 August 2007. http://entertainment.timesonline.co.uk/tol/arts_and_entertainment/tv_and_radio/article2224728.ece. 'C4 "distorted" mosque programme', *BBC News Online*, 8 August 2007. http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/england/west_midlands/6936681.stm.

298. Ibid.

299. *Ofcom Broadcast Bulletin*, Issue 97, November 2007. http://www.ofcom.org.uk/tv/obb/prog_cb/obb97/issue97.pdf.

300. 'Police apologise to mosque film crew', Channel 4 News, 15 May 2008. http://www.channel4.com/news/articles/uk/police%20apologise%20to%20mosque%20film%20crew/2199452.

301. The Macpherson report was published in 1999 after an inquiry into the Metropolitan Police Service's handling of the Stephen Lawrence murder investigation. The report accused the Metropolitan Police Service and policing in general of 'institutional racism' and led to a raft of wide-ranging reforms.

302. Private information.

303. Email exchanges between Policy Exchange and the West Midlands Police Authority, 23 February 2009.

comment offered by Gormley hitherto in this regard was the view that the joint press release issued by the CPS and the WMP – at the time of Channel 4's referral to Ofcom – had been an error.[304] In other words, the corporate view seemed to be that what was problematic was the *way* things were done, rather than the actions themselves.

This entire episode is all the more worrying when set against the broader policing ethos that would appear to condone – indeed to favour – non-violent extremism as useful in the battle against violent extremism. A senior officer typified this belief when he told a policing conference: 'Isn't radicalisation a good thing? Surely what matters is when it becomes violent radicalisation? Isn't it a good sign young people want to become engaged and change the world?'[305] He saw radicalism, even when its content is hate-filled and reactionary, as constructive: it operates as a safety valve, discharging anger and stabilising otherwise volatile young men.

The MPA's report into counter-terrorism policing in London similarly noted: 'We were reminded that radicalism in students can be a good thing, and that it is important again to distinguish rigorously between students on the one hand getting politicised, organised and mobilised, and, on the other, being recruited into terrorism.'[306] It continued: 'We heard from students of literature disseminated on campus which incited racial hatred – mostly virulently anti-Semitic propaganda – but none which overtly solicited terrorism.'[307] Little attention is paid in this respect to the connection between non-violent and violent extremism. Not only is the symbiotic relationship between the two totally ignored, but the former is also seen as a constructive phenomenon which can be positively enlisted against the latter.

Perhaps it was these considerations that led the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) to act as an official partner to the Global Peace and Unity (GPU) event. Over a

four-year period the MPS has provided sponsorship of approximately £26,500 to GPU and senior Met officials have attended and spoken at the conference.[308] As the case study below (pages 75-77) demonstrates, GPU featured several individuals and groups that have put forward extreme Islamist sentiments. Despite this, it was deemed a suitable organisation with which the MPS should work. And when Hazel Blears wanted to advise ministers against participating in the 2008 GPU (see above, pages 15-16), the fact that the police were attending was used against her by colleagues and civil servants who wanted to attend. A decision taken by the MPS to support an event can therefore sometimes make it difficult for even senior elected politicians to say no.

> ❝ the police are being placed in a very difficult situation by what they are being asked to do under the aegis of Prevent ❞

So how is it that an organisation such as the Metropolitan Police Service, which in its standard email disclaimer disavows 'racist, homophobic, sexist, defamatory, offensive, illegal or otherwise inappropriate material', can allow itself publicly to endorse individuals and groups diametrically opposed to several of its own openly stated values?[309] Why is it that the MPS, which has to make 'Equality Impact Assessments' (EIAs) of its actions – particularly in relation to counter-terrorism activity – does not consider the 'impact' on other minority communities of policies that lead to the toleration of those who advance bigoted and offensive opinions?[310] Significantly, when Policy Exchange raised this possibility, senior MPS figures responded with blithe indifference to the idea that Prevent might have an impact on community relations more generally. To

304. *Police and the Media: Second Report of Session 2008-09*, House of Commons, Home Affairs Select Committee, 16 December 2008, p 12-3, Ev. 8-10.

305. Private information.

306. *Counter-Terrorism: The London Debate*, p 60.

307. Ibid. p 61.

308. *Global Peace and Unity Conference*, MPS briefing sent to MPA members, 9 February 2009.

309. This sentence is part of the disclaimer used by the Metropolitan Police Service at the bottom of all their standard emails.

310. For an example of this pre-occupation with 'Racial and Equality Impact' assessments, see *Counter-Terrorism Governance Update: Report by the Chief Executive*, Metropolitan Police Authority, 24 July 2008.

conduct such EIAs of Prevent on non-Muslim communities would, it was asserted, be 'a bureaucratic nightmare'.[311]

The result of this unwillingness to consider the broader impact of its policies is that men like Abu Usama are *seen* to be enjoying the patronage of the police. As the result of a quite deliberate policy, they are endowed with the legitimacy that stems from being quasi-official partners of the police.

The recent controversy over Mohammed Ali Harrath raises similar issues. Harrath had been appointed by the MPS' Muslim Contact Unit as an adviser on preventing extremism, but in December 2008 *The Times* revealed that Interpol has issued a 'red notice' against him, a request by the Tunisian government for his arrest and extradition on terrorism charges.[312] Whatever the truth of these allegations, Harrath is quite open about his political views: he supports the establishment of an Islamic state.[313] On what basis then, was he judged by the Metropolitan Police Service to be an authoritative interpreter of Islam? What is the MPS looking for in its Muslim counsellors?

These same questions might also be asked of the Muslim Safety Forum (MSF). Created after 9/11, the MSF is a key advisory body to the Metropolitan Police Service on Islam and also has some powers to scrutinise police actions.[314] It was set up to give the MPS a 'finger on the pulse' of the Muslim community.[315] To this end, a number of national organisations were asked to send representatives to meetings with the police. This *ad hoc* arrangement later evolved so that the MSF developed its own constitution and became an independent body. Today, it holds monthly meetings with 'with senior representatives of ACPO, the MPS, the MPA, Home Office and the IPCC [Independent Police Complaints Commission]'.[316] Sources in the MPA describe it as the 'main mechanism of consultation' with the Muslim

community,[317] and in 2006-07 it was given at least £35,000 of taxpayers' money.[318] But on what basis, if any, was the MSF deemed suitable for this role?

The MSF is certainly not an uncontroversial body, and lists both the Muslim Association of Britain and the Muslim Council of Britain among its members.[319] Perhaps more worrying are the revelations surrounding Azad Ali, a trustee and former chairman of the MSF, who also sits on the Metropolitan Police's Strategic Stop and Search Committee and Police Use of Firearms Group, as well as the IPCC's Community Advisory Group and the Home Office's Trust and Confidence Community Panel.[320] Ali has recently published a series of incendiary articles on the internet fuelled by his outrage over Israeli military activity in Gaza. In one article he pours scorn on moderate Muslims, calling them 'self-serving vultures, feeding on the dead flesh of the Palestinians'.[321] On what basis, then, was someone with Azad Ali's views, or an organisation such as the MSF, judged to be an appropriate partner for the Metropolitan Police and other official organs? Why, even now, does the Metropolitan Police not regard him as beyond the pale?

When pressed on this matter, senior police sources seemed uncertain whether any systematic process of 'due diligence' is routinely carried out on those with whom they work. As with the broader question of 'criteria for engagement' (see above, page 29), the decision appeared to be devolved to the subjective assessment of those within the police responsible for the actual engagement. In other words, it was a 'judgment call' in which there were few 'hard and fast rules'.[322]

While the police are tasked with 'addressing grievances' under Prevent, it is worth considering whether its choice of partners such as Azad Ali and Mohammed Ali Harrath has actually accentuated, rather than damped down, grievances? Of perhaps greater concern is that the police turn to

311. Private Information

312. Richard Kerbaj & Dominic Kennedy, 'Terrorism adviser to Met is on wanted list', *The Times*, 15 December 2008. http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/uk/crime/article5342730.ece. For the Interpol notice see: *http://www.interpol.int/Public/Data/Wanted/Notices/Data/1992/85/1992_27585.asp*.

313. Richard Kerbaj & Dominic Kennedy, 'Nothing criminal about trying to establish an Islamic state', *The Times*, 15 December 2008. http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/uk/crime/article5342766.ece.

314. 'History', Muslim Safety Forum. http://muslimsafetyforum.org/about-us/history.html.

315. Private Information.

316. 'History', Muslim Safety Forum. http://muslimsafetyforum.org/about-us/history.html.

317. Private Information.

318. Neil Millard & Jack Lefley, '"Police give £35,000 taxpayers" money to a Muslim organisation formerly headed by the civil servant suspended over anti-British remarks', *Evening Standard*, 19 January 2009. http://www.thisislondon.co.uk/standard/article-23622454-details/Police+give+%A335,000+taxpayers%27+money+to+group+headed+by+anti-British+Muslim/article.do

319. 'MSF Members', Muslim Safety Forum, http://muslimsafetyforum.org/msf-members.html.

320. 'Muslim-Government Relations in Changing Security Contexts: Prospects for Transformation – Participant Biographies', SOAS, 5-7 June 2008. http://www.soas.ac.uk/politics/events/muslimgovtconf/participants/participants-biographies.html#AzadAli.

321. Azad Ali, 'We are the Resistance II', *Between the Lines*, 15 January 2009. http://blog.islamicforumeurope.com/?p=139.

322. Private Information.

such advisers when trying to establish what grievances it should be addressing.

All of this highlights the extent to which the police are being placed in a very difficult situation by what they are being asked to do under the aegis of Prevent. Already, Britain's police forces have certain statutory obligations to engage in partnership and engagement activities, and this has been reinforced by the localist agenda emanating from the government on Prevent.

The result of this is two-fold. First, there is the obsession with engagement for engagement's sake. In the context of a policing culture that cherishes 'community partnership' and 'neighbourhood policing' as absolute priorities, 'engagement' has become a sacred cow to be pursued and preserved at all costs. An example of this was again provided by the decision of the MPS to attend the GPU conference. A senior member of the MPA has defended this move on the basis that, irrespective of the questionable views of some participants, participation in GPU gave the police access to a large number of Muslims. Even more striking is the way in which, despite the debate on this very subject within government, some senior MPS officers seem barely to have registered the possibility that attendance at such an event might be controversial. In their view there was never any question that the police *should* be involved with an event like GPU, because it provided an opportunity to 'get the Met's message out'.[323]

In other words, it is the very process of engagement – in and of itself – that is prized. The quality or nature of that process is deemed less significant. The only brake on potentially damaging acts of engagement appears to be the fear of external objections (for example, a media row), rather than the use of any objective guidelines.

Moreover, to the extent that issues of quality are considered, they are viewed through a very narrow lens: that of the

immediate security challenge. The fact is that the police have a different set of priorities from local councils and government as a whole. Their focus is therefore very much on preventing *violent* extremism, rather than all extremism.

> ❝ 'engagement' has become a sacred cow to be pursued and preserved at all costs ❞

In line with this, the ACPO Prevent Strategy Delivery Plan looks towards the creation of 'risk-based' action plans to prevent violent extremism at local level.[324] It is envisaged that Prevent strategies will be tailored according to the locality, to make them proportionate to the level of 'risk' in each area. Obviously, there is some sense in this. But there are serious problems arising from such an approach, when it is placed in the wider context of the police's current attitude to Prevent. An ACPO source has confirmed to Policy Exchange that in those areas of the greatest 'risk', it can mean that local police forces are more inclined to take chances with regards to engagement strategy. In a framework where the only constraint is the need to stop a terrorist incident, it is supposed that 'bad guys' are the very people that need to be engaged.[325] As a result, a lower 'threshold' is applied for those with whom the police might work. The problem, of course, is that this has the potential to create a self-fulfilling prophecy.

Moreover, there is a conflation of standards here between what is appropriate for the covert cultivation and recruitment of human sources and what should surely be the higher threshold of behaviour expected from *public* partners under the Prevent programme. The latter has the potential to shift the balance within Muslim communities and send the most powerful message about who is – and,

323. Private Information.

324. *PREVENT: The Policing Response to the Prevention of Terrorism and Violent Extremism Strategy & Delivery Plan*, April 2008, p 41.

325. Private Information.

crucially, who is not – an acceptable voice within both British Muslim communities and wider society. In this respect, Prevent is (and should be seen as) a world away from the 'classic' Special Branch approach of back-channel talks on the margins. It instead entails the public legitimisation of those deemed worthy of respect. This distinction, however, appears not to be fully appreciated by the police.

## Delivery and Accountability

The problems surrounding accountability of the police on Prevent-related matters are similar to those discussed in the previous chapter. In normal circumstances there are quite clear lines of accountability on matters such as the abuse of powers or of suspects in custody, most of which are judiciary led.[326] There is also a system operated by the Independent Police Complaints Commission (IPCC) for making complaints against the police. In relation to Prevent, however, there are no clear guidelines. If members of the public have a problem with an aspect of the police's approach to Prevent, it is far from obvious what recourse they would have. More broadly, there is no easily understood system that ensures accountability over Prevent is maintained.

For example, the Prevent Strategy and Delivery Plan produced by ACPO refers to the creation of a 'Police Prevent Programme Board', which will be responsible for 'ensuring the [Prevent] strategy is implemented nationally'.[327] This body is chaired by the Chief Constable of West Yorkshire Police, Sir Norman Bettison, and reports to ACPO (TAM).[328] ACPO (TAM) evaluations are in turn fed into the National Prevent Sub Board, which then reports to the overall Contest Board headed by Charles Farr.[329]

Alongside these structures there are also regional 'Prevent Delivery Managers' (who form the link between ACPO at the national level and the Basic Command Unit Commanders at the local level) and a 'national co-ordination team' within the ACPO (TAM) 'business area'.[330] This latter body, the ACPO National Prevent Delivery Unit, now incorporates the National Community Tension Team and is said to provide a 'co-ordination' role for Prevent.[331] It is not entirely clear, though, who sits on this board, nor to whom it is accountable. Neither is it clear whether it holds any actual accountability functions, or whether it is merely intended as an administrative entity. Thus the question of who oversees and holds responsibility for, the process is left unanswered.

As with other aspects of police work, it is clear that the police authorities have a key role to play in terms of oversight and accountability of Prevent-related policing. To this end, the Association of Police Authorities (APA) has indicated that it will employ a new APA Prevent National Manager to provide guidance and advice to police authorities in the delivery of Prevent locally.[332] The APA has also produced a *Strategy for Police Authorities* for Preventing Violent Extremism. This document, however, merely recycles the same vague language in evidence elsewhere (supporting 'mainstream voices'; utilising 'key individual networks'; and working with 'community leaders').[333] In addition, the action it advocates for police authorities is largely organisational in form, concerned primarily with ensuring that certain structures and methods are in place. There is, therefore, a call for police authorities to ensure that there are 'regular community mapping processes'.[334] Other suggestions include guaranteeing that a 'vulnerability index is utilised', that there are 'dedicated police authority consultation processes' in place, or that 'a consequence management strategy' is developed. There is, however, no values-based discussion of what the Prevent strategy is aiming to achieve, or how the police should be navigating through the difficult

326. Robert Reiner, *The Politics of the Police* (Oxford, 2001), p 183-4.

327. *PREVENT: The Policing Response to the Prevention of Terrorism and Violent Extremism Strategy & Delivery Plan*, April 2008, p 35-7.

328. *Police PREVENT Programme Board*. Document supplied to Policy Exchange by ACPO.

329. Diagram provided to Policy Exchange by ACPO.

330. *PREVENT: The Policing Response to the Prevention of Terrorism and Violent Extremism Strategy & Delivery Plan*, April 2008, p 35-7.

331. *ACPO National Prevent Delivery Unit*.

332. *PREVENT: The Policing Response to the Prevention of Terrorism and Violent Extremism Strategy & Delivery Plan*, April 2008, p 35-7.

333. *Preventing Violent Extremism: A Strategy for Police Authorities* (Draft v4), Association of Police Authorities, January 2009, p 13, 14.

334. Ibid. p 14.

waters of picking allies in local Muslim communities. This silence on such crucial questions is made all the more noticeable by, for instance, the fact that analysis of the police authorities' role on Prevent produced by the Humberside Police Authority specifically lists their responsibility for 'securing the co-operation of communities'.[335] The principles on which such co-operation is to proceed are not defined, and it is far from clear precisely what is being accounted for by the authorities.

The situation concerning the Metropolitan Police Service is a useful case study that further reveals the problems with the existing system. The resources dedicated by the MPS to supporting the delivery of Prevent are set to double over the next couple of years.[336] It is the role of the 23-person Metropolitan Police Authority to scrutinise and hold to account the MPS.[337] And it has recently established a four-person 'Counter-Terrorism and Protective Services Sub-Committee', which will meet every six weeks to oversee all counter-terrorism related matters, including Prevent.[338]

This sub-committee's terms of reference permit it to 'ensure effective MPA oversight of MPS CT activity including the co-ordination of CT activity across MPS business groups'. In addition to this, it is meant to 'work with the MPS to ensure improved transparency to the delivery of CT activity (as far as is practicable), and to improve the mechanisms in place to engage effectively with London's diverse communities', and to 'monitor progress against the four CONTEST strands'.[339]

The situation is complicated by the fact that the Metropolitan Police Service takes the lead nationally in relation to counter-terrorism matters. So while 'oversight and engagement priorities at local levels are a responsibility for *all* police authorities', some counter terrorism responsibilities are also overseen by the MPA.[340] As a result, the MPA has established a national over-sight group for police authorities, to oversee the national counter-terrorist network.[341] Since 2007 this network has been reorganised with the creation of four Counter-Terrorism Units (CTUs), hosted in key forces: West Midlands, Greater Manchester, West Yorkshire and the Metropolitan; a fifth CTU is being created for Thames Valley.[342] In each of these regions the respective forces have established their own oversight committees; and there is also now the MPA-led combined oversight body – the Joint Counter-Terrorism Unit Oversight Group (JCTUOG).[343] This group is meant to scrutinise the national counter terrorism programme and allow liaison between the CTU authorities and also the smaller, Counter-Terrorism Intelligence Unit (CTIU) authorities. Its membership includes representatives of the CTU and CTIU authorities, as well as delegates from the APA and the Home Office. In April 2007 this oversight body delegated the MPA to be 'the lead Police Authority for community engagement on counter-terrorism in 2007-08'.[344]

There seems to be a shortfall between the theory behind such accountability structures for Prevent and their practical implementation. The MPA has told Policy Exchange that there have been no cases where they have asked the MPS to remove or disengage from an organisation which was shown to have espoused distasteful views.[345] This, despite the fact that senior police officers admit that Prevent is a new sphere of work for the police and mistakes have been made. The MPA's approach is all the more striking given that it is a body with wide-ranging powers over the MPS. On 'hard power' issues such as the MPS's use of 'Stop and Search' powers under section 44 of the Terrorism Act 2000, or the desire to bring in Taser weapons, the MPA has proven itself willing and able to challenge the actions of the police.[346] This same rigour has been lacking where

335. *Prevent Policing: Report of the Director of Performance and Resource, Humberside Police Authority – Protective Services Committee*, 9 September 2008, p 2.

336. It is increasing from 41police officers/staff posts in 2008/9 (at a cost of £2.2m), to 93 in 2010/11 (at a cost of £5.8m). See, 'MPS Prevent Delivery Strategy: Report by Assistant Commissioner Specialist Operations on behalf of the Commissioner', Metropolitan Police Authority, 24 July 2008.

337. Metropolitan Police Authority, http://www.mpa.gov.uk/default.htm.

338. The first of these meetings was held in November 2008. 'Counter-Terrorism and Protective Services Sub-committee meeting', Metropolitan Police Authority, 27 November 2008. http://www.mpa.gov.uk/committees/ctps/2008/081127/default.htm

339. 'Counter-Terrorism and Protective Services Sub-Committee – Terms of Reference', appendix 1 to 'Counter-Terrorism and Protective Services Sub-Commtitee', Metropolitan Police Authority, 24 November 2008.

340. APA Plenary Paper, April 2007.

341. Ibid. See also: 'Counter-Terrorism Governance Update: Report by the Chief Executive', Metropolitan Police Authority, 24 July 2008.

342. Ibid.

343. 'Counter-Terrorism Governance Update: Report by Chief Executive', Metropolitan Police Authority, 24 July 2008, p 1.

344. 'MPA Update on "Counter-Terrorism: The London Debate": Report by the Chief Executive and Clerk', Metropolitan Police Authority, 28 June 2007, p 3.

345. MPA email to Policy Exchange.

346. 'Review of Police Use of Counter-Terrorism Stop and Search Powers in London: Report by AC Specialist Operations on behalf of the Commissioner', Metropolitan Police Authority, 31 May 2007; Private Information.

Prevent is concerned. On this most political of subjects, the MPA seems reluctant to assert itself – and serious questions therefore remain about its effectiveness in scrutinising Prevent.

The Metropolitan Police Service, of course, is part of the wider structures for overseeing counter-terrorism policy. Here too, however, the efficacy and value of what is being done is less than clear. On the one hand, the MPS, because of its national role in combatting terrorism, has representatives on the national Contest and Prevent boards as well as on the overall Police Prevent Programme Board. At the same time it is part of the Contest (London) Board and also the London Prevent Board (both chaired by the Government Office for London), which pull together chief executives from local authorities and other statutory bodies on a quarterly basis to scrutinise the policies of the police and other national agencies.

Internally, meanwhile, since July 2008 there has been an MPS Counter-Terrorism Strategic Delivery Board under the chairmanship of the Assistant Commissioner Specialist Operations (ACSO), which brings together the four senior MPS officers who have been identified to take a lead role in the delivery of each strand of the Contest strategy.[347] An MPS Counter-Terrorism Strategic Partnership Board has also been formed to ensure that 'key strategic partners' are effectively engaged.[348] Finally, a Prevent Oversight Board has also been created for the MPS comprising representatives from the Association of Muslim Police (AMP), Muslim Safety Forum (MSF), the MPA and an Independent Advisory Group (IAG).[349]

The existence of this myriad of structures for accountability and oversight – relating to the Metropolitan Police Service *alone* – raises all manner of questions. Most obviously, what is the inter-relationship between these different groups and committees? And by what benchmarks are the respective enti-

ties assessing the performance of the MPS in relation to Prevent?

In this context, it is telling that one senior figure on the MPA has described to Policy Exchange their incomprehension over the particular competencies of this smorgasbord of bodies. Those tasked with running the system seem far from sure as to who is doing what, and to what end.

The MPS' internal Oversight Board on Prevent raises further important issues. Again, it is worth asking why groups like the MSF were deemed suitable for the role they have been given. On what basis was it decided that they could speak for the Muslim community? Senior sources within the MPS have described the MSF as providing an authentic voice for 'angry young Muslims'.[350] How did this view – and, indeed, the characterisation of young Muslims as 'angry' – come to be accepted?

A similar issue arises from the 'Police Prevent Programme Board' mentioned above (page 58), which oversees police Prevent work at the national level. Alongside the various Chief Constables, Chief Executives and members of police authorities, a member of the National Association of Muslim Police (NAMP) sits on this board.[351] Yet the chairman of the NAMP, Zaheer Ahmad, has indicated an aversion to some Muslim groups by directing seemingly hostile criticism at Ed Husain, director of the Quilliam Foundation, which bills itself as a 'counter extremism think tank'.[352] Ahmad wrote in *Jane's Police Review*:[353]

> It seems that some of our most senior officers have been seduced by Mr Husain's celebrity status and have been taken in by the stereotypical image of Islam he portrays in his book (The Islamist). This is an image they probably feel comfortable with, but is a million miles from reality. Mr Husain has few supporters within the Muslim Community.

347. '*Counter-Terrorism Update: Report by Assistant Commissioner Specialist Operations on behalf of the Commissioner*', Metropolitan Police Authority, 24 July 2008.

348. Ibid.

349. '*Delivery of Prevent: Report by Assistant Commissioner Robert Quick on behalf of the Commissioner*', Metropolitan Police Authority, 29 January 2009, p 2.

350. Private Information.

351. Email from ACPO (TAM) to Policy Exchange, 5 February 2009.

352. 'Quilliam Foundation', www.quilliamfoundation.org.

353. Zaheer Ahmad, 'Personal view - Million miles from reality', *Jane's Police Review*, 19 March 2008.

Since when did the NAMP become involved in political judgements about which 'image' of Islam is the correct one, or about the representativeness of Ed Husain? Moreover, why have only Muslim groups been engaged to date in the task of overseeing MPS Prevent work? This focus on the Muslim community, to the exclusion of all others, is replicated elsewhere in the MPS' approach.[354]

The assumption that underpins this approach holds that 'those most affected' by Prevent-related policies must be the people consulted on, or given scrutiny of, its operation. It is worth considering the problems created by such a narrow outlook. For by focusing on one community alone, is there not a danger that one ends up with an emphasis on the lowest common denominator within that community? And by treating that community as distinct from society as a whole, is a sense of separation not reinforced?

A further problem, closely related to this, concerns the continued marginalisation of elected members in relation to Prevent accountability. Even as those groups and individuals with a narrow perspective are being empowered in this sphere, those who enjoy a wider, democratic mandate and legitimacy are sidelined. In terms of structures, for example, the elected component of the MPA's 'Counter-Terrorism and Protective Services Sub-Committee' comprises only 25 per cent of the body. Elsewhere the MPA report of 2007 has stated that the 'police tend to ignore democratically elected councillors in their community engagement, even though they are usually the only people with an objective mandate, however low the turn-out or however slim their majority'.[355] The result was acknowledged to be a 'democratic deficit'.[356] Again, London MPs – the most high profile and representative elected figures in the capital after the Mayor himself – seem scarcely to feature.

> ❝ vital questions about the police's Prevent work are being left unanswered ❞

Overall, the picture in relation to Prevent accountability for the Metropolitan Police Service is far from bright. At best, the situation can be said to be characterised by serious confusion, with a tangle of different accountability structures. At worst, it is clear that there are serious problems with the way the task is being approached at present. In July 2008, the Chief Executive of the MPA admitted that 'police authority scrutiny of counter-terrorist policing was rudimentary until two years ago'.[357] Unfortunately, where Prevent is concerned too little in the way of meaningful progress appears to have been made since then – and the suspicion must be that what is true for the MPS is equally true for other forces.

## Conclusion

Prevent represents a radical new departure for the police – and because of this it requires new and effective oversight mechanisms. At present there seems to be a dearth of such structures. Instead, such accountability bodies as exist appear to produce more heat than light. As a result, vital questions about the police's Prevent work are being left unanswered: how are bad partnership decisions taken under Prevent accounted for? What redress is there for members of the public in relation to decisions taken by police in Prevent matters? To whom exactly must the police answer? Is there a danger that successive Home Secretaries have perhaps been too passive in holding the police to account on these vital issues?

In this context it is worth observing that despite the above-noted admission from senior police sources that Prevent work has

354. See, for example, 'Delivery of Prevent: Report by Assistant Commissioner Robert Quick on behalf of the Commissioner', Metropolitan Police Authority, 29 January 2009, p 3. In the context of assessing the 'Racial and Equality Impact' of Prevent, this document states, 'We are developing attitudinal based survey work that will specifically survey the Muslim community around confidence based Prevent issues.'

355. Counter-Terrorism: The London Debate, p 39.

356. Ibid.

357. 'Counter-Terrorism Governance Update: Report by the Chief Executive', Metropolitan Police Authority, 24 July 2008.

been a process of 'trial and error', those same sources are unable to cite even a single instance in which a group that has been engaged by the police has been later judged unacceptable and therefore 'disengaged'.[358]

> ❝ in their pursuit of a pragmatic process, the police have been forced to make some deeply political decisions about the state's engagement with Islamism ❞

Yet, remarkably, the government currently has more tools for overseeing the police service than ever before. Indeed, one leading analyst, Professor Robert Reiner, beleives that HMIC, the Audit Commission and ACPO have all helped to extend the government's powers over the police.[359] This, along with other changes in recent years, has fundamentally altered the relationship between local government and Chief Constables, who are less accountable today to local representatives than they have been in the past: lines of accountability for Chief Constables now tend to run directly to central government.[360] Despite this, there appears to be little interest at Westminster in establishing clear lines of accountability on matters connected with Prevent.

Politicians are instead keen to promote a fluid, pragmatic approach which can at times prove problematic. Speaking at the BCU Commanders conference in April 2008, Jacqui Smith said: 'It's about using the specialist knowledge available to work in partnership with our communities, and it's about knowing what works.'[361] This emphasis on practicality and doing 'what works' reveals much about the pragmatic subculture that has come to define the police's approach to Prevent.

The key issue is what is meant by 'what works'? If only a narrow set of aims are identified which centre on the notion of stopping 'bombs going off', then greater

latitude will clearly be afforded to groups than might otherwise be deemed appropriate. Indeed, references to the success of Operation Trident, an MPS initiative to combat gun crime in black communities, have become the favoured cliché of Metropolitan Police officers who too often engage uncritically with Islamist groups. Such a view represents the triumph of British pragmatism run amok. Without government more clearly defining what it expects and requires from the police on Prevent, the pressing concerns of immediate security considerations will continue to dominate its thinking on the matter.

The readiness of government to assert itself in this sphere must run beyond the realm of rhetoric. While the recent shift in emphasis from ministers like Hazel Blears and Jacqui Smith is welcome, with increased attention paid to a broader conception of what Prevent is about, senior police sources have confirmed to Policy Exchange that such governmental speechifying often makes little or no difference to the practical realities of everyday policing. Instead, the police continue to act according to their own priorities, which stress law enforcement and strict security concerns over and above everything else.[362]

Ironically, in their pursuit of a pragmatic process, the police have been forced to make some deeply political decisions about the state's engagement with Islamism – particularly at a local level. The example of West Midlands Police and Channel 4 cited above (see pages 53-55) is just one illustration of this. But if the police are forced to pick 'winners' from within the Muslim community, the potential implications of this for the future operational independence and integrity of the police are worrying.

There has also been a failure to understand that 'what works' with regards to one problem may not work for another. So while the MPS can rightly claim that its engagement strategy with black communi-

358. Private Information.

359. Reiner, The Politics of the Police, p 191.

360. Ibid. p 167. Also see, pp. 189-95.

361. Home Secretary Jacqui Smith, 'Prevent strategy: background and next steps - speech to the BCU Commanders Conference', 16 April 2008. http://press.homeoffice.gov.uk/Speeches/bcu-conference-speech.

362. Private Information.

ties in London helped tackle the problem of 'yardie' gang violence, it does not follow that a similar approach will yield similar results with regards to the Islamist threat, which is often tied to a global ideological project.

This is where government must intervene and provide some long-overdue guidance. Of course, the British police enjoy operational independence. But Prevent is different. It is an inherently political programme entailing substantial ideological and even theological judgements. It takes the police into novel terrain. In consequence, the traditional functions of police accountability may not be sufficient.

Robert Reiner has described how the growing centralisation of British policing means that government is already afforded the luxury of 'steering' but not 'rowing'.[363] This is an important distinction and government must consequently use its legitimate powers to set clear guidance for the police about what its specific role under Prevent is, and how its objectives are to be met in this regard. Reiner explains, 'The police are free to "row" in any way they decide, so long as it is in the direction "steered" by the Home Secretary.'[364]

With this being the case, why is government not asserting itself more on matters relating to Prevent? Why does it allow the police forces to ally themselves with Islamists, rather than setting a strong values-led approach which they would then have to follow?

363. Reiner, *The Politics of the Police*, p. 196.

364. Ibid, p. 197.

# 5

## Defeating Non-violent Extremism: Lessons from the Labour Party and MI5

Yes, many British Islamists of the Muslim Brotherhood and Jamaat do want to 'integrate' into British society. In a very narrow sense, they are accurate. But they want to 'integrate' in the same way that the Militant Tendency wanted to 'integrate' into the Labour Party. They wanted to do it on their own terms and in their own way — to dictate the party's future in line with their own sectional aims.[366]

Professor Neal Robinson
at Policy Exchange, July 2006[367]

### Labour and the Example of Militant

What are the precedents for dealing with non-violent subversive threats in the UK? This challenge is perhaps most familiar to members of the Labour Party. The party's origins lie in a meeting at London's Memorial Hall in 1900 when an assortment of left-wing groups, mainly trade unions and co-operatives, came together to form the Labour Representation Committee (LRC), with Ramsay MacDonald as its secretary. The LRC went on to become the Labour Party, but at this stage it had no individual members, only affiliated organisations, which gave collective political expression to their members through a central administration. This made the new body particularly vulnerable to external influences.

When the Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB) was formed two decades later, Lenin advised its members to affiliate themselves to Labour. The Soviet leader was encouraged by the freedom already afforded to the British Socialist Party (BSP) which was founded in 1911 and promoted the socialist values of the Second International. The BSP affiliated itself to Labour the following year and ran its own press within the Labour Party, which did not limit itself to the kind of robust debate that sustains parties seeking to evolve policy, but was openly hostile to the then Labour leadership and sought to assume control for itself.[368] The existence of a large number of working-class activists organised through an administrative mechanism called 'Labour' which potentially failed to control its affiliates presented an enticing prospect to Lenin. 'It might seem a political party, [but] is nevertheless obliged to grant its members complete latitude ... In such circumstances, it would be a mistake not to join this party,' he concluded.[369] However the Labour Party spotted the danger and, despite sustained and vigorous attempts by CPGB members, prevented Communists from affiliating. Labour did this in 1933 by creating a list of proscribed groups ineligible for affiliation. A group was prohibited from joining Labour if:

- it had its own separate propaganda and a distinctive programme and policy
- it had its own branches in the constituencies
- it promoted [its own] parliamentary or local government candidates

365. *PREVENT: The Policing Response to the Prevention of Terrorism and Violent Extremism Strategy & Delivery Plan*, April 2008,, p. 38.

366. These remarks were made at the launch of Martin Bright's pamphlet, 'When Progressives Treat with Reactionaries', at Policy Exchange in July 2006.

367. Professor Neal Robinson is one of the leading British experts on the Qur'an.

368. *Lenin's Collected Works* (Moscow, 1965) Vol.31, p 260.

369. Ibid.

- it owed allegiance to any foreign organisation[370]

It is beyond the scope of this pamphlet to consider the merits of these criteria, but it is worth examining their significance and operation. What is beyond doubt is that the emerging Labour Party considered these protective measures to be essential to its future.

Under Labour's constitution, the National Executive Committee (NEC) was given powers to take 'any action it deems necessary' to fulfil its obligation of preserving the party's rules and constitution.[371] The creation in 1933 of the list of proscribed organisations gave the NEC teeth. Through a combination of its own research and liaison with local constituencies and party agents, the list was assembled and maintained despite various groups changing their names to avoid detection. Unsurprisingly, many of the organisations, including the Labour Research Department, British Soviet Friendship Society, British Peace Committee and the Union Movement, were connected to the Communist Party. The list typically held the names of 30-40 proscribed groups which were renewed at the annual party conference. A statement explaining the need to renew the list at the 1972 conference said:

> Many organisations which were, or are, subsidiaries of the Communist Party, were of short life, became merged into other organisations, or changed their title. This has caused some confusion, and many Constituency and Local Labour Parties, and their members, have been induced to give support to these organisations which have attractive titles, without a full appreciation of their origin.[372]

Multiple groups were created in order to overwhelm the NEC's machinery, allowing some to slip through the net and affiliate to the Labour Party. Affiliation provided those groups with the opportunity to use Labour's infrastructure to project their message to a wider audience, along with the hope that, as more like-minded groups affiliated to the party, they could ultimately shape its future direction.

The NEC's proscribed list proved invaluable to Constituency Labour Parties (CLPs) because they could rely on the NEC's ability to pool resources and intelligence at the centre, which built a national picture of subversive groups. It provided committees with the knowledge they needed to act against the local agents of proscribed groups, who would otherwise have been too well embedded to be removed. This is significant because banned parties often sought legal redress against CLPs that barred their affiliation, regularly browbeating them into submission. With the NEC's backing, however, CLPs could now rely on the moral and financial support of the central party for locally taken decisions.

While the reasoning behind the proscribed list was sound, its operation was not, excluding only groups whose names featured on the list. As old groups morphed into new ones and their leaders moved on, it proved increasingly difficult to maintain a definitive and authoritative list. The implication was that any group not on the list was automatically eligible for affiliation. As new groups emerged, often with formidable cross-constituency organisation and resources, the list became unsustainable. That the list remained in existence for 40 years is proof of its vital role in guiding the Labour Party through a crucial period in its early development. However, allegations that the list promoted 'McCarthyism' and 'witch-hunts' emboldened the Bennite broad left and Militant, causing the list to be scrapped in 1973.[373]

*Militant* was ostensibly a newspaper created in 1964 by members of a clandestine organisation, the Revolutionary Socialist League, which was formed just

370. Labour History Archive and Study Centre (People's History Museum/University of Central Lancashire), Labour Party Archives LP/WG - LP/SCW - ref. LP; also see Paul McCormick, 'The Labour Party: Three unnoticed changes' in British Journal of Political Science, Vol. 10, No. 3 (July 1980), p 381.

371. Ibid; Labour Party Constitution 1974, clause VIII (2C).

372. Ibid; Renewing the proscribed organisations, Labour annual conference 1972.

373. For the foremost account of Militant and its battle with the Labour Party see, Michael Crick, *The March of Militant* (London, 1986).

under a decade earlier. Its members preached a Trotskyist message and favoured an entryist approach, seeking to infiltrate the Labour Party and use its mechanisms to project themselves into power. They were revolutionary in intent and anti-democratic in practice, and over time those associated with *Militant* became known as 'the Militant Tendency'. From the mid-1960s, a key focus for Militant was Labour Party Young Socialists and by 1970 it had effectively taken control of that body.[374] From there, it sought to establish itself in the wider Labour Party.

Militant's success prompted those opposed to its ideology and methods to begin to take it more seriously. 'Reg' Underhill, the party's National Agent, presented a report to the NEC in November 1975 expressing his concern at the promotion earlier that year of Andy Bevan, a known Militant sympathiser, to a key position as the party's youth officer. Underhill's report also revealed that as early as 1964 over half of the Young Socialists' national committee were under Trotskyist influence. Yet Underhill's dossier was shelved, with no action taken despite leaked copies finding their way into the hands of the press, which declared that Militant had created a 'party within a party'.

The implication of Underhill's report was clear: association with Militant was not compatible with membership of the Labour Party and contravened its constitution. But at the time little effective action was taken to combat the tendency.[375] A 1977 NEC report into Militant's activities eschewed disciplinary measures, concluding that, 'Trotskyist views cannot be beaten by disciplinary action.' Instead, the focus was to be on education and providing better explanation of the Labour Party's 'democratic socialism'.[376] This proved futile, however and Militant continued to grow in size and influence.

After Michael Foot became leader of the Labour Party he finally decided to take

action against Militant. He did so with the support of Neil Kinnock, previously considered part of the Labour Party's 'soft left', but someone who regarded the group as trying to promote 'democratic centralism', a method for furthering Leninist aims from within the party. Although Foot had hitherto resisted attempts to purge the party of its Trotskyist influences, he was stirred into action after Militant's influence continued to grow unchecked. He appointed Ron Hayward, the party's General Secretary, and David Hughes, who succeeded Underhill as National Agent, to investigate whether Militant was compatible with Labour's constitution.

When the Hayward-Hughes report was published in 1982, it gave those elements within the party that wanted to move against Militant the impetus they needed. The report was laden with caveats making it clear that the party did not wish to return to the proscription lists and expulsions of the past. Hayward-Hughes argued instead for the creation of a 'Register of Non-Affiliated Groups', which would allow some non-affiliated groups to remain legitimately within the Labour Party. Still, the members of *Militant*'s editorial board saw the Hayward-Hughes inquiry as a threat and vowed to take legal action if they were expelled from the party. In order to avoid an embarrassing legal defeat, careful thought had to be given to the precise shape and form the register should take. The Labour Party employed a leading QC, Derry Irvine, and his young protégé, Tony Blair, to study the party's constitution and devise a solution which was equitable, but also safeguarded the party.[377]

Irvine and Blair ensured that the register operated in a much more robust manner than the earlier proscribed list. To ensure the register was more rigorous, groups were only deemed eligible for entry if they could demonstrate their compatibility with Clause 2 of Labour's constitution, which stated that everyone within Labour must 'accept the programme, policy and principles of the

374. Ibid. p 61-4.

375. In the mid-seventies, a key opponent was the Clause 4 group in the National Organisation of Labour Students and the Labour Party's National Agent, Reg Underhill. See Crick, The March of Militant, p. 95.

376. Ibid. p 111.

377. Kenneth Morgan, Michael Foot: A Life (London, 2007) p 424.

party [and] agree to conform to the constitution and standing orders of the party'.[378] Militant was ultimately deemed ineligible for inclusion on the register and the five members of its editorial board identified by the Hayward-Hughes report were expelled in February 1983.[379]

Even at this point, however, Militant's opponents were far from pleased with the outcome. While the paper's editors had been ejected, they had managed to protect their Labour Party parliamentary candidates and wider support network. One Labour Shadow Cabinet Minister observed that, 'Militant had won – game, set and match'.[380] Michael Foot was opposed to mass expulsions and this worked to Militant's advantage.

Militant built its base away from London, preferring decaying Liverpool, where the group would later reach its high water mark in 1983 after winning control of the City Council.[381] Sixteen of the 51 Labour councillors elected were identified as belonging to Militant; and one of their number, the media-friendly Derek Hatton, was elected deputy leader of the council.[382] Unsurprisingly, this caused real consternation among ordinary members of the Labour Party. Even those who were not members of Militant often had to toe the line of this highly cohesive groupuscule.

Unease with Militant's activities led several CLPs to expel members associated with the tendency, and those opposed to it were given new encouragement by the 1983 election as Labour leader of Neil Kinnock, who had been resolutely hostile to the group since his student days.[383]

Defeating Militant and its predecessors proved to be a long and tortuous process. Militant denied its existence as a movement and operated through the use of front organisations such as the Youth Trade Union Rights Campaign or the School Students Union.[384] Kinnock, however, was increasingly convinced of the need to tackle the Militant threat directly. Whereas the Labour

leadership had previously accepted the view that the way to defeat Militant was by persuasion and education, Kinnock was adamant that it had to be broken using disciplinary means. Others within his party argued that Militant should be 'engaged – debated and overcome by force of argument', but Kinnock insisted that the very act of sharing a platform with Militant (even if the Trotskyites were defeated) lent unwarranted legitimacy and credibility to the Militant tendency.

In keeping with this belief, Kinnock was determined to re-take control of the Labour Party's youth section and destroy Militant's influence in the wider party. At the 1985 Labour Party conference, Kinnock famously repudiated Militant and its 'gesture-generals … [and] tendency-tacticians' playing 'politics with people's jobs'.[385] In February 1986, after an inquiry lasting several months, the Labour Party's NEC voted to expel sixteen members of Militant from Liverpool. Eventually, seven people, including Hatton, were expelled from the party.[386]

At the heart of Labour's battle to undermine the influence of Militant and its leadership's subversive plans was the question of what the Labour Party stood for — its purpose and role in British political life. Winning that struggle against political entryists was a protracted endeavour, fraught with frustration and litigation. Labour MP Frank Field recalled,

> For what seemed like an eternity, the NEC simply equivocated on countering the Trotskyist takeover bid. When Neil Kinnock finally had an executive with the bottle, it took action.[387]

Taking action against those who wanted to subvert the Labour Party may have been fraught with difficulty, but it was a vital step in making Labour a natural party of government again. Furthermore, it pointed the way towards a resolute, value-led

378. Ibid. p 426; Also see Labour Party Archives LP/BAB - LP/JKH and LP/HART - LP/W1 - ref. LP.

379. Crick, *The March of Militant*, pp. 208-10.

380. Ibid. p 211.

381. Morgan, *Michael Foot*, p.419.

382. Crick, *The March of Militant*, p 225.

383. Ibid. p 267.

384. Ibid. p 273-4.

385. Ibid. p 277.

386. Ibid. p 283-95.

387. Frank Field, *The Guardian*, 10 June 2003.

approach in which the challenge of extremism is confronted head-on.

## The Security Service (MI5)

During the Cold War, the British state well understood that the Soviet and Communist threat was not solely military. It recognised that non-violent subversive activity also posed a threat. So too did political parties – notably Labour.

In March 1948 the Prime Minister, Clement Attlee, announced that the Security Service would introduce a vetting system for its officers. He was alarmed by the growth of the Communist Party of Great Britain and also by the support for fascists, deciding that both posed a subversive threat and should be excluded from work 'vital to the security of the state'.[388] Such individuals, Attlee decided, 'would be prepared to endanger the security of the State in the interests of another Power'.[389] Attlee also introduced a vetting procedure for ministers on the advice of MI5 in 1951. It was a drastic measure created in response to the defection to the Soviet Union earlier that year of Guy Burgess and Donald Maclean, two senior Foreign Office officials.[390]

Nearly four decades later, the 1989 Security Service Act placed MI5 on a statutory footing for the first time, to investigate subversion. Although the Act does not provide a definition of 'subversion', it does afford MI5 the widest possible construction of it, by allowing it to investigate any 'actions intended to overthrow or undermine parliamentary democracy by political, industrial or violent means'.[391]

The Security Service publicly acknowledges that a subversive threat remains. On its website, MI5 observes that a number of extremist groups 'currently aspire to mount terrorist attacks against targets in the UK. Some extremist groups also have a subversive agenda, seeking to undermine parliamentary democracy or the British economy.'[392]

Despite that disclosure, the Security Service also suggests the threat is now 'negligible' and goes on to make the remarkable admission that, 'We do not currently investigate subversion.'[393] Instead, it would seem that today's intelligence services – unlike their historical predecessors – have confined themselves to a much narrower target: terrorist violence against the British state.

The Security Service's concentration on violent threats owes much to the habits and modes of thought that arose during the Troubles in Northern Ireland; it does not draw as much as it might on British experiences during the Cold War. The state developed a clear understanding about what subversion meant during the Cold War when it was linked to a 'hard power', conventional threat from the Soviet Union. With the IRA, however, the main issue for the state was how it could bring a terrorist campaign/armed insurgency to an end. Superficially, of course, the threat of al-Qaeda bears a greater resemblance to the IRA: both are non-state actors. None the less, there are lessons from the Cold War that are still relevant. While the Soviet Union presented a substantial conventional military challenge, it also proved itself capable of mobilising a formidable subversive threat. The British state therefore prepared both its 'hard power', as well as 'soft power', capabilities to meet those challenges. The challenge posed by political Islamists who ostensibly eschew violence cannot therefore be considered solely through the prism of the British state's comparatively narrow experiences in Northern Ireland. We should ask whether the intelligence services need to recover some of their intellectual inheritance in relation to developing a definition of 'subversion' fit for the challenges of the twenty-first century?

388. Christopher Andrew, Secret Service: The Making of the British Intelligence Community (London, 1985).

389. 'Security Service: MI5', http://www.securityservice.gov.uk/output/Page243.html.

390. Anthony Glees, The Secrets of the Service: A Story of Soviet Subversion of Western Intelligence (New York, 1987).

391. Security Service Act 1989, s.1(2).

392. 'Domestic extremism', MI5 website. https://www.mi5.gov.uk/output/Page25.html.

393. 'Subversion', MI5 website, http://www.mi5.gov.uk/textonly/Page53.html.

# 6

## Future Criteria for Engagement

### What is engagement?

'Engagement' is a vague, slippery word. Too often it has been used as a euphemism to explain away policies that confer legitimacy and credibility on extremists, and it is urgently necessary to develop precise criteria for engagement with Muslim bodies across the public sector.

Proponents of a broad engagement strategy often accuse those who adopt a more cautious approach of refusing to talk to people they don't like. This, of course, is a straw man. Taxpayers do not object to behind-the-scenes contact or tactical alliances with groups and individuals judged to be objectionable. In fact, it is expected that the Security Service and police will build private networks and relationships with distasteful characters in the hope that it will yield vital intelligence.

For the purposes of these criteria, 'engagement' is therefore defined as applying to those cases where groups and event organisers are clearly seeking funding, an endorsement or enhanced reputation through visible *public* association with government ministers or other state actors. Given the vast resources and financing available to Islamist movements, it is hardly surprising that some of the largest annual Muslim events hosted in Britain, such as IslamExpo and GPU, promote Islamist ideals.

For Islamists, the benefits of ministerial engagement are obvious. Any official presence immediately lends credibility to their views by suggesting that the government regards them as both legitimate and valid, even if the official representative uses the opportunity to voice disagreements. It also establishes the organisers as acceptable leaders by acknowledging them as appropriate interlocutors for grassroots 'community engagement' of the sort demanded by Prevent.

For the authorities, meanwhile, the decision whether or not to engage with Islamist-run events can be a difficult one. With some of the events mentioned attracting up to 50,000 visitors, the government and other official bodies are often torn about whether the benefits of attendance outweigh the harm. There are very real concerns that, by not attending such gatherings, the government is missing a vital opportunity to communicate its message to a mass audience. The sizeable number of visitors who attend the annual IslamExpo and GPU events can therefore be an alluring prospect for politicians keen to engage young Muslims.

To make such a narrow assessment is to fall into the predictable trap of seeing Muslims only through the prism of their religious identity. For those who preach the importance of reaching out to people at grassroots level, there is simply no reason why this need be done through Islamist-sponsored events. Alternatives exist. Why, for instance, has government given no serious thought to reaching out through cultural events such as the Bradford Mela, a massive celebration of South Asian culture which last year attracted 120,000 visitors, more than twice the number who attended IslamExpo?[394] The Bradford Mela is not a religious event, but one promoting music,

394. 'Bradford Mela' Bradford City Council. http://www.bradford.gov.uk/bradford_mela/bradford_mela.htm.

food and arts from the Indian subcontinent. However a significant proportion of those who attend are Muslim, with large numbers coming from precisely those deprived communities in the north of England that the government is so keen to connect with. By engaging them through a neutral platform of this type, government sends a clear message – that it does not consider Muslims' religious affiliation or observance to be the most important thing about them in public life. Government must therefore consider not only who it is aiming to engage with, but also what the nature of such engagement should be.

Clearly, the term 'engagement' in this context covers a great deal and there are three broad 'types' to consider:

- ministerial attendance or endorsement
- financial assistance
- official partnership and consultancy

Within each category, it might be possible to taper the level of engagement, according to how fully a would-be partner complies with the criteria. For instance, when asked to attend an event such as IslamExpo or GPU, a spectrum of engagement could be said to exist. This would cover:

- 'Neutral' agencies such as the NHS or teacher-training agency having a stall at the event
- Officials attending the event, in the audience
- Officials attending the event, making a speech
- Officials attending the event, taking part in a debate
- Ministers sending messages of support for publicity materials (such as websites)
- Ministers attending, but not speaking
- Ministers attending, making a speech
- Ministers attending, taking part in a debate

- The Prime Minister offering a message of support for the event
- The Prime Minister making a speech at the event and taking questions

In this instance, each step of the ladder could be matched by pressure on the event organisers to offer guarantees on a) literature available at the event; b) the stall-holders present; c) the nature of fringe events/speakers; and d) platform speakers, all of which can be measured against the selection criteria proposed below.

Such an arrangement allows ministers and their departments to be flexible by permitting them to contract out of the criteria by explaining their reasons for doing so. There may be instances where, in the interests of achieving specific, short-term goals this might be necessary. The criteria allow for this by creating the environment where decisions to contract out of the criteria must be explained. The threshold for contracting out must, however, be high: the civil service, local government, the police and the Security Service should account to ministers as to why enduring values should be sacrificed for the sake of short-term objectives under Prevent. They must also explain what specific goals they hope to achieve and how the engagement strategy used to achieve those short-term aims will not also become the long-term status quo.

When assessing the suitability of a prospective official partner, we propose that the group in question, its affiliates, leaders and all other agents authorised to act or speak on its behalf are collectively measured against these criteria. Successful bodies would need to satisfy all the criteria before being accepted as partners.

## Principles Governing the Selection of Criteria

It is important that the criteria are properly defined – too narrow, and the state

would be prevented from dealing with and supporting genuinely progressive groups and individuals; too broad, and the state gives aid and comfort to those who seek to undermine or subvert it. It is often suggested that in a liberal state it is only necessary to say, 'Groups are free to do what they like, so long as they remain within the law.' But these proposed criteria do not address criminality. They are concerned with those legal groups and bodies that government actively chooses to promote, support and fund.

This goes to the heart of the tensions which modern democracies face when trying to curb the terrorist threat and preserve civil liberties. That is not something at which the British political system has been particularly successful in recent decades. Pragmatism is the order of the day in our post-ideological age. And though pragmatism is a quintessentially British virtue, it cannot, by definition, be an end in itself. Saying 'we do what works' raises the question of what is meant by 'works'? If by 'works', one means a reduction in the number of al-Qaeda attacks, perhaps it makes sense to bolster non-violent Islamists against violent Islamists – as it would to bolster the BNP against Combat 18. It is not surprising that security officers whose job it is to keep us safe, and who are assessed on their ability to 'manage down' the risk of terrorism, should come to such decisions. But politicians must take a wider view. They must question that judgement and decide how best to protect, not just our lives, but also our way of life.

Such considerations helped define the criteria which follow. What are the fundamental values of our political community? In what ways do extremist groups violate them or seek to replace them with other ones?

Some of the criteria relate to the method of political change: when is political violence justified, and against which kind of targets? Others are about aims: is the kind of society envisaged by extremists compatible with parliamentary democracy? Finally, some are concerned with the consistency of state policy: are extremists advocating changes that would prevent the state exercising its duties towards its people or the peoples of other countries it has agreed to help?

On this basis, the following principles were applied:

- the criteria should be general – concerned with political and social values, not with specific policy; and
- the criteria should be universal and objective, legally defined whenever possible.

> ❝ These criteria avoid being overly prescriptive but also replace the current ambiguity. They offer a new benchmark in the standards expected from official partners and could send a clear message to those who fall short ❞

## The Proposed Criteria

The criteria below ask several questions of prospective groups when assessing whether they are appropriate for official engagement – does a group really oppose terrorism, or does it hide behind the hoary evasion that 'one man's terrorist is another man's freedom fighter'? Does it seek to undermine the liberal principles of British parliamentary democracy? Does it reject the essential elements of civilised international behaviour, codified by international treaties? And does it seek to prevent the state from taking the steps necessary to fulfil the first duty of government, to protect its citizens?

These criteria avoid being overly prescriptive but also replace the current ambiguity. They offer a new benchmark in the standards expected from official partners and send a clear message to those who fall short. They are as follows:

1. It has become common for some groups to make vague, often misleading statements condemning attacks on 'innocent civilians'. This is inadequate. The term 'innocent' is too often used as a red herring, and apologists for terrorism invent forms of equivocation to designate civilians as 'legitimate targets'. We do not accept that some societies are organised in a way that denies their civilian population the protection of the laws of war, nor do we think it sufficient that someone only opposes attacks on civilians in the UK. All civilians should be considered *hors de combat*, wherever they are. We take our definition from the Geneva Convention (see annex pages 89-90).

   Therefore **government must not engage with organisations or individuals that support or condone the deliberate targeting of civilians (as defined by the Geneva Conventions) anywhere in the world.**

2. It would be perverse for the state to endorse groups that support attacks against the British armed forces or their allies. Moreover, the UK has a United Nations (UN) Security Council veto and therefore consents to all deployments of force under a UN mandate.

   As a result, **the government should not engage with individuals or organisations that call for, or condone, attacks on British soldiers and their allies anywhere in the world or against any forces acting under a UN mandate.**

3. It is an inalienable and universal value that all sovereign states and their peoples enjoy the right to existence. This is something the government has been particularly reluctant to assert in recent years. Some might suggest this has more to do with Israel than the UK and question whether support for Israel should be made a litmus test for Muslim partners. To be clear, it is not proposed that being pro-Israeli is a precondition for engaging with government. Indeed, many groups and organisations oppose the policies of foreign states. However, too much latitude has been afforded by the British state to vitriolic Islamist groups who are hostile to the very existence of Israel. Clearly, nobody should be made to support Israel or Israeli policies. However the state is also entitled *not* to engage with groups who are against the very existence of Israel (or indeed of any other country), thus continuing to plunge that region into further instability.

   The government should stand firm in defence of the principle that **UN member states are legitimate and entitled to exist, and therefore should not engage with people or groups that call for or condone the destruction of UN member states.**

4. It is a regrettable but unavoidable fact that states and non-state actors are sometimes capable of committing great violence in pursuit of their aims. The twentieth century was witness to atrocities on a previously unimaginable scale. In an attempt to stem such atrocities the UN agreed upon definitions of very serious and systematic 'crimes against humanity' including genocide (see annex for definition pages 89-90). Although statute cannot prevent such crimes, it is a necessary and vital tool in holding leaders to account on the gravest of charges. Thus, Slobodan Milosevic and Radovan Karadzic were brought to trial. The president of Sudan, Omar al-Bashir, whose country supports the Janjaweed militia in Darfur, has similarly been indicted by the new International Criminal Court. An official UN report for the Security Council described the situation in Darfur as being 'as serious as genocide'.[395]

395. Report of the International Committee of Inquiry on Darfur to the United Nations Secretary General, pursuant to UNSCR 1564, 25 January 2005. http://www.un.org/news/dh/sudan/com_inq_darfur.pdf.

It is essential that government does not undermine efforts to hold those who perpetrate crimes against humanity to account. **It must consequently not engage with people or organisations that give a platform to, deny, or are apologists for crimes against humanity including genocide.**

5. The application of indiscriminate violence – often targeted against civilians – to achieve political change is an unfortunate but increasingly common phenomenon of the modern world. It is a challenge that affects people of all nations, races and religions. Those who perpetrate such violence do not act in a vacuum, but rely on a network of supporters and cheerleaders who often create the moral imperatives for their actions.

The government must therefore **not engage with groups or individuals who support or condone terrorism anywhere in the world.**

6. Recent decades have witnessed tremendous progress towards equality in Britain. Social and legislative changes have given ethnic minorities, women and gay people rights previously denied to them. The government has integrated the European Convention of Human Rights (ECHR) into British Law through the Human Rights Act. The ECHR lists many of the inalienable, fundamental and basic rights of man. These are values the government has a duty to preserve. It must, of course, allow for debate and disagreement over how these rights are best enshrined in law. But these should not serve to mask those whose own value system is antithetical to the EHCR. Furthermore, Britain has a fine tradition in ensuring that genuine opportunity accompanies those rights and can claim greater success in this regard than its European counterparts.

> **❝ The government must therefore not engage with groups or individuals who support or condone terrorism anywhere in the world ❞**

None the less, some Islamist groups argue that this liberal climate goes against their faith, and sometimes take steps to prevent British Muslims from exercising their full rights or taking advantage of the opportunities they are entitled to in the UK. It would be wrong for the authorities to betray their commitments to gender, sexual, racial and religious equality for the sake of ill-defined notions of 'community engagement'.

**The government must not therefore engage with groups or individuals that present a threat to rights and freedoms protected by the ECHR and discriminate or advocate discrimination on the basis of religion, religious sect, race, sexual orientation or gender in any aspect of public life or public policy.**

7. The state should rightly be concerned about groups that try to dissuade young Muslims from joining the armed forces or the police. Muslims are currently under-represented in both, and it should encourage, not discourage Muslims to join. Supporting groups or individuals who dissuade Muslims from joining the police or armed forces vitiates the policy of increasing the representation of ethnic and religious minorities in those institutions. Provisions must be made for conscientious objectors, but only in cases where an individual believes that *all* wars are wrong.

**Government must not engage with organisations that oppose armed forces' recruitment because they selectively oppose wars that the state, under the**

**authority of the democratically elected parliament, is currently fighting.**

8. Some foreign governments, such as Saudi Arabia, have established extremely well-funded programmes to promote their forms of Islam across the world. It is frequently alleged, but not possible to prove, that hard-line Muslim organisations receive funding from Saudi Arabia. Of course the government cannot compel private associations to publish their accounts, but it would be a serious error of government policy to provide supplementary funding to outfits already in hock to foreign institutions. Accountability is essential.

   **Therefore government should only engage with organisations that declare any and all sources of foreign funding.**

9. Finally, good governmental practice should ensure that taxpayers' money can be properly accounted for.

Therefore, **government should only fund incorporated associations** (see annex for definition).

## Conclusion

What, then, are the aims and goals of these criteria? At their core, they are there to send a clear message about what the British public space stands for. They allow government to create a values-led narrative about the kind of behaviour it expects from its official partners. But they have wider implications too. These criteria also seek to empower genuinely progressive forces from within the Muslim community by excluding from official patronage those whose views are inconsistent with liberal democratic social values. The aim of the above is to offer a starting-point for the government and authorities which can lead to a new process of engagement with Muslim partners – one that will empower progressives, not reactionaries.

# 7

## Case Study: The Global Peace and Unity (GPU) Event

GPU describes itself as 'an annual cultural event and Islamic conference' held in London. Representatives from the three main political parties attended the event in 2008, while the Conservative Mayor, Boris Johnson, sent a letter of support to the organisers.[396] Over the last for years the Metropolitan Police Service has also provided approximately £26,500 in sponsorship to GPU.[397] Application of the above criteria to the speakers and exhibitors who attended this year's GPU event, reveals that several of them fall short on various points:

*CRITERION 1: Government must not engage with organisations or individuals that support or condone the deliberate targeting of civilians (as defined by the Geneva Conventions) anywhere in the world.*

- A speaker at GPU, Mohammed Ijaz ul-Haq, when Pakistan's Religious Affairs Minister, suggested that the Queen's decision to award Salman Rushdie a knighthood in 2007 was enough to justify Muslims carrying out suicide bombings. He was reported by a number of UK newspapers to have said: 'If someone exploded a bomb on his body he would be right to do so unless the British government apologises and withdraws the "sir" title.'[398]
- An exhibitor called 'Wearaloud', which describes itself as an Islamic clothing retailer, sells shirts that glorify the Lebanese terrorist group Hezbollah.[399]
- Another clothing retailer at GPU, 'e-bizaar', sold shirts at the event glorifying the Palestinian terror group Hamas. A picture on the shirt depicted a group of Hamas fighters marching with the words 'Stop! Hamas Time' daubed across it.[400]

*CRITERION 2: Government must not engage with individuals or organisations that call for, or condone, attacks on British soldiers and their allies anywhere in the world or against any forces acting under a UN mandate.*

- The exhibitor 'e-bizaar' sold a shirt at GPU which glorified the killing of American soldiers in Iraq. It displayed a caricature of an insurgent wearing a knuckle duster with the word Iraq written on it, punching an American. Across the top of the cartoon were the words 'Iraqi Resistance'. On the back of the shirt was an adulterated version of the American flag displaying the stars as bullet holes and the stripes as streams of blood pouring down the shirt.[401]

*CRITERIA 4: Government must not engage with people or organisations that give a platform to, deny, or are apologists for crimes against humanity, including genocide.*

- The founder and former CEO of the Muslim Public Affairs Committee (MPACUK), Asghar Bukhari, was invited to speak at a 'workshop' session at GPU on 'how to create democratic political change'. In the past, Bukhari has donated money to David Irving,

396. 'Global Peace and Unity'. http://www.theglobalunity.com/08/text_pdfs/Global%20Peace%20and%20Unity%20Event%20-%20Message%20of%20Support.pdf.

397. Global Peace and unity Conference, MPS briefing sent to MPA members, 9 February 2009 (given to Policy Exchange by MPA).

398. David Batty and Peter Walker, Rushdie knighthood 'justifies suicide attacks', The Guardian, 18 June 2007. http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2007/jun/18/books.religion.

399. 'Wearaloud.com'. http://wearaloud.com/shop786/index.php?cPath=20&sort=2a&page=5.

400. T-shirt and digital recording of merchandise being sold now in Policy Exchange's possession.

401. T-shirt and digital recording of merchandise being sold now in Policy Exchange's possession.

402. Jamie Doward, 'Muslim leader sent funds to Irving', The Observer, 19 November 2006. http://www.guardian.co.uk/uk/2006/nov/19/secondworldwar.religion.

the discredited and controversial historian who denied the Holocaust took place, during his court case. Bukhari told him, 'You may feel like you are on your own but rest assured many people are with you in your fight for the truth.'[402] Making a donation of £60, Bukhari wrote, 'Here is the cheque I promised. Good luck, if there is any other way I can help please don't hesitate to call me. I have also asked many Muslim websites to create links to your own and ask for donations.'[403]

*CRITERION 6: Government must not engage with groups or individuals that present a threat to rights and freedoms protected by the ECHR and discriminate or advocate discrimination on the basis of religion, religious sect, race, sexual orientation or gender in any aspect of public life or public policy.*

- One of the guest speakers at GPU, Sheikh Muhammad Alshareef argues that the Jews are divinely cursed and urges Muslims not to take them as friends or allies.[404]
- The Azhar Academy, an exhibitor at the GPU event, sold copies of a book called *Women who Deserve to Go to Hell* by Mansoor Abul Hakim.[405] The author argues that the women's rights movements during the last century were 'launched with the basic objective of driving women towards aberrant ways'.[406] The book provides a list of women whom the author believes deserve to go to hell, including women who: (1) 'Complain against their husband now and then'; (2) 'adorn' themselves; (3) are arrogant; (4) and are 'quarrelsome'.[407] This publication is also available on the Azhar Academy's website.[408]
- Asghar Bukhari, who founded the Muslim Public Affairs Committee and is its former CEO, was invited to speak at a GPU 'workshop' session. The

report of the All-Party Parliamentary Group against anti-Semitism found a repeated pattern of anti-Semitic behaviour by MPACUK and its members.[409] It found that the group had promoted the idea of a worldwide Zionist conspiracy and displayed material on its website from neo-Nazi, white nationalist, and Holocaust denial websites.[410] In 2004 the National Union of Students banned MPACUK from all UK university campuses because of its anti-Semitic stance.[411]

- Another exhibitor, Books Plus, sold a number of extreme and separatist publications including an eight-volume edition of *Fatawa Islamiyah* (Islamic fatwas). Volume 1 of this series gives the following verdict on how Muslims should interact with non-Muslims: 'There is absolutely no brotherhood between the believer and the disbeliever. Indeed, it is incumbent upon the believer not to take the disbeliever as a friend.'[412] It continues: 'It is necessary to avoid mixing with non Muslims, because mixing with them causes the loss of one's religious zeal from the heart and may even lead to affection and love for them.'[413] In volume 5 the author says that if a Muslim woman marries a non-Muslim, then 'she deserves to be chastised as does [sic] the guardian, the witnesses and the registrar.'[414] The author also suggests that if someone renounces their belief in Islam, 'his head should be chopped off'.[415]

## Conclusion

Hazel Blears sought assurances from the organisers that no extremist speakers or material would be present at Global Peace and Unity. In the event, representatives from the three main parties attended. In addition, the Mayor's office and Metropolitan Police both officially supported the event as well. This raises the

403. Ibid.

404. Muhammad Alshareef, 'Why the Jews Were Cursed', 17 February 2001. http://www.sunnahonline.com/ilm/jihaad/0006.htm.

405. Mansoor Abul Hakim, Women who deserve to go to Hell (Karachi, 2004).

406. Ibid.

407. Ibid.

408. 'Azhar Academy', http://www.azharacademy.com/scripts/prodView.asp?idproduct=1021.

409. 'Report of the All-Party Parliamentary Inquiry into Anti-Semitism', All-Party Parliamentary Group against Anti-Semitism, September 2006, p 29-30. http://thepcaa.org/Report.pdf.

410. Ibid.

411. Ibid.

412. Fatawa Islamiyah – Islamic Verdicts, volume 1, Abdul 'Aziz bin 'Abdullah bin Baz, Muhammad bin Saleh al-Uthaimin, Abdullah bin Abdul Rahman Al-Jibreen (Dar-us-Salam, 2001).

413. Ibid.

414. Fatawa Islamiyah – Islamic Verdicts, volume 5, Abdul 'Aziz bin 'Abdullah bin Baz, Muhammad bin Saleh al-Uthaimin, Abdullah bin Abdul Rahman Al-Jibreen (Dar-us-Salam, 2001).

415. Ibid. Video of the books being sold is in posession of Policy Exchange.

vital question: what criteria, if any, were used when assessing the suitability of GPU for endorsement.

The case study above reveals how a number of the invited speakers and exhibitors at this year's GPU fell short of our criteria – and clearly support some views which are inconsistent with the normative values of British society. These are not views which MPs or other official representatives of the state should be endorsing. During his speech at the GPU event, the then Shadow Home Secretary and Shadow Attorney General, Dominic Grieve, criticised some of the invited speakers, suggesting he would not attend future events if their participation continued. In particular, Grieve described William Rodriguez, a survivor of 9/11 who believes the event was orchestrated by the US government,[416] and Sheikh Yasir Qadhi, who has denied the Holocaust, as 'mad'.[417] An examination of the list of speakers and exhibitors invited to previous GPU events demonstrates that this is a regular pattern and cannot therefore be dismissed as a 'one off'. So it is worth asking whether Blears was right and whether GPU was the kind of event which the government of a liberal democracy should have engaged with, thereby endorsing and endowing it with credibility as 'moderate'.

416. 'Website of William Rodriguez'. http://www.911 keymaster.com/.

417. A recording of Dominic Grieve's speech at the Global Peace and Unity Conference, 2008, is in Policy Exchange's possession.

# 8

## Implementing the Criteria

The current Prevent strategy has brought in its train a major growth in the power of the unelected, permanent British state. One of the key issues arising out of this, as emphasised above, is that of accountability. How can government strategy be monitored and evaluated in a serious way?

> ❝ The criteria discussed here only scratch the surface of a much wider change that is needed within government ❞

This question goes to the heart of how these criteria should be implemented. They will only be effective when supported by a wider infrastructure which is able to realise the aims they are there to achieve. Therefore, before considering how the criteria might be implemented and greater transparency achieved, it is important to first examine their philosophical aims.

As a starting point for reassessing and reforming both the purpose and operation of Prevent, it is crucial that its performance to date be audited. Prevent in its current form is complex and controversial, and government must therefore set up an independent inquiry into how money for PVE can be used to maximum advantage. This should be a short, sharp inquiry lasting no longer than three months and led by one individual supported by staff drawn from the National Audit Office. Its remit should also include a detailed analysis of those Muslim groups that have already benefited from Prevent funding – what they stand for, what they do and what relationships

have been established between such groups and statutory authorities.

### Preventing Extremism: Recasting PVE as PE

The existing Prevent programme is symptomatic of the government's overall tone. It behaves as though it cannot set normative social values. Instead it only makes minimalistic demands – asking partners to refrain from engaging in or supporting terrorism in the UK. Ernest Bevin once suggested of the British working classes that their greatest problem was their 'poverty of aspiration'.[418] Much the same might be said of the current Prevent strand of Contest.

The government's apparently minimalistic approach, only asking people to refrain from violence on these shores, derives partly from apparently successful foreign precedents. In countries such as Jordan or Saudi Arabia, appeals to young men and women not to engage in violent *jihad* are obviously couched in religious terms. Thus the Saudi Kingdom has initiated the 'Care Programme' to reform members of al-Qaeda in lavish 'compounds' that can only be described as 'Betty Ford Clinics for jihadists'.[419] It is easy to see why senior civil servants with a history of working alongside allied intelligence services abroad have been impressed by initiatives of this kind. But this approach comes at a price. The Saudi state does not challenge the ideology of the jihadists, but instead wants to control their ideas by re-establishing the state as the authoritative interpreter of Islam.

418. Alan Bullock, *Ernest Bevin* (London, 2002).

419. See, 'The Perks of Penance', BBC News Online, 9 July 2008. http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/middle_east/7496375.stm;and Shiraz Maher, 'A Betty Ford clinic for jihadis', The Times, 6 July 2008. http:// entertainment.timesonline.co.uk/tol/arts_and_entertainment/tv_and_radio/article4275042.ece. See also, Peter Bergen and Paul Cruickshank, 'The unraveling: the jihadist revolt against bin Laden', The New Republic, 11 June 2008.http://www.tnr.com/politics/story.html?id=702bf6d5-a37a-4e3e-a491-fd72bf6a9da1.

Effectively, they seem to be telling young jihadists: 'We share your views of the *Kuffar* (unbelievers). But *you* had no right to declare *jihad* on your own.' As such, the message of the Saudi authorities is as much disciplinary and organisational as it is ideological. This approach might make sense in 99 per cent Muslim societies – but to adopt kindred approaches in modern Britain is to traduce the principles on which our parliamentary democracy is founded. Islam is not, nor should it be, the main framework of reference through which the British state or its representatives appeal to those of its citizens who happen to be Muslim.

In this respect, the criteria discussed here only scratch the surface of a much wider change that is needed within government. In its latest publication on Prevent, the government suggests that Islamist ideology is 'never the only factor and seldom the most important' in the radicalisation of young men.[420] No explanation is offered about how this conclusion was reached – nor is there any mention of whether the veracity of that assertion might be kept under constant reappraisal. Indeed, amidst a wide range of topics listed in the Prevent guidelines as possibilities for ongoing research, it is significant that there is no mention of exploring the relationship between non-violent and violent extremism. Yet it would be most unusual if there were not a link between Islamist extremism and Islamist terrorism. It is as if Palestinian nationalism did not motivate Yasser Arafat; Irish nationalism had no role in persuading Martin McGuinness to join the IRA; and Marxism was irrelevant to Andreas Baader and Ulrike Meinhof. The historical record provides plentiful evidence that calls the government's conventional wisdom into question. Michael Burleigh's recent synthesis of much existing scholarship on terrorism in *Blood and Rage* demonstrates that terrorists need, and leech off, a wider set of cultural and moral imperatives to drive them forward.[421] Surveying almost two centuries of terrorism, from Sergei Nechaev and the Fenians to Carlos the Jackal and Ayman al-Zawahiri, Burleigh shows how terrorism cannot be isolated from its surrounding ideological environment.

Government must therefore urgently research the causal link between non-violent extremism and violent extremism, exploring the role ideology and ideological cheerleaders play in motivating terrorists. In addition to this research, the government must recast the 'Preventing Violent Extremism' initiative to simply 'Preventing Extremism' – marking an important practical and psychological shift in its ambitions.

## Creating transparency

For central government, the task of identifying the right groups from within the Muslim community has at times been an almost Sisyphean task. It has proven extremely difficult to wade through the alphabet soup of supposedly representative Muslim bodies that all too often have a real flavour of Monty Python's Judean People's Liberation Front and the People's Liberation Front of Judea. More broadly, as has already been discussed, Whitehall officials remain fiercely divided amongst themselves over the precise nature of the ideological threat that we face. Some progress has been made in this respect since 7/7, but there is still a long way to go.

If this task has been challenging for government, it has been almost impossible for local authorities. Municipalities cannot place an emphasis equal to that of central government on developing the level of intelligence and expertise required to distinguish between the myriad of different groups out there. That should not be their role. They need assistance, badly.

It is therefore proposed that these criteria be adopted across government and the public sector, creating a consistent and

420. The Prevent Strategy: A Guide for Local Partners in England; Stopping people becoming or supporting terrorists and violent extremists, June 2008, p 17.

421. Michael Burleigh, *Blood and Rage: A Cultural History of Terrorism* (London, 2008).

coherent framework across institutional lines. The adoption of a single list for all public agencies will facilitate this and instil greater confidence in the decision making process by introducing a level of transparency which is currently lacking.

> ❝ when reading through the existing Prevent documents, it can feel as if one is reading another language ❞

The HMIC-Audit Commission report into the existing Prevent strategy found that, 'Community groups and the voluntary sector wanted more transparency on the strategic decisions made by councils and police partners in selecting projects for Prevent funding.'[422] It is incumbent on government to respond to this understandable concern. On occasion, when reading through the existing Prevent documents, it can feel as if one is reading another language – replete with its own vocabulary and syntax. The maze of authorities and acronyms – NI:35, LSPs, LAAs, CAAs, APACS, BCUs, KINs, AIGs – can be utterly bewildering. Speaking plain English and making the operation of Prevent more transparent can only help to improve efficiency and delivery.

In cases where the language of Prevent was simplified for local partners, the HMIC-Audit Commission report found that, 'community groups said that they feel more involved and consequently more signed up to the Prevent approach.'[423] More generally, this would also help members of the public feel a stronger sense of involvement and ownership with Prevent, which could, in turn, ensure that its initiatives receive popular support.

No less important is what the Commission on Integration and Cohesion (CIC) calls 'single group funding'. As the HMIC-Audit Commission report observed, one of the difficulties with the

Preventing Violent Extremism-Pathfinder Fund has been that it 'has the potential to alienate both Muslim communities, which may feel unfairly stigmatised, and non-Muslim communities, which may perceive an unfair distribution of local resources'.[424]

In line with the CIC's recommendations, therefore, it seems entirely right that 'Single Group Funding', defined as that which is 'awarded on the basis of a particular identity, such as ethnic, religious or cultural', should be 'the exception rather than the rule' for government.[425] At the moment, PVE is perhaps the ultimate in 'single group funding' – aimed almost exclusively at the Muslim community and only existing because of the challenge of violent Islamism. As the CIC noted, however, one of the dangers of 'single group funding' is that it has the 'potential to increase insularity and a sense of separation where the project funded is only or mainly for the group in question'.[426] Furthermore, it was said to be something of a 'hangover from old identity politics – with groups encouraged to shout loudly about their own individual needs, rather than being encouraged to come together to access funding for shared activities enabling bridging and interaction.'[427] For these reasons, it seems hard to disagree with the CIC's conclusions: 'The presumption should be against Single Group Funding unless there is a clear reason for capacity building within a group or community,' and where 'Single Group Funding is awarded, the reasons behind that award should be clearly publicised to all communities in the local area.'[428]

Furthermore, in order to ensure that proper analysis of any Prevent-related activities can be made, it is crucial that the police and local authorities evaluate their likely impact upon equality issues. At present public bodies such as the police are required to conduct such assessments. This must be extended to all work, across all streams of government, which falls under the bracket of the Prevent strategy.

422. Preventing Violent Extremism Learning and Development Exercise: Report to the Home Office and Communities and Local Government, October 2008, p 18.

423. Ibid. p 19.

424. Preventing Violent Extremism Learning and Development Exercise: Report to the Home Office and Communities and Local Government, October 2008, p. 11.

425. Commission on Integration and Cohesion - Our Shared Future, June 2007, p 160.

426. Ibid. p 161.

427. Ibid. p 162.

428. Ibid. p 163.

Crucially, the issue of 'equality' must be considered from the perspective of society as a whole. Too often, where Prevent is concerned, the authorities and police have sought only to judge how their activities might affect Muslim communities. Little thought is given to the broader impact on communal relations. There is, for instance, no consideration of how engagement with certain sectarian organisations or individuals, might affect non-Muslim communities. This needs to change. To this end, Prevent work must be subjected to rigorous Equality Impact Assessments that analyse such matters in relation to society as a whole.

## Creating accountability: putting MPs at the heart of Prevent

A revolution is taking place in local government in which municipalities are enjoying ever-increasing powers and being asked to do more and more. But, the implementation of the Prevent strategy on the ground represents a substantial shift in power away from elected politicians to the permanent state.

However there is real concern among some that giving increased representation to elected officials at the local level could result in advocates of sectarian or Islamist politics gaining unprecedented control over Prevent matters. The narrow, and often monocultural wards in which some councillors operate, makes this a possibility. Yet councillors are not best placed to take strategic decisions on Prevent and spaces reserved for elected representatives must therefore be allocated to MPs. They enjoy a much broader mandate across a wider constituency, often composed of several different ethnic groupings.

Aneurin Bevan, the founder of the National Health Service, once famously declared that, 'When a bedpan is dropped on a hospital floor its noise should resound in the Palace of Westminster.'[429] In light of the prevailing culture on Prevent, this is not a characterisation of ministerial responsibility that many members of the Commons would immediately recognise. Therefore, while MPs currently play a negligible role in Prevent, responsibility for much of it is hived off to entirely anonymous local and regional Prevent Boards. This cannot continue. MPs must now be put not just into the decision making process for Prevent but also into key oversight positions which allow them to adequately audit its delivery.

The lack of an active role for MPs also means that the public are losing sight of where their taxes are being spent and they are unable to scrutinise decisions about how and why certain projects have been funded, or to ask questions about their performance.

Just as the OSCT operates across departmental lines, so government must create a Select Committee operating across departmental lines with responsibility for auditing, accounting and overseeing the Prevent strategy. This committee should work, wherever possible, on an open source basis and publicly explain both its findings and conclusions.

Though the 'soft power' initiatives of political Islamists command less attention from the public and politicians than actual terrorist attacks, Prevent is arguably the most important pillar of the government's counter-terrorism strategy in the long term. It is also the least understood. This must be urgently redressed to enlist popular support both within the Commons and the country.

## Making assessments: creating a Due Diligence Unit (DDU)

The practice hitherto of giving local authorities near-independent decision-making powers on local Prevent partnerships has too often resulted in local knowledge being translated into local standards.

429. Michael Foot, *Aneurin Bevan: 1945-60*, v. 2 (London, 1975).

However local authorities can take an excessively restrictive view, reacting only to the impulses and prevailing climate in their locality. Therefore localised groups operating within these narrower parameters can exert a disproportionate pull. Instead, these groups and local authorities need to be responding to a much larger values led initiative from the centre. What is needed is *local knowledge, national standards*.

> ❝ What is needed is *local knowledge, national standards* ❞

Consequently, the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) must establish an in-house Due Diligence Unit (DDU) which will develop a central database resource on the array of different groups operating around the country. This will inevitably require it to work closely with local councils when identifying those groups; but it must increasingly take the lead in making decisions and assessing the suitability of potential partners. This centralised Due Diligence Unit would create an environment where local knowledge responds to national standards.

It is proposed that this unit works with open source material looking at:

1. Public pronouncements (such as those expressed in publications, speeches or the internet)
2. Pronouncements made primarily to selected audiences (such as those uncovered by Channel 4's Dispatches in its investigation of preachers in some British mosques)

Operating at the heart of government, a unit of this kind will be uniquely placed to create a coherent policy across institutional lines which can advise Whitehall departments, local councils, the police

and the public sector on who their partners should be with some much needed consistency.

A Due Diligence Unit is also more likely to spot Islamist organisations who reinvent themselves, create 'front groups' or operate a carousel of leaders. This kind of resource is almost impossible to operate in a meaningful way at local level and enhances its integrity by building a national picture of behaviour and activity.

Why should DCLG take the lead on this, as opposed to other government departments? Because only it has the potential to be a values-based institution, making it quite different to the Home Office and the police. Inevitably, their concern is to stop the next bomb from going off – and they are often prepared to pay a high price to do so. They cannot be expected to mould the public sphere in line with a values-based approach which outlines what government believes our society should be about.

In light of the Prime Minister's ongoing and legitimate emphasis on British values, it is surprising how little the concept of 'Britishness' appears in Prevent-related documents – illustrating a lack of confidence. This is an urgent priority. And the creation of a Due Diligence Unit would be an important step in the right direction.

The immediate demands, however, of guarding against the hard edge of terrorism, will clash with a unit of this kind which prioritises the more slow moving needs of community cohesion – the 'urgent' versus the 'important'. There will be inevitable tensions here between long-term and short-term Prevent goals. DCLG must, however, assert itself in taking the lead on this agenda and creating a robust values based approach, helping set the normative values of the British public sphere.

### Securing and Monitoring change

The current government strategy, as revealed by Hazel Blears to Policy Exchange, is to pur-

sue an approach which encourages changes in organisational behaviour. Achieving that means promoting and incentivising good behaviour. Therefore, whenever government refuses to engage with an individual or group, or refuses to attend an event such as IslamExpo or GPU, it should publicly explain its reasoning – thereby hoping to promote change. Of course, if government is seeking to promote change by rewarding positive behaviour, this naturally merits some consideration of how we assess change.

It is important that the government is open to the possibility that individuals and groups can alter course. Yet, when it is suggested that a behavioural change has occurred, it is vital that this assertion be held up to scrutiny – and set against the criteria outlined here.

Thus, it has been suggested that the Islamic Foundation in Leicester has shaken off many of its difficult associations from the past with groups like Jamaat-e-Islami. For example, Dilwar Hussain, head of the policy research centre at the Islamic Foundation, recently said that Muslims had not done enough to challenge extremism and frequently 'did not challenge strongly enough the preachers of hate and the peddlers of simplistic, yet nihilistic, solutions'.[430]

Such comments would appear to signal a welcome departure for the Islamic Foundation. But what other evidence is there of such change?

Senior government officials have suggested to Policy Exchange that Hussain's positive comments represent a gradual, generational shift within the Islamic Foundation.[431] In some senses, they consider themselves to be 'tilting the balance' in favour of moderation internally, within the IF. That might be so, but on whose terms is this apparent shift happening? And how far will this reformation go? While this remains uncertain, the current hopes expressed by some over these first signs of change represent the tensions that exist between long-term concerns against short-term objectives.

> **❝** when it is suggested that a behavioural change has occurred, it is vital that this assertion be held up to scrutiny **❞**

More recently, the head of Equalities and Diversity for Birmingham City Council, Mashuq Ally, told a council scrutiny committee that the Green Lane Mosque, where Channel 4 filmed Abu Usama preaching an incendiary message as part of its *Dispatches* programme, has now reformed. The mosque is supposed to have re-written its constitution and launched a 'proper recruitment process' for new Imams.[432] The committee was also told that Birmingham Central Mosque is 'depoliticising'.[433]

It would be interesting to know what the exact evidence for these claims is. After all, the Green Lane Mosque was hailed as a 'moderate' institution long before Channel 4 originally uncovered evidence of wrongdoing. What new assurances have Birmingham City Council now received? What safeguards have been put in place to ensure that extremist preachers like Abu Usama can no longer enjoy a platform in the mosque? What is now available through public and open sources to demonstrate that the Green Lane and the Central mosques have undergone meaningful changes? Despite repeated requests for clarification, at the time of publication, Birmingham City Council had not replied to Policy Exchange's questions.

Clearly, government must reward positive changes in organisational behaviour by acknowledging them when they occur. It must also ensure, however, that such changes represent a broad and genuine shift towards the liberal democratic values of the British state which these criteria aim to promote. Therefore, when assessing change, the burden of proof must rest with

430. Zaki Cooper and Guy Lodge, Faith in the Nation: Religion, identity and the public realm in Britain today (IPPR: December, 2008) p 41.

431. Private sources.

432. 'Birmingham Muslims 'made to feel guilty' about Western lifestyles', Birmingham Post, 12 December 2008. http://www.birminghampost.net/news/west-midlands-news/2008/12/12/birmingham-muslims-made-to-feel-guilty-about-western-lifestyles-65233-22465617/.

433. Ibid.

those parties who claim to have repudiated previously distasteful views.

## Conclusion

In order to ensure that the criteria proposed here can be implemented in an effective and accountable way, the following suggestions have been made:

1. The recasting of Preventing Violent Extremism to Preventing Extremism.
2. The creation of a short, sharp, independent inquiry to examine where funds have been allocated, and to what end, under PVE.
3. The new criteria for engagement should be adopted across government and the public sector, creating a consistent and coherent framework across institutional lines.
4. The PVE strategy should be simplified and made more transparent.
5. Single group funding should be the exception rather than the rule. Where it is awarded, funding allocation should be clearly explained.
6. All Prevent-related activity must be subjected to rigorous 'Equality Impact Assessments', which consider the activity by their impact on society as a whole.
7. Members of Parliament must be put into the heart of the decision-making process for Prevent and given oversight positions which allow them to adequately audit its delivery.
8. Government must create a cross-departmental Select Committee with responsibility for auditing, accounting and overseeing the Prevent strategy.
9. The Department for Communities and Local Government must establish an in-house Due Diligence Unit which will develop an open source central information resource on the array of different groups operating around the country.
10. The government must promote and incentivise good behaviour – and disincentivise bad behaviour.

# 9

## Conclusion

In *Identity and Violence,* the Nobel Laureate Amartya Sen points out that every individual has a vast array of 'identities', such as gender, sexuality, race, faith, parental background, profession, residency or age, that he or she might choose to emphasise.[434] Faith is just one of those, and only for relatively few people is it the most important. It follows that each individual must make a choice between these competing identities and decide how much weight to give them in his or her own life.

Sen asks, 'Why should a British citizen who happens to be Muslim have to rely on clerics and other leaders of the religious community to communicate with the Prime Minister?'[435] Such a policy is counterproductive to promoting integration and a progressive national identity because it encourages Muslims to see themselves as semi-detached Britons. If the government only engages with Muslims by appealing to their faith, rather than through other channels, then why should Muslims see their political identity as being informed by anything other than Islam? And should we then be surprised if their views are later expressed through Islamist politics?

For too long, government has only viewed Muslims through the narrow prism of their communal, faith-based identity. The existing framework for Prevent reinforces this, at best because local authorities and their partners are unsure of what they are meant to be doing, at worst because they actively regard political Islamists, and more importantly their message, as a necessary bulwark against violent extremism. The problems with the prevailing policy have been elaborated upon at length in the preceding chapters.

> " If the government only engages with Muslims by appealing to their faith, rather than through other channels, then why should Muslims see their political identity as being informed by anything other than Islam? "

The criteria outlined in this pamphlet seek to change this status quo. They offer a new gold standard for engagement across the public sector and insert MPs into the decision-making process. In doing so, the proposals outlined here are designed to reconstitute the Prevent initiative as currently conceived – not to end it. 'Contest' is the right strategy for meeting the terrorist threat that we face, of which Prevent is a critical part. It must remain so and, in the long term, will be the most important aspect of the government's work in this area. Only by preventing people from embracing extremist ideas can we hope to fatally and decisively undermine the nihilism of al-Qaeda. Although Prevent must endure, it is in urgent need of being recast if its ambitious aims are to be realised. This invariably involves government adopting a more rigorous approach towards its philosophical and ideological aspects, rather than just its technocratic dimensions.

In this respect, these criteria are about much more than simply picking partners. They help the government define what the British public sphere stands for, and therefore, what it is we are seeking to protect from the threat of Islamism. Ideology is an integral part of this, and Prevent must endeavour to undermine the intellectual

434. Amartya Sen, *Identity and Violence: the illusion of destiny* (London, 2006).

435. Ibid.

framework that creates the moral impera-
tives for terrorism.

> ❝ At the heart of all this lies the question about what kind of society we want to build for the future❞

Government must therefore recast the 'Preventing Violent Extremism' initiative as simply 'Preventing Extremism'. This means ending the current arrangement whereby groups and individuals hostile to the basic tenets of our liberal democracy are often accommodated in the belief that they can 'deliver' young men from the path of violence.

More generally, government and the public sector must also abandon the practice of 'picking winners'. The threat of 'home-grown' terrorism has intensified the desire of many within officialdom to uncover an Islamic 'silver bullet' that can eliminate the danger. It is hoped that 'gate-keepers' might somehow 'deliver' Muslim communities away from the path of violence. This is an exercise in futility. Muslims are not 'deliverable' as a communal faith bloc.

How can anyone claim to know 'what Muslims want' – either at home or abroad? In this context, consider the outcome of the elections in Bangladesh last December. The poll resulted in the virtual elimination of the Jamaat-e-Islami as a political force – which won just two out of 300 seats.[436] While Jamaat's British allies continue to claim they speak for British Muslims, their 'mother party' has been decisively rejected at the ballot box. Is it not time that the British government matched the determi-nation of the Bangladeshi people and emphatically set aside the Jamaat? These developments in the Indian subcontinent were matched in Iraq, during provincial elections there in January 2009. All the Islamist parties lost ground, particularly

the Islamic Party of Iraq, which was virtu-ally wiped out, along with the Shi'ite party associated with the firebrand cleric Moqtada al-Sadr, whose share of the vote dropped from 11 to just 3 per cent.[437] It means that Islamist parties will no longer be able to run any of the provincial coun-cils, on which they have been replaced by a new and secular movement that is indige-nously Iraqi. Where do such developments leave those commentators who have insisted we pay patronage to Islamists because they are 'the coming force'?

At the heart of all this lies the question about what kind of society we want to build for the future. After Ruth Kelly began the important process of distancing government from some of its traditional Islamist partners, Azzam Tamimi was quick to criticise those who were newly empowered. He suggested the government had chosen some Sufi partners 'because these [Sufi] orders generally encourage the separation between life and religion'.[438] More recently, the spokesman for the Muslim Council of Britain – Inayat Bunglawala – said that Policy Exchange 'has consistently tried to promote an apolitical version of Islam'.[439]

Would this be such a bad thing? It may be bad news for Azzam Tamimi and Inayat Bunglawala, but why would it be bad news for Britain? Do we really want more reli-gion in politics? Do we want to see more people adopting faith-based political iden-tities? Ultimately, do we want progressive, non-sectarian politics in this country, or do we want to accommodate ourselves to sectarian 'realities'?

Of course, none of this is about the government trying to 'reform' Islam or 'silence dissent'. This is a point that needs to be stressed, not least because this is how Islamists will attempt to portray any move to dethrone them. But the state cannot be held to ransom by their threats; and it should have a more expansive vision of the role it can play in positively influencing the

436. 'The tenacity of hope', The Economist, 30 December 2008. http://www.economist.com/worl d/asia/displaystory.cfm?story_id =12855437&fsrc=rss.

437. William Shawcross, 'Democratic dawn in Iraq', The Guardian, 3 February 2009. http://www.guardian.co.uk/com mentisfree/2009/feb/03/ comment-iraq-elections.

438. Ahmed Ibrahim, 'Britain's Sufism', IslamOnline, 26 August 2008. http://www.islamonline. net/servlet/Satellite?c=Article_C &cid=1219723024580&pagenam e=Zone-English-News/NWELayout.

439. Andy Beckett, 'What can they be thinking?', The Guardian, 26 September 2008. http://www.guardian.co.uk/politi cs/2008/sep/26/thinktanks.cons ervatives.

social behaviour of its partners – without descending into authoritarianism. The simple act of sidelining those who reject our social values can be a powerful tool for prompting changes in organisational behaviour. The Muslim Council of Britain's decision (sadly now reversed) to abandon its boycott of Holocaust Memorial Day was a notable example of this.[440] After being removed from its position of near monopoly as 'the sole legitimate representative of the Muslim people of the UK', the group had agreed to attend the event, hoping to be drawn back into Whitehall's good books in the process. The MCB's U-turn infuriated Anas Altikriti, who lambasted them for reneging on their 'principled stand' – a disagreement that in itself exposes the broader tactical advantages that our criteria might offer.[441] More pragmatic elements prefer reform to radicalisation – and as different movements choose different paths this will create fissures and opportunities for the state to exploit in the long term. This is entirely consistent with the approach outlined by Hazel Blears when she spoke at Policy Exchange about pursuing policies which are 'designed to change behaviour'.[442]

Hazel Blears has proven herself to be a worthy successor to Ruth Kelly at the Department for Communities and Local Government. She has continued much of the good work initiated by her predecessor on Prevent, setting clear moral boundaries and rewarding progressive, rather than reactionary ideology. However this kind of principled approach requires consistent application to make its message meaningful to those communities whose co-operation we require in the long term. In that sense, it is not enough to simply have a policy in place, but also the will to see it through and the recognition that it is our democratic British state, not the Islamists, which holds the cards. These criteria mark an important first step

towards creating greater clarity in policy, and allow the British state to once again reassert itself as the authoritative allocator of values.

To achieve this, much greater clarity will be needed about those values and how they should be reflected across the country. Reports about the imminent publication of a refreshed counter-terrorism strategy, known as 'Contest 2', suggest that official thinking on these matters is far from settled. It seems that wide swathes of officialdom – especially in local government and the police – are still reluctant to adopt a robust values-led initiative that challenges extremist ideology itself. A recent publication from the Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills (DIUS), gives an insight into this continuing stasis. In his foreword, Minister of State, David Lammy, makes a series of welcome statements about the need to 'resist extremist influence' and challenge 'extremist tendencies'.[443] Lammy's pronouncements marked an important shift in tone and language, building on the sentiments first expressed by Jacqui Smith at the Prevent Conference in December 2008. However, the core of the DIUS document reveals that, despite the apparent shift in emphasis to encompass extremism, this is still being done *only* where extremist activity risks spilling over into *violent* action. The overriding focus on violent activity has not changed and the need to challenge extremist ideas *per se*, to denounce them and make it clear that they have no legitimate place in our liberal democracy, remains conspicuously absent. And even Hazel Blears, who has taken a clear and principled lead on these matters, revealed the enduring 'grey areas' surrounding Contest 2 when speaking at the London School of Economics.[444]

This lack of clarity has international significance, too. One very senior government source has told Policy Exchange that the Prime Minister hopes to persuade the new US administration to 'take Prevent

440. 'MCB Decision on Holocaust Memorial Day', MCB News, 3 December 2007. http://www.mcb.org.uk/article_detail.php?article=announcement-693.

441. Anas Altikriti, Forgetting to Remember', *The Guardian*, 4 December 2007. http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2007/dec/04/forgettingtoremember.

442. Policy Exchange seminar led by Rt. Hon. Hazel Blears MP, Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government on 'Preventing Violent Extremism: the Government's Approach', 17 July 2008. http://www.policyexchange.org.uk/Events.aspx?id=688.

443. The role of further education colleges in preventing violent extremism: next steps, February, 2009.

444. Rt Hon Hazel Blears MP, 'Many Voices: understanding the debate about preventing violent extremism', London School of Economics, 25 February 2009. http://www.communities.gov.uk/speeches/corporate/manyvoices.

global' because 'the US is the only country that can replicate Prevent on an industrial scale' across the world. Yet as this study shows, there are still many serious problems – political, philosophical and organisational – with the Prevent programme as it currently exists. Prevent is a most necessary part of Contest: but the too often indiscriminate and promiscuous embrace of reactionary Islamist elements risks discrediting the entire enterprise. It is time for a major change in approach.

# Annex: Technical Definition of Some Criteria

Interpretation of the points above will be the responsibility of those bodies which choose to adopt them although for the sake of clarity we have expanded on some points below to explain terms which might appear legally ambiguous.

## Definition of 'attacks on civilians'

The definition of 'attacks' in these criteria will be taken from the Geneva Convention (Protocol 1, Additional to the Geneva Conventions, 1977, PART IV: CIVILIAN POPULATION) which states:

> Article 49: Definition of Attacks and
> Scope of Application

'Attacks' means acts of violence against the adversary, whether in offense or in defence.

The definition of 'civilian' here will be taken from the Geneva Convention (Protocol 1, Additional to the Geneva Conventions, 1977, PART IV: CIVILIAN POPULATION) which states:

> Article 50: Definition of Civilians and
> Civilian Population
>
> A civilian is any person who does not belong to one of the categories of persons referred to in Article 4 A 111, lll, (31 and 161 of the Third Convention and in Article 43 of this Protocol. In case of doubt whether a person is a civilian, that person shall be considered to be a civilian.
>
> The civilian population comprises all persons who are civilians.
>
> The presence within the civilian population of individuals who do not come within the definition of civilians does not deprive the population of its civilian character.

## Definition of 'genocide or crimes against humanity'.

The legal definition of genocide as outlined in the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in December 1948 (which came into effect in January 1951) will apply. It states:

> Article 2
> In the present Convention, genocide means any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, as such:

- Killing members of the group
- Causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group
- Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part
- Imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group
- Forcibly transferring children of the group to another group

The term 'crimes against humanity' has passed into common usage to denote any serious atrocity committed on a large scale. This remains too vague to be effective and does not reflect either the technical or legal status of the term. The concept of crimes against humanity was first given effect in the 1907 Hague Convention preamble, which codified the customary law of armed conflict. Following the Second World War and the creation of tribunals at Nuremberg where Nazi members were tried for their crimes, the need to develop a precise inten-

tional agreement for the prosecution of war criminals arose to facilitate proceedings at the International Military Tribunal (IMT). It defined crimes against humanity as:

> Article 6
> [...]
> The following acts, or any of them, are crimes coming within the jurisdiction of the Tribunal for which there shall be individual responsibility:
> [...]
> War crimes: namely, violations of the laws or customs of war. Such violations shall include, but not be limited to, murder, ill-treatment or deportation to slave labour or for any other purpose of civilian population of or in occupied territory, murder or ill-treatment of prisoners of war or persons on the seas, killing of hostages, plunder of public or private property, wanton destruction of cities, towns or villages, or devastation not justified by military necessity;
>
> Crimes against humanity: namely, murder, extermination, enslavement, deportation, and other inhumane acts committed against any civilian popula-

tion, before or during the war; or persecutions on political, racial or religious grounds in execution of or in connection with any crime within the jurisdiction of the Tribunal, whether or not in violation of the domestic law of the country where perpetrated.

## Definition of incorporated and unincorporated associations.

An incorporated association is treated for legal purposes like a person. This allows the entity to own and dispose of property and the right to enter into and enforce contracts. This creates the situation where the body can have perpetual succession, outliving its directors and shareholders (if any). Its existence only ends when it is wound up pursuant to the Companies Acts. The current notes to PVE Community Leadership Fund already stipulate this as a requirement for groups, though only in cases where funding is being sought.[445] We propose that this principle is extended to groups seeking any kind of official engagement to promote greater institutional transparency and accountability, allowing external parties to make an informed decision about the organisation's character.

445. Preventing Violent Extremism: Community Leadership Fund Guidance (April, 2008) p.9

# Glossary

ACPO – Association of Chief Police Officers
ACPO (TAM) – Association of Chief Police Officers (Terrorism and Allied Matters)
ACSO – Assistant Commissioner of Specialist Operations (in the MPS)
AMP – Association of Muslim Police (here of the MPS)
APA – Association of Police Authorities
APACS – Assessments of Policing and Community Safety (performance indicator)
BCU – Basic Command Units (of the police)
BMI – British Muslim Initiative
BNP – British National Party
BSP – British Socialist Party
CAA – Comprehensive Area Agreement
CIC – Commission on Integration and Cohesion
CLF – Community Leadership Fund
CLP – Constituency Labour Party
CPGB – Communist Party of Great Britain
CPS – Crown Prosecution Service
CTIU – Counter Terrorism Intelligence Unit
CTR – Countering Terrorism and Radicalisation programme (at the FCO)
CTU – Counter Terrorism Unit
DCSF – Department for Children, Schools and Families
DCLG – Department of Communities and Local Government
DfID – Department for International Development
DIUS – Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills
EIA – Equality Impact Assessment
ELM – East London Mosque
FCCBF – Faith Communities Capacity Building Fund
FCO – Foreign and Commonwealth Office (or just 'Foreign Office')
FOSIS – Federation of Islamic Student Societies (FOSIS)
GPU – Global Peace and Unity (Conference)
HMIC – Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary
HuT – Hizb-ut-Tahrir
IAG – Independent Advisory Group (to the police)
IDeA – Improvement and Development Agency
IF – Islamic Foundation
IPCC – Independent Police Complaints Commission
JCTUOG – Joint Counter Terrorism Unit Oversight Group
KIN – Key Individual Network (for the police)
LAA – Local Area Agreement
LDE – Learning and Development Exercise
LGA – Local Government Association
LRC – Labour Representation Committee
LSP – Local Strategic Partnership
MAB – Muslim Association of Britain
MCB – Muslim Council of Britain
MCU – Muslim Contact Unit

MIHE – Markfield Institute of Higher Education

MINAB – Mosques and Imams National Advisory Board

MMA – Mutahida Majlis-e-Amal (Pakistani Islamist coalition)

MPAC-UK – Muslim Public Affairs Committee (UK)

MPA – Metropolitan Police Authority

MPS – Metropolitan Police Service

MSF – Muslim Safety Forum

NAMP – National Association of Muslim Police

NEC – National Executive Committee (of the Labour Party)

NI:35 – National Indicator 35

NPIA – National Police Improvement Agency

NUS – National Union of Students

NWFP – North-West Frontier Province (in Pakistan)

OSCT – Office for Security and Counter-Terrorism

PVE – Preventing Violent Extremism

PVE-PF – Preventing Violent Extremism-Pathfinder Fund

RICU – Research, Information and Communications Unit

RMW – Radical Middle Way

SPF – Strategic Programme Fund (at the FCO)

WMP – West Midlands Police

WMPA – West Midlands Police Authority

YMAG – Young Muslim Advisory Group

YMO – Young Muslim Organisation

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