

# Responding to the Threat of Violent Extremism

Failing to Prevent

Paul Thomas

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# Preface

In many ways, this book is the product of my response, through research and writing, to a series of events, rather than pre-planning. My long-term research focus has been, and remains, one around multiculturalism, ethnic identity and young people. From shortly after the 2001 riots in northern England, I have been carrying out field research in Oldham, and neighbouring Rochdale, in Greater Manchester into how the apparently new race relations policy approach of ‘community cohesion’ has been understood and operationalised by professionals on the ground, and how the issues that it addresses are experienced and understood by young people. That research involvement informed my 2011 book *Youth, Multiculturalism and Community Cohesion* (Palgrave Macmillan), which used this grounded research evidence to suggest more nuanced and progressive understandings of what community cohesion has the potential to be than many academic critiques based solely on readings of national policy documents and accompanying political discourses largely have allowed.

However, events and governmental policy reactions to them have intervened to alter the landscape of ethnic relations and the promotion of community cohesion that I have been attempting to make sense of. The 7/7 London bombings of July 2005 occurred as I was carrying out field research with youth workers in Oldham, which had a significant impact on the tone and content of a number of those in-depth conversations. The impact grew as it became apparent that all four of the attackers were from West Yorkshire. Three attackers came from the city that I live in, Leeds, and the other came from the town, Huddersfield, that I work in. The ringleader, Mohammad Sidique Khan, had been a part-time youth worker and was known to a number of youth work professionals that I have trained, or liaised with, whilst another of the attackers was well known to friends of mine. Within a year of the 7/7 attacks, it was starting to be clear that, as a result of those events, government was determined to take the focus and content of policy relating to British Muslim communities in a significantly difficult direction. The *Prevent* agenda was announced in October 2006, and the ‘Preventing Violent Extremism Pathfinder’ initiative commenced in April 2007. From the moment it started to be implemented, experienced youth workers, community workers and other local authority officials who I knew, and whose judgement I trusted, were flagging *Prevent* up as not only highly problematic in itself but also flatly contradictory to the community cohesion agenda they were attempting to develop locally, often through highly imaginative pieces of work. To those workers, and me, *Prevent* seemed to have forgotten all the concerns that the 2001 riots had crystallised, and which the Cantle Report had identified, around both increasingly racialised community identities and relations, and policy’s failure to address that, as

well as the well-documented problems of previous approaches to tackling racist extremism in white communities. In both cases, monocultural policy approaches that essentialised and reified ethnic or faith identity in the absence of focus on social class and identity complexity had proved counterproductive, as the community cohesion analysis so clearly identified, but *Prevent* seemed determined to ignore those lessons of history. Research involvements in and around the local implementation of *Prevent* in both Greater Manchester and West Yorkshire confirmed those feelings and provided evidence of community cohesion thinking and practice being sidelined by *Prevent*.

Such concerns were my motivations for writing journal articles on *Prevent* and making the evidence submission to the House of Commons Communities and Local Government Select Committee Inquiry that led to the invitation to present oral evidence to the Committee in December 2009. My argument there, and the main focus of this book, is not just that the government focus on *Prevent* and the resulting local implementation of it has sidelined, possibly even stalled, the developing progressive local practice around cohesion and integration, but that the design and implementation of *Prevent* has largely failed to consider the key analysis of community cohesion.

That cohesion analysis suggested that policy approaches of essentialising and focusing on separate and distinct ethnic identities and experiences, despite the increasingly complex diversity of real British life, are both problematic and potentially counterproductive. Such an essentialising approach will inevitably create ‘space’ for minorities within communities to espouse and grow towards extreme versions of such identities, and doctrines of violent extremism based on those identities, whether that is extreme white supremacist racism or jihadist Islamist violent extremism. That is not to suggest that real economic and social circumstances, and domestic and foreign policy actions, are not contributory to such violent extremism, but rather to argue that the only effective way to build *real* resilience against violent extremism within and between communities is *not* more focus on separate identities but actually less; real resilience will come from the building of stronger shared identities and experiences, and processes of meaningful citizenship and real democratic engagement for all British citizens, based on mutual respect and equality.

In arguing for that cohesion-based approach to preventing attraction towards violent extremism, the book is not seeking to deny the reality of either distinct ‘identifications’ in society or of specific and unequal experiences for some groups, but to argue that policy can only effectively address such realities, and win popular consent to do so, within a stronger framework of commonality. Similarly, the book is not naively suggesting that any inter-ethnic contact will inevitably be positive and productive – there is clear evidence that the opposite can often be true. Rather it argues that approaches to preventing violent extremism that aim to build strong and active democratic involvement by young people of all backgrounds, in a well-planned and appropriately resourced manner, offer the best hope of building that resilience against violent extremism.

# Glossary

|       |  |
|-------|--|
| ACPO  | Association of Chief Police Officers               |
| APA   | Association of Police Authorities                  |
| BNP   | British National Party                             |
| CLG   | Communities and Local Government                   |
| CRE   | Commission for Racial Equality                     |
| CTU   | Counter-Terrorism Unit                             |
| DCLG  | Department for Communities and Local Government    |
| EDL   | English Defence League                             |
| FOSIS | Federation of Student Islamic Societies            |
| HAC   | Home Affairs Committee                             |
| HMG   | Her Majesty's Government                           |
| HUT   | Hizb ut-Tahrir                                     |
| IRA   | Irish Republican Army                              |
| IRR   | Institute of Race Relations                        |
| JTAC  | Joint Terrorism Analysis Centre                    |
| MCB   | Muslim Council of Britain                          |
| MCU   | Muslim Contact Unit                                |
| NCS   | National Citizen Service                           |
| NI    | National Indicator                                 |
| OSCT  | Office for Security and Counter-Terrorism          |
| PET   | Preventing Extremism Together                      |
| PVE   | Preventing Violent Extremism                       |
| RICU  | Research, Information and Communication Unit       |
| RIEP  | Regional Improvement and Effectiveness Partnership |
| SEU   | Social Exclusion Unit                              |
| TPA   | Tax Payer's Alliance                               |
| UKYP  | United Kingdom Youth Parliament                    |
| YJB   | Youth Justice Board                                |
| YOI   | Young Offenders Institution                        |
| YOS   | Youth Offending Service                            |
| YOT   | Youth Offending Team                               |

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# Introduction

## A new threat of violent extremism?

Two number-based symbols seem to sum up the very different political world that Britain now inhabits: 9/11 and 7/7. The terrorist attacks on the World Trade Centre buildings in New York on the 11th September 2001 have become both iconic in their imagery and pivotal in relation to political actions and assumptions, not only for the United States but also for key allies such as Britain. In the direct wake of the 9/11 attacks has come the long-running military involvement in Afghanistan and its substantial impacts on neighbouring Pakistan, as well as the highly controversial invasion and occupation of Iraq. The former involvement was directly linked to the threat of Islamist violent extremism, the latter less so, but both involvements have had a profound impact on the relationship Western states concerned have with other, Muslim-populated states and with their own domestic Muslim populations. The question of the relationship between military involvements in Afghanistan and Iraq and Islamist violent extremism was brought into sharp relief for Britain by four coordinated suicide bomb attacks on public transport in central London on the morning of Thursday, 7th July 2005. Two weeks later, London narrowly averted further terrorist attacks when another series of suicide bombings failed due to technical deficiencies. The attack on Glasgow Airport in June 2007,<sup>1</sup> by the same Islamist cell who had failed to explode a car bomb in central London just days before, refocused public attention on the level of the threat.

The shocking attacks of 7/7 were carried out by four young British Muslims, all from West Yorkshire and apparently 'integrated', leading to the deaths of 52 commuters from a variety of ethnic and religious backgrounds, as well as the serious injury of many others. The videoed statements left behind by two of the 7/7 bombers explicitly addressed the British military involvements outlined above, with the broad Yorkshire accents of the terrorists somehow adding to the chilling impact of the statements. These 7/7 attacks in London mirrored the even more deadly attacks carried out in the Spanish capital Madrid the previous year, when a series of bombs planted on commuter trains on Thursday, 11th March 2004, by Moroccan-origin young Islamists killed over 180 people in and around the central Atocha station and at two suburban stations. About a third of those killed in these Spanish attacks were immigrants from a variety of countries. The Spanish government's immediate and wrong attribution of the responsibility to the Basque separatist group ETA

led to public outrage and a change of government in the subsequent election, a far-reaching impact for what had been a ramshackle plot.<sup>2</sup> In the years since 7/7, British police have foiled a number of substantial Islamist plots, with many leading to convictions.<sup>3</sup> These plots have overwhelmingly involved young British Muslims, including a significant number of converts, in plans to cause explosions aimed at members of the general public, often on public transport or in other public spaces. The origins of a significant number of these plots can be traced earlier than 7/7, or even before the 2003 invasion of Iraq, so questioning the simplistic cause and effect argument put forward that British military involvement has inevitably provoked radicalisation. Some of these British Islamist plotters have had contact with each other, but there has been no evidence of any formal organisational structures or command hierarchies nationally.<sup>4</sup> The suggestion that the Al-Qaeda leadership of Osama Bin-Laden and his associates, prior to Bin-Laden's killing by American Special Forces in Abbottabad, Pakistan in May 2011, had commissioned and directed such British bombings and plots is at least partially countered by the reality that these groups of plotters have more often already conceived and started to plan their attacks and then sought finance and support from 'Al-Qaeda central'. Some have had no documented contact with Al-Qaeda figures at all, suggesting that a significant part of this undoubted Islamist terror threat comes from 'self-starting', autonomous cells. The attempted murder of East London Labour MP Stephen Timms by Roshonara Choudhry, a Bangladeshi-origin young woman acting alone, in May 2010 showed that sometimes even a small cell of like-minded believers is not necessary. Choudhry was a highly gifted university student, close to finishing her degree and with a bright future in front of her, but whose political anger over British policy seemed to be further radicalised through viewing of Internet material, particularly sermons by radical Islamist preacher Anwar al-Awlaki.<sup>5</sup>

Not only is this threat of British domestic Islamist violent extremism a serious and continuing one, but it is a significantly different one from the dangers previously posed to Britain by Irish republican terrorism. The Irish republican threat between the early 1970s and the mid-1990s largely came from the Provisional Irish Republican Army (IRA) or offshoots such as the Irish National Liberation Army (INLA). These Irish republican organisations were hierarchical with military-style command and control structures, meaning that terrorist actions were planned and authorised by commanders. Whilst deadly force was often used, targets were largely military or political, with the minority of actions aimed at public spaces or places normally involving warnings to avoid civilian casualties. Incidents that did involve civilian deaths, such as the 1974 Guildford and Birmingham pub bombings, were portrayed by the Irish republicans as resulting from bungled warnings or the actions of rogue operatives who were then harshly punished. The current Islamist threat to Britain appears to be very different, both in its targets and in its organisation,

and attempting to understand the nature and make-up of this Islamist threat is one of the key areas of focus for this book.

In using the term ‘Islamist’, itself something explored in more detail, the book is acknowledging that this current and very serious terror threat faced by Britain is primarily about a minority of young British Muslims espousing a radical political narrative of Muslim identity, grievance and oppression, the drift of some of those young Muslims towards violent extremism to promote that political narrative, and the need to combat it. This terror threat of the past few years, combined with the 2001 disturbances in a number of northern English towns and cities that all involved young Muslim men of Pakistani and Bangladeshi origin,<sup>6</sup> has suggested to some politicians that Britain has a significant ‘Muslim problem’.<sup>7</sup> The meaning and relevance to national cohesion and security of apparently strengthening Muslim identification in the context of globalisation and the profound associated impacts on identity and experience are highly contested issues. What is beyond dispute is that since the 2001 riots, and the global shock of the 9/11 attacks that occurred just weeks later, there has been a significant shift in the aims, language and content of British policy approaches to ethnic relations in general and to British Muslims in particular. The previous emphasis on ethnic diversity and specificity has been replaced post-2001 by an emphasis on ‘community cohesion’, a stated concern with commonality and shared values and experiences.<sup>8</sup> In itself controversial, this move towards community cohesion has been accompanied by explicit attacks on multiculturalism that have suggested previous multiculturalist policies have encouraged separation and allowed ethnic minority communities to separate themselves. Such political pronouncements by Prime Minister David Cameron<sup>9</sup> and others have given the impression that Britain is part of a lurch across northern Europe back towards assimilationist policies that are much less sympathetic to the needs and identities of ethnic and religious minorities or even to their presence at all.

### The policy response of *Prevent*

The British political response to the Islamist terror threat has arguably encapsulated this wider reaction against ethnic diversity in general and Muslims in particular, leading to important questions as to whether the anti-terrorist policy responses, including the *Prevent* element, have been proportionate to the actual terror threat or have rather symbolised wider societal fears about the Muslim ‘others’ within. The *Prevent* policy approach was first introduced in October 2006 as one of the four elements of the wider government counterterrorism strategy, CONTEST. Prior to the 7/7 attacks of July 2005 outlined above, *Prevent* had been the least developed of the four CONTEST strands but, for one commentator, ‘over the course of the



following five years, *Prevent* became the world's most extensive counter-radicalisation policy'.<sup>10</sup> It has subsequently been replicated significantly in policies developed by Denmark, Australia and Canada, and influenced the development of similar initiatives in Germany, Sweden and the United States. *Prevent* was initially operationalised through targeted funding for all local authorities in England having Muslims as 5 per cent or more of their local population. Following this initial 'Pathfinder' pilot year of 2007/8, *Prevent* was developed and extended as a national policy priority. Funding was given to all local authorities first with 4,000 or more, then 2,000 or more, Muslim residents, with local authority involvement and compliance policed by the central government department concerned, the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG), through compulsory 'National Indicators' and monitoring of progress against them. At the same time, *Prevent* funding from the Home Office was directed at local Youth Offending Teams (YOTs) and Young Offenders Institutes (YOIs) via the Youth Justice Board (YJB), prisons, and further and higher education institutions. The element of this funding aimed directly at the Police Service nationally led to over 300 new dedicated *Prevent* police posts, whilst both the Security Service (MI5) and the Counter-Terrorism Unit (CTU) opened regional offices for the first time, explicitly to address the threat of violent extremism. In total, this national government *Prevent* programme of activity involved £140 million between 2008 and 2011. Taking power in May 2010, the Conservative-Liberal Democrat coalition government quickly scaled back the DCLG element of *Prevent* funding for that financial year and arguably echoed the recommendations of the recent House of Commons Communities and Local Government (CLG) Select Committee Inquiry<sup>11</sup> into *Prevent* by redirecting some of the money saved towards their new youth-focused National Citizen Service (NCS), a scheme claimed as community cohesion in action.<sup>12</sup> The coalition then commissioned a formal review of *Prevent* by the government's security 'watchdog' Lord Carlile, the outcome of which was serially delayed amidst allegations that the government was riven by exactly the same tensions and dilemmas over *Prevent* that had arguably marked the Labour government's approach to *Prevent*. The eventual publication of the revised *Prevent* strategy in June 2011, its content and the political discourse around it all showed that these fundamental tensions remained.<sup>13</sup> Those continuing tensions and dilemmas over *Prevent* relate both to its actual effectiveness in 'preventing violent extremism' and to the impact and consequences of *Prevent* for wider issues of ethnic relations and community cohesion in Britain, and are the focus of this book. In particular, the book argues that *Prevent* has been badly flawed in its failure to accept and incorporate the community cohesion analysis of the dangers of overemphasising specific and separate ethnic or faith identities, and has consequently both worked in opposition to community cohesion and significantly damaged community support for the fight against terrorism.

To many observers, this programme of *Prevent* activity by the previous Labour government appeared to explicitly target Britain's Muslim communities as a whole for a mixture of admonition, education, intervention and surveillance, all based on the belief that there needed to be '*demonstrable change*' in those communities.<sup>14</sup> Stuart Hall, Britain's most important sociological commentator on post-war immigration and the accompanying journey towards a more multicultural society, has characterised the response of *Prevent* as a very serious development and deepening of UK state multiculturalism, in both its explicit national government control and organisation, and in the extent of its 'internal penetration' of Muslim communities.<sup>15</sup> The aims, assumptions, content and implications of *Prevent* are examined in this book. Throughout its relatively short life, *Prevent* has been actually understood and operationalized under a number of titles, including 'Preventing Violent Extremism', PVE as an acronym, or even as the obscure 'Pathfinder'. These changing names and the fact that in some localities *Prevent* work has operated without any formal title or reference at all highlight the sensitivities and tensions around this policy. For consistency, this book uses *Prevent* throughout. One of the most controversial aspects of *Prevent* has been its explicit focus on Muslims and Muslim communities, something that the book argues has not only been damaging to the broader goal of community cohesion but which has actually damaged attempts to win vital community support for identifying and defeating violent extremism.

A corollary of this has been an absence of focus on right-wing violent extremism or similar activity by animal liberationists or antiglobalisation and anticapitalism protestors. This is because Islamist violent extremism is viewed as 'international' in nature, both in its organisation and personnel, and so falls under the CONTEST strategy and funding, which focuses on international terrorism,<sup>16</sup> whereas those other forms of potentially violent political extremism do not. For that reason, and to do justice to the complexities and ambiguities of the past and present *Prevent* work, the book primarily focuses on *Prevent*'s concerns with Muslims and Islamist violent extremism but does highlight parallels with right-wing/racist extremism and attempts to combat it when they are helpful. In particular, the book argues that the terrible events in Norway in July 2011, when a far-right activist killed 77 people, most of them young people shot at a socialist youth camp, showed the serious flaws in this UK government position. Coming just weeks after the relaunch of the UK *Prevent* strategy reiterated the lack of a domestic far-right terror threat, the Norway killings highlighted how an apparent 'lone wolf' terrorist was actually embedded within a large and growing right-wing, pan-European network that is increasingly drawn towards violent extremism. The killer, Anders Behring Breivik, had regular links with the English Defence League (EDL) and other UK right-wing groups whose members already have convictions for acts of terrorism, yet *Prevent* to date has shown no interest in this potential terror threat. This book suggests that is badly misguided, and that it demonstrates a

misunderstanding of the nature of both the Islamist and far-right terror threats. Above all, therefore, the book aims to identify how *Prevent* can both be more effective in its efforts to prevent violent extremism of *all* kinds and can support wider efforts to positively build common identities and cross-ethnic cohesion and resilience.

### The purpose of this book

Given that the explicit aim of *Prevent* is indeed to ‘prevent violent extremism’, the book draws on a range of empirical research by the author and others, and a broader range of recent academic work around *Prevent* and ethnic relations, to question how effective *Prevent* has actually been so far in relation to this stated aim. The book’s position is that neither the undoubted Islamist terror threat posed by a small minority of young British Muslims nor the effectiveness of *Prevent* policies in relation to the broader mass of British ‘Muslims’ (itself a questionable characterisation) can be understood without debating the wider policy developments and discussions around ethnic relations, diversity and identity symbolised by community cohesion.

In this way, this book is a development of the analysis of the meaning and potential of community cohesion begun in my previous book, *Youth, Multiculturalism and Community Cohesion*.<sup>17</sup> Like that earlier publication, this book is concerned with social policy and with how public policy design and practice implementation can be more effective. *Youth, Multiculturalism and Community Cohesion* offered what continues to be one of the very few empirically based analyses of how post-2001 community cohesion policies in Britain have actually been understood and implemented on the ground, and what this suggests about its future potential as a policy approach. That analysis was based on significant empirical research in Oldham and Rochdale, Greater Manchester around how educational practitioners such as youth workers had understood and implemented community cohesion approaches, and what were young peoples’ understandings of cohesion, segregation and ‘identity’ within their highly racialised local areas.<sup>18</sup> That research suggested that, rather than being the lurch back to assimilationism that it is often portrayed as, community cohesion actually represents a potentially positive way forward for multiculturalism. Here, community cohesion is a re-balancing of multiculturalism, an approach that still recognises, accepts and works with ethnic difference but one that puts greater emphasis than previously on augmenting those separate identities with overarching common identities and interests. In practice, community cohesion is doing this through forms of work with young people based on ‘contact theory’, a social psychology-based approach to reducing prejudice and fear, and building commonality.<sup>19</sup> Such interethnic ‘contact’ has no guarantee of producing positive outcomes around

cohesion and commonality, and the conditions under which greater interethnic contact can and does contribute to more cohesive and tolerant communities and to greater resilience against extremism are discussed in this book. Implicit in the Oldham and Rochdale case study of community cohesion in practice, and in the national government community cohesion policy documents, is the acceptance that existing and ‘hot’ ethnic or religious identities need to become of necessity somewhat ‘cooler’, and more ‘de-centred’ and intersectional forms of identity encouraged, if Britain’s complex and increasingly diverse multicultural society is to operate peacefully and successfully.<sup>20</sup>

That analysis is crucial to the way this book tries to understand what the Islamist terror threat is, how government has responded so far, and how policy aimed at ‘preventing violent extremism’ can be more effective in the future. As in *Youth, Multiculturalism and Community Cohesion*, the book develops this analysis through examination of a strong base of empirical evidence around how *Prevent* approaches to date have been operationalised, understood and experienced. This empirical material includes my involvement in 2007/8 in evaluating the initial ‘Pathfinder’ year of *Prevent* activity in Kirklees, West Yorkshire (home of two of the 7/7 bombers) for Kirklees Metropolitan Council; my design and research leadership in 2007/8 of collaborative, *Prevent*-funded research into how young people understand ‘identity’ and cohesion in Rochdale, Greater Manchester for the Rochdale Pride Partnership (the Local Strategic Partnership for the area including Rochdale Metropolitan Borough Council and other public sector bodies); my presenting oral evidence in December 2009 at the House of Commons CLG Select Committee Inquiry witness hearings into *Prevent*;<sup>21</sup> my collaborative research with colleagues at the University of Huddersfield on how two West Yorkshire local authorities have to date implemented and embedded *Prevent* and community cohesion policies within their activities (2009/10);<sup>22</sup> and my collaborative involvement with colleagues in the University of Huddersfield’s Applied Criminology Centre who have evaluated for the YJB local implementation by YOTs of *Prevent* (2009 to date). This empirical evidence, and previous academic outputs based on it, is drawn on and supported by a series of recent interviews with professionals and community members involved in education, local government and community activity who have had personal experience of *Prevent* and the issues that it addresses in practice. In addition, previous research into approaches to promote effective anti-racist education with white young people is also drawn upon.<sup>23</sup> Alongside this personal empirical research, the book also draws on empirical material of others, including academic analysis of *Prevent*, approaches to British Muslims, and their relationship to the wider policy context of community cohesion. In particular, it draws on the helpful data relating to *Prevent* within key sources such as Husband and Alam’s *Social Cohesion and Counter-Terrorism* (2011) and Eatwell and Goodwin’s *The New Extremism in 21st Century Britain* (2010), augmenting this with new empirical data and further developing the

debates over *Prevent*'s content and purpose there. It uses all this material to analyse the aims, starting points and content of *Prevent* policy approaches initiated by the then Labour government from 2006 onwards as well as the new directions that the coalition government has mapped out since its election in May 2010. Within this, the book closely examines how *Prevent* has been understood and implemented in practice, how Britain's Muslim communities and those working with them have experienced and reacted to *Prevent*, and what evidence there is as to the effectiveness so far of these *Prevent* policies. This enables the book to squarely examine and discuss a number of interrelated criticisms of those *Prevent* policy approaches. These are listed below:

- *Prevent* to date has focused on and worked with Muslims only, in blatant contradiction to the analysis and approach of broader community cohesion policies, and has ignored what it suggests about the dangers of overemphasised ethnic identities and the causes of ethnic tensions and resentments in society.
- In doing so, *Prevent* has re-enforced and utilised simplistic and partial understandings of 'Muslim' identity, so arguably deepening one of the causal factors on Islamist violent extremism.
- This monocultural approach has involved clumsy and counterproductive attempts by the state to influence and engineer particular forms of leadership and religious practice within Muslim communities.
- This *Prevent* approach has also effectively ignored violent extremism in other communities, such as far-right/fascist politically motivated violence, so further stoking resentments among some British Muslims.
- More seriously still, the popular belief that *Prevent* has involved significant levels of surveillance on British Muslims has badly damaged the trust and dialogue between the state and Muslims, which will be central to effective counterterrorism in the long run.
- Profound political and operational tensions have been built into the design and implementation, both nationally and locally, of *Prevent* to date, so badly hampering efforts to prevent violent extremism.

In outlining and discussing such criticisms, the aim of the book is not to simply be negative about *Prevent* approaches to date but rather to learn from them and propose a number of ways in which future policy and practice approaches to this serious and long-term threat to British society, and its people of all backgrounds and beliefs, can be more effective, based on cohesion-based approaches that emphasise cross-community dialogue and resilience building, and genuine democratic involvement and debate. Whilst clearly focused on the

analysis of British *Prevent* policy approach, its aims, content and flaws, the book attempts to make parallels with experiences of Islamist terrorism and policy approaches to preventing such violent extremism in other states, such as the United States and the Netherlands, where appropriate. It is certainly my hope that in examining the British *Prevent* policy experience, the book offers evidence and insights of use to policy makers and academic colleagues in other countries who are grappling with similar challenges and dilemmas.

## The structure of the book

Chapter 1 examines the threat of violent extremism facing Britain. It critically discusses 7/7 and the other Islamist terrorist incidents that have occurred alongside details of other foiled plots and convictions. This allows the chapter to step back and offer analysis of how we can understand the young British Islamist violent extremists involved – their backgrounds, motivations and beliefs. Such British events need to be understood within the context of the growth of Islamist neo-fundamentalism globally and Al-Qaeda-influenced radical extremism within it, and the chapter draws on key academic sources to examine different academic perspectives on the causes of and influences on the growth of this international Islamic militancy, especially its violent extremism forms.

Chapter 2 provides a wider context for the discussions of Chapter 1, and for the examination of *Prevent* policy aims, content and implementation later in the book. It does this by setting both the minority Islamist terror threat and policy responses to it within the wider picture of ‘race relations’ and changing British policy responses to ethnic diversity and identity since 2001. Here, the 2001 northern riots and the subsequent prioritisation of a new ‘race relations’ policy goal, ‘community cohesion’, are outlined and summarised. In particular, the chapter examines what the community cohesion analysis suggests about ‘parallel lives’ and separate identities within specific ethnic, religious and geographical communities, and how community cohesion practice has attempted to address the dangers of those separate and mutually antagonistic identities in areas of tension. Drawing on my previous empirically based academic work around the meaning and purpose of community cohesion, the chapter suggests the goals and standards by which state policies aiming to tackle separate, antagonistic identities and build stronger support for, and active involvement in, common identities, experiences and values should be judged. Together, Chapters 1 and 2 outline key things we know about the roots and causes of Islamist violent extremism, and the wider problem of separate and oppositional identities within British society, thereby suggesting standards by which we can judge the aims, content and implementation of governmental policy efforts to date to prevent violent extremism.

Chapter 3 begins the analysis of *Prevent* policies by examining the design and factual implementation of those UK policies, including both their stated and implicit assumptions and antecedents. This historical overview of the development of *Prevent*, and the significant modifications made along the way since 2006, enables the chapter to identify key past and present issues and tensions that are then examined in more detail in Chapters 4, 5 and 6. This chapter both examines past policy statements and implementation under the past Labour government and discusses the arguably contradictory statements and actions to date of the coalition government that took power in May 2010, including their major revision of the *Prevent* strategy announced in June 2011.

Chapter 4 discusses the monocultural focus on Britain's Muslim communities of *Prevent* policies, and the stark contradiction that approach has presented in relation to the broader political prioritisation of community cohesion. The chapter examines a number of problematic issues arising from this approach, including the resulting overt and clumsy 'engineering' of changes in the leadership, culture and religious practices of Muslim communities, the resentment engendered among young Muslims at the broad focus on them combined with an apparent indifference to 'extremism' within other communities, and a perverse 'envy' among non-Muslim communities at the very considerable resources focused on Muslim communities through *Prevent*. In making links with 'extremism' in other communities, the chapter highlights learning for *Prevent* from previous, highly problematic, attempts to promote 'anti-racism' in white, working-class communities. It builds on this to examine the Norway massacre of July 2011 and what this revealed about far-right extremist networks that have strong links to the United Kingdom through groups such as the EDL, the fallacy of the 'lone wolf' far-right violent extremist, and *Prevent's* failure to address this growing threat.

Chapter 5 draws on significant empirical evidence to focus on the actual implementation of *Prevent* and the very considerable resulting tensions and 'turf wars' between different parts of the state at both national and local levels. Those tensions examined include the mechanisms by which central government has 'forced' local government involvement in and compliance with *Prevent*, tensions over leadership and direction at a local level and the dilemmas of local authorities who have seen both their autonomy and their ongoing efforts to develop cohesion and integration strategies locally seriously compromised by the imposition of *Prevent* from above, and the problematic relationship between the two different national government departments responsible for *Prevent*. In addition, the chapter examines the involvement in *Prevent* policy implementation of specific sectors such as universities and further education colleges, prisons and YOTs, to suggest that common problems can be identified across the range of *Prevent* policy implementation at ground level.

Chapter 6 develops further some of the tensions and issues identified in Chapter 5 by discussing the most powerful allegation against *Prevent* policy

approaches to date, namely that it has been an elaborate and far-reaching surveillance programme aimed at Britain's Muslim communities in general. The evidence for and against this allegation is considered, alongside discussion of how the policy managed to find itself in such a fraught and politically charged controversy. Within this, the chapter discusses the very considerable growth in counterterrorism policing and Security Service structures that *Prevent* has resourced and facilitated, and the role that these security-focused personnel have played in community engagement roles, such as the 'Channel' programme.

The Conclusion not only summarises the evidence and arguments developed in the earlier chapters but also uses this to propose concrete ways in which *Prevent* policy approaches to 'preventing violent extremism' can be more effective and win more trust and support from people of all backgrounds and political persuasions, so building greater cross-community solidarity and resilience and also reducing the chances of another terrorist outrage like 7/7 occurring in Britain.

### Issues of terminology

In a book that is centrally concerned with assumptions around, and understandings of, highly contested concepts such as 'values', 'loyalties' and 'identity', it is important to discuss terminology deployed. Throughout the book, young Britons of ethnic minority backgrounds such as of Pakistani, Bangladeshi and Somali origin are referred to as 'Muslims' for two reasons. First, governmental attempts to 'prevent violent extremism' since 7/7 have, in my view, unhelpfully and simplistically generalised and essentialised these diverse individuals and communities as 'Muslims'. Second, there is significant academic evidence, including data presented in this book, that young Britons with ethnic backgrounds such as Pakistani, Bangladeshi and Somali are increasingly identifying their Islamic faith as their most preferred form of 'identification' when asked. These apparent developments, how we might understand them, and what their implications are, are a key focus for this book. Despite these justifications, in so using 'Muslim' as a description for these young people, I am aware that the book risks perpetuating exactly the sort of broad-brush 'essentialising' that it criticises and questions both within policy and some academic approaches. Here, the book is deploying the strategy that Gunaratnam describes in her important account of researching 'race' and ethnicity<sup>24</sup> as 'working with and against "race"', utilising the identification that most young British people of Pakistani, Bangladeshi and Somali origin choose, which is ascribed to them by political and media discourse, but also critically examining the strengthening of this identification and questioning its usefulness and limitations.



For consistency, the terms ‘Islamist terrorism’ or ‘Islamist violent extremism’ are used throughout to describe the terror threat that policy attempts to ‘prevent violent extremism’ have been focused on since 7th July 2005. ‘Islamist’ is deployed to denote individuals and groups committed to working towards both civil society and government being determined and controlled by Islamic religious doctrine/teachings, a position informed by their understanding and interpretation of Islam and the perceived situation of the Muslim *‘ummah’* globally. Academic understandings of the key tenets and motivations of this Islamist ideology are briefly outlined in Chapter 1.<sup>25</sup> Other authors have used terms such as ‘neo-fundamentalist’, Al-Qaeda-directed or Al-Qaeda-inspired, but none of those are wholly satisfactory. The concept of ‘jihad’ is much debated within the Muslim world, but some Islamist violent extremists see their justification in jihad and are so labelled by themselves and others as jihadis, whilst other commentators favour the term ‘takfiri’ to identify radical Islamist extremists prepared to wage violence against Muslims who they view as heretics. It is important to note that ‘Islamist’ when used here is linked to ‘terrorism’ or ‘violent extremism’ and has specific meaning, as there are much larger numbers of Muslims in Britain and internationally whose outlook and philosophy could be described as ‘Islamist’ but who totally reject illegality or violent extremism in any form. Similarly, ‘terrorism’ is a very controversial term, with many Muslim and non-Muslims alike seeing state military action by the United States, the United Kingdom and others in Iraq and Afghanistan as ‘state terrorism’. Chapter 1 begins by summarising understandings of ‘terrorism’, and then goes on to discuss the relevance of UK foreign policy to the threat of Islamist violent extremism currently faced, alongside other factors and influences.

# The Threat of Violent Extremism

## Introduction: ‘Terrorism’?

The threat of ‘violent extremism’ faced by Britain over the past few years is a complex one that defies simplistic analysis or explanation. This chapter aims to both outline the key facts and scale of that violent extremist threat, and to draw on a range of academic material and perspectives to discuss how we can understand its nature, motivation and make-up. Such detailed discussion of the threat is a vital prerequisite for a meaningful assessment of whether British policy attempts to date to ‘prevent violent extremism’ have been realistic or well-designed. The threat of Islamist violent extremism to Britain clearly can be characterised as ‘terrorism’; yet too often political, media and academic discussions of the problem and policy responses to it have focused on Muslims and the nature of Islam, rather than what we know more broadly about terrorism. This is particularly surprising, both because of the considerable academic literature based on examples of terrorism around the world and Britain’s own modern experience of terrorist activity in both Northern Ireland and Britain itself relating to the northern Irish conflict. That experience and body of academic material relating to terrorism cautions against overly simplistic understandings of the make-up and motivations of terrorists or against ill-conceived or even counterproductive policy responses.

Defining ‘terrorism’ is surprisingly complex. A common understanding focuses on violence by ‘non-state actors’, on the basis that any actions by terrorists are often mirrored by state military forces in situations of war or occupation, a parallel not lost on political opponents of the ‘war-on-terror’ state military actions in Afghanistan and Iraq. A suggestion that terrorism focuses on civilians is similarly simplistic, given that some terrorist movements have avoided attacks on civilians, whilst state military operations have involved bombing civilian areas. Coming originally from the Latin word ‘terrere’, to frighten, deter or scare away, terrorism came into popular use after the ‘terror’ period of violence and anarchy in the aftermath of the French Revolution that saw as many as 40,000 people sent to the guillotine. However, long before then Britain had arguably already faced its gravest ever terrorism threat in the form of the 1605 Gunpowder Plot, designed to kill the monarch and members of Parliament, with the religiously motivated plotters having also considered kidnapping and killing the royal children. Given this history, and the fact that

‘zealots’ were Jewish ‘terrorists’ of the first century AD, English (2009) suggests that the ‘new’, post-9/11 Islamist terrorism facing Britain and other Western states is actually much less new than it appears. Indeed, he questions whether terrorism is actually still a helpful term, given that ‘terrorism might best be considered as a method deployed by people who collectively see themselves as engaged in a war’.<sup>1</sup> This is echoed by Dipak Gupta, who suggests that ‘it is perhaps useful to think of terrorism as an epi-phenomenon, a minor sideshow of a larger social problem’.<sup>2</sup> These characterisations immediately challenge notions of terrorists as deranged or unbalanced individuals, living in their own fantasy world. Instead, these leading analysts of terrorism see individual terrorists and their actions as part of wider social movements, with the individual acts of violence a form of altruism towards ‘their’ social group. Other commentators identify a number of metaphors used in relation to modern Islamist terrorism. The terrorism as ‘war’ formulation deployed by the US Bush administration in the wake of 9/11 has rightly been criticised as fundamentally flawed and counterproductive in their inspiration for military involvements,<sup>3</sup> whereas notions of terrorism as a ‘disease’ that can spread among populations if unchecked can be seen as the inspiration for preventative domestic policy efforts around ‘preventing violent extremism’.<sup>4</sup>

This immediately gives some sense of the complex debates around the motivations of terrorists generally and in particular the young British Muslims involved in the current threat of ‘violent extremism’. This is far from being a uniquely British problem, with the United States Attorney General, Eric Holder, admitting in December 2010 that the domestic Islamist terror threat in America was now more about American Muslims rather than foreign visitors.<sup>5</sup> This chapter will explore some of those arguments and theories. It first briefly outlines the pivotal events of 7/7 and subsequent terrorist events, plots and convictions. It then discusses how we might understand the motivations and actions of the young British Muslims involved by focusing on six distinct but interrelated theories and explanations for such Islamist terrorism:

- Radical Islam: The ‘single narrative’
- A reaction to British foreign policy?
- A foreign hand?
- A product of ethnic/racial segregation and poverty?
- Radicalisation: Radical mosques and ‘preachers of hate’?
- Group dynamics

In discussing these theories and explanations, the chapter will suggest that understandings of the current and serious threat of Islamist violent extremism facing Britain are complex and interrelated, and that policy responses need to recognise that.

## 7/7: Home-grown suicide bombers

Some years on, the visceral shock of the 7/7 bombings in central London remains strong. Whilst the number of deaths involved was on a smaller scale to that of the 9/11 attacks on New York in September 2001, or the attacks on Madrid's public transport system in March 2004, the resulting impact of the British domestic population seeing the world in a slightly different way was similar. The shock came not only through the large-scale deaths and very serious injuries but also in the associated realities that these attacks were suicide attacks, carried out by four young British Muslims. The attackers were four young men from West Yorkshire in the north of England, three of them of Pakistani origin from Beeston in south Leeds and one an African-Caribbean convert to Islam from nearby Huddersfield. All had been brought up and educated in Britain, with the broad Yorkshire accents of two of them captured in a video statement prior to the attacks being all the more unsettling for the general British public – these young men looked and sounded like many thousands of other young Muslims in Britain's multiracial towns and cities. The oldest attacker, viewed subsequently as the ringleader, was Mohammad Sidique Khan, a popular learning mentor at a south Leeds multiracial primary school, and a part-time youth worker at the Hamara Youth Access Point in Beeston. Through his youth and community activities, Khan had got to know Shezad Tanweer, a 22-year-old university student and keen sportsman, and 18-year-old Hasib Hussain. Nineteen-year-old Germaine Lindsay from Huddersfield had converted to Islam as a 15-year-old, taking the name Abdullah Shaheed Jamal. Married to a white Muslim convert with a young son, and with his wife expecting their second child, Jamal was living in his wife's home town of Aylesbury prior to the attacks but still spending a lot of time in West Yorkshire. It is likely that he met Khan when attending talks by radical Islamist preachers in 2004.<sup>6</sup>

Having apparently carried out a 'dry run' the week before, the four attackers travelled down to London early on the morning of Thursday 7th July 2005. Parting in Kings Cross station after hugging each other, they then travelled in separate directions on public transport, where they each detonated their explosives that they had previously prepared in their 'bomb factory' flat in the Hyde Park area of Leeds. Three detonated their bombs around 8.50 a.m. on underground tube trains, with Hasib Hussain detonating his bomb on a diverted Number 30 bus in Tavistock Square about 30 minutes later after apparently failing to get on to the tube system. The motives for Hussain attempting to phone his fellow bombers after they had blown themselves up remain unclear. In the confines of a bus and tube trains, the impact of their improvised explosives, packed with bolts and other metal objects, was both deadly and horrific. In total, 52 commuters from widely varying national, ethnic, age and occupational backgrounds died, and hundreds were injured,

some very seriously with lifelong after effects. In the aftermath, many critical questions were raised, first, about the speed of the response by the emergency services and whether this attack was preventable through information already held by MI5. Calls for a full public inquiry were resisted by government, with a much more limited report issued by Parliament that outlined the key facts known. After much campaigning, survivors and bereaved relatives did succeed in gaining an Inquest in 2010/11.<sup>7</sup> This both provided the opportunity for survivors and relatives to hear the full facts about what happened to individuals during each bomb attack and shed some new light on the behaviour of the individual bombers in the run-up to the attack. This added some helpful detail to the facts of the plot identified by the initial police investigation and by the previous government report. It remains unclear whether others were involved in the planning and preparation of the 7/7 attacks. In 2008 the trial of three associates of Sidique Khan collapsed after they had been accused of conducting a 'hostile reconnaissance' mission with two of the attackers seven months before the July 2005 attacks. All three had attended training camps in Pakistan with Sidique Khan, and objects belonging to them were later found in the 'bomb-making factory' in Hyde Park, Leeds, but this was not enough to secure convictions.<sup>8</sup>

The fact that this 7/7 attack was not an isolated one-off was graphically illustrated just two weeks later on the 21st July, when four young men of Somali origin attempted to carry out further suicide bomb attacks on London transport. These attacks only failed because their home-made explosives failed to detonate, leading to their later capture and conviction. In the heightened tension of the intervening period, armed police chased and shot dead an innocent Brazilian, Jean Charles de Menezes, at Stockwell tube station, believing him to be one of the 21/7 attackers who was about to detonate explosives. That incident and the official slowness to accept liability for the unlawful death set an unhelpful context for future government attempts to win public support towards anti-terrorism measures. Two years later, in June 2007, Bilal Abdulla, a doctor of Iraqi origin, and Kafeel Ahmed, an Indian-origin engineering student, both resident in the United Kingdom, were arrested after an attempted bombing of Glasgow airport, this coming days after their earlier failed attempt to detonate a car bomb in a crowded part of central London. Ahmed later died of the injuries he sustained during the attack.<sup>9</sup>

These actual incidents have proved to be just the tip of the iceberg, with a number of other plots foiled, leading to convictions and long terms of imprisonment. Those plots have included plans to bomb major shopping centres and nightclubs, and to detonate bombs simultaneously on a number of transatlantic airliners. These plots have largely involved young British Muslims or young Muslims with transnational links to Britain. This reality and the Christmas Day 2009 arrest of the London University-educated Nigerian Farouk Abdulmutallab, the so-called 'underpants bomber', after his unsuccessful

attempt to detonate a bomb on a flight landing in Detroit, Michigan, have all led to a picture of a very serious terror threat among young British Muslims, something not undermined by the failure to proceed with trials after some arrests. All these incidents and other plots have involved plans to carry out explosions in public places, often through suicide attacks. This raises the key issue of why some young British Muslims have been suddenly attracted to violent extremism over the past few years and what is motivating them.

### Radical Islam: The ‘single narrative’

What is clear about this terror threat is that the consistent motivation or justification for all these attacks and plots by people of Muslim faith, some of them only very recently converted or rediscovering this faith, is a complex mixture of religion and politics. Here, a very strong identification with the ‘*ummah*’, or one global Muslim community, and a political analysis of Muslims internationally being oppressed, threatened and humiliated provide a context within which a small minority of those holding such views then travel further down a path towards acts of violent extremism. As the rest of this chapter outlines, there is no one simple profile of, or explanation for, those individuals who do travel in that direction, but their common starting point has been the acceptance of a hard-line Islamist position, a politicised understanding of Islamic faith, that provides what had been described as the ‘single narrative’.<sup>10</sup> This ‘single narrative’ explains the world, and the individual’s life and experiences within it, in terms of the oppression of the Muslim *ummah* and the need to take action against that oppression. To describe this shared ideology underpinning the threat of Islamist violent extremism as ‘religious’ is simplistic, given that in both its outlook and the ways in which it is understood and operationalised by its adherents it is arguably closer to the revolutionary anarchist ideology of the nineteenth century or the Marxist-Leninist ideology that inspired revolutionaries across the world for much of the twentieth century.<sup>11</sup> To combat the Islamist ‘single narrative’ and how it can inspire violent extremism, it is important to understand its key elements. Whilst space does not allow a full examination, the aim here is to briefly outline the key components. These include the growth of political Islamism globally over the past 60 years and its development in Britain, the role of foreign Muslim countries such as Saudi Arabia in promoting particular and literalist forms of Islamic adherence, and the role of new technology in enabling new understandings of both the Muslim *ummah* and radical Islamist interpretations of its position and needs.

One key source of this radical Islamist ideology has been a political understanding of Islam which has its roots in the struggles for independence from colonialism and the creation of a nation state in Arab and other Muslim

countries. In many of these countries, such as the Egypt of General Nasser, a broadly secular nationalism, more influenced by socialism than religion, was the dominant political ideology. However, the limited national development in the face of continued Western post-colonial economic domination and the failure of these national rulers to create meaningful democracy, liberty or equality led to increasing disillusionment with both nationalism and socialism. This, combined firstly with the break-up of the Ottoman Empire, the only Muslim-dominated power bloc, and then the failure to arrest the development of Israel that was seen a humiliation for all Arabs led to increasing support for an interest in Islamist ideologies and organisations that saw Islam as the answer. A key focus for this was the Muslim Brotherhood, founded in Egypt in 1928 by Hasan al-Banna, whose influence grew in opposition to the post-independence regime of Nasser through radical leaders and ideologues like Syed Qutb, who was hanged by the Egyptian authorities. Qutb, a key disciple of al-Banna, wrote a book, *Milestones*, that portrayed the West as deliberately anti-Muslim and which proposed overtly Islamic societies as a solution. This book remains highly influential on Islamist activists.<sup>12</sup> Whilst al-Banna's influence has largely been on 'evolutionary Islamists' working within democratic processes, Qutb's work has inspired revolutionary Islamists. This emerging Islamist ideology saw Islam not just as a faith but also as a blueprint for a socio-economic system and for society as a whole. This growth of Islamist thought in contrast to secular nationalism can be seen in the triumph of religious forces following the 1979 Iranian popular revolution and the increasing dominance of the Islamist Hamas over the largely secular and nationalist Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) in Palestine, in the wake of their failure to secure a viable and independent Palestinian state. This 'wave' of Islamist political ideology superseding nationalist and socialist thought in a broad political way is mirrored in a more specific way in the respective 'waves' of terrorism. Gupta (2008) identifies previous global terrorist 'waves' based first on nationalism, then on Marxist/socialist thought. Just as the perceived political failure of those socialist/nationalist ideologies led to the growth of Islamist political movements, so did the failure of violent extremism based on those former ideologies create an attraction towards violent extremism based around Islamism within the Muslim world, but with significant overlaps with this previous 'wave' of violent extremism as Al-Qaeda with the 9/11 and other attacks on US power 'targeted modern imperialism, as the ultra-leftists of the late 1960s and 1970s did with less success'.<sup>13</sup>

Islamist groups based on this ideology, which draws on key thinkers like Qutb and the Indian Maududi, a key ideologue within the Indian-based and ultra-conservative Deobandi movement, have gradually spread across the world, first appearing in the United Kingdom in an organised form in the shape of Hizb ut-Tahrir (HUT) after the first Gulf War in 1991. In contrast to the Sufi traditions of the majority of Pakistani- and Bangladeshi-origin British Muslims

who view faith as largely spiritual and unconnected from politics, such an Islamist perspective focuses on political action and on making overt demands on behalf of Muslims and their religious practice, so intensely politicising Muslim life and identity. The granting of asylum to violent Islamist extremists from Algeria, Egypt and other North African and Middle Eastern states between the late 1980s and late 1990s also did much to enable the growth of Islamist politics in Britain, as did the plight of Bosnian Muslims during the break-up of the former Yugoslavia.<sup>14</sup> At the same time, Britain has been on the receiving end of very considerable religious propaganda and funding for conservative Islamic activities from Saudi Arabia and other Gulf states. The twin threats of the 1979 Iranian revolution with its more radical form of a political Islam and the growth of Leftist nationalism in other states led the oil-rich Saudis to commit huge amounts of funding to the promotion of their own conservative and literalist Wahabi interpretation of Islam. This was directed at Muslim communities globally through printed and Internet propaganda and through the strategic use of funds for mosques and organisational funding. The pivotal role of Saudi Arabia as the focus for the Hajj pilgrimage and the training of many imams enabled them to deepen this impact.

This growth both of an overtly political Islamism combined with the global promotion of literalist and noncontingent forms of Islam through Wahabism and Deobandism have led to significant developments within Muslim communities, both in Britain and internationally. It is important to state that these more politicised and/or more literal positions are still often held by only a minority of Muslims, but that minority has grown both in numbers and influence through generational change. Within this development, key concepts can be identified. ‘Salafi’ denotes Muslims who view many other individual Muslims and Muslim-dominated states as not pure or observant enough, with some Salafis expressing this through doctrinal practice and debate, and others drawn towards political, or even violent, expression. Oliver Roy (2004) terms the politicised form of this held by some young Western Muslims as ‘neo-fundamentalism’. Whilst the vast majority of Salafis oppose violence, they have little support for or involvement in wider, non-Muslim society. A more extreme development from that position is that of ‘takfiri’, radical Salafi Islamists who believe that violence against other, less devout Muslims is justified. Here, Al-Qaeda leaders have talked about ‘far’ and ‘near’ enemies, with ‘far’ denoting non-Muslims powers like the United States, and ‘near’ denoting Muslim states and their rulers viewed as corrupt or not pure enough. The fact that the video statement left by Sidiq Khan spent as much time addressing British Muslims and their leaders for their lack of ‘purity’ as it did addressing the wider British public illustrates this ideology.<sup>15</sup>

A key component in this Islamist ideology, and its extreme violent offshoots, is its emphasis and exploitation of the concept of the *ummah*, one Muslim community globally, irrespective of national or ethnic boundaries. Chapter 2 outlines the significant support for this identity and concept among young



British Muslims generally and how we might understand this, as well as the progressive and internationalist potential the concept offers.<sup>16</sup> However, this attachment to the *ummah*, the Muslim ‘imagined community’ can be exploited and directed towards violent extremism. Here, the ‘single narrative’ that Muslims are everywhere oppressed and humiliated, and that action must be taken, can be the motivation for violent extremism on their behalf. This understanding motivates Gupta’s (2008) belief that terrorism is an altruistic act, with Islamist terrorists acting on behalf of the *ummah*, especially when a strong and simplistic narrative is built around historic and current diverse political events such as the 1979 Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, the Chechnya and Kashmir conflicts, anti-Muslim atrocities in Bosnia, the 1991 and 2003 invasions of Iraq, and the festering Israel/Palestine conflict. This narrative conveniently overlooks the facts that many of the deaths in Iraq have resulted from attacks by Muslims on other Muslims or of situations like Sudan where Muslims are the ‘oppressors’. Nevertheless, Scott Atran observes that ‘the terrorists aren’t nihilists, starkly or ambiguously, but often deeply moral souls with a horribly misplaced sense of justice’.<sup>17</sup> This suggests that saying suicide-bombing terrorists, such as the 7/7 attackers, died for ‘a cause’ is too simplistic; rather, they died for others, real and imagined friends and co-religionists.

This ‘single narrative’ and the way it is understood by young Western Muslims can appear to be a conservative, backward-looking rejection of modernity, but Oliver Roy suggests that ‘neo-fundamentalism and radical violence are more linked with westernisation than with a return to the Qur’an’.<sup>18</sup> For Roy, the growth of this international Islamist ideology is just one facet of, and one reaction to, globalisation, both in the way that it is communicated via modern technologies and how it is increasingly about *individual* understandings, identities and behaviour, and how that individual understanding of Islam is performed. In this way, Islamist radicalism and its minority violent extremism forms can be better understood through comparisons with, and study of, modern ‘evangelical’ trends in other religions,<sup>19</sup> and secular modern radical movements, such as antiglobalisation militants or neo-fascist/racist networks, than by studying Islamic history or ‘tradition’. This leads Roy to suggest that ‘the ummah here plays the role of the proletariat for Trotskyist and leftists groups of the 1960s – an imaginary and therefore silent community that gives legitimacy to a small group pretending to speak in its name’.<sup>20</sup> Western countries did not focus on the growth in Islamist ideology or in the global network built around the ‘single narrative’ until the shock of 9/11 because they had been using such groups as a tool to oppose communism, radical Shiaism or Arab leftist nationalism and were shocked to find it attacking the West. This suggests that Islamist radicalism in the West is a social movement, a response to globalisation and to the experiences of being second or third generations of a conservative ethnic minority community, as discussed further in Chapter 2.

## A reaction to British foreign policy?

An obvious explanation of this domestic terror threat for some commentators is British foreign policy, specifically the highly controversial military involvements in Afghanistan since 2001 and in Iraq between 2003 and 2010. Those involvements were explicitly addressed by Mohammad Sidique Khan in the first section of his ‘suicide video’, where he stated, ‘Your democratically-elected governments continuously perpetrate atrocities against my people all over the world. And your support of them makes you directly responsible, just as I am directly responsible for protecting and avenging my Muslim brothers and sisters’.<sup>21</sup> A number of politicians from different political parties echoed this link to Iraq in the weeks following 7/7. In contrast, Prime Minister Tony Blair flatly denied such a link and the government continued to avoid such a linkage. For Derek McGhee, ‘By dismissing the relationship between British foreign policy and radicalisation, the government under Blair lost the opportunity to understand and respond to the grievances that extremists are all too eager to exploit.’<sup>22</sup> However, even allowing for the political dangers of accepting such a link, it is suggested below that such ‘grievances’ are far less clear or transparent than those underpinning previous terror threats, such as Irish Republicanism.

Nevertheless, anti-Iraq war campaigners highlighted advice given to the government by the Parliamentary Intelligence and Security Committee, drawing on the Joint Intelligence Committee of government agencies, that involvement in Iraq would heighten the risk of terrorism.<sup>23</sup> This link was explored further in 2004 by a joint Home Office/Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) document, *Draft Report on Young Muslims and Extremism*. This commented that ‘there is a feeling that parts of the Muslim community, particularly younger men, are disaffected’. As part of that report, the head of the Foreign Office, Michael Jay, wrote that one recurring theme within this disaffection was ‘the issue of British foreign policy’, which was seen as central to the recruitment of the various Islamist groups such as HUT and Al-Muhajiroun. A perception of double standards held by Western governments, especially around Israel, was identified in the report itself, and these concerns grew as the situation in Iraq deteriorated into large-scale violence affecting civilians. Richard English, a leading academic commentator on terrorism, notes that ‘members of the terrorist cell convicted in April 2007 of plotting bomb attacks in England clearly had a sense that the United Kingdom should be hit because of its support for the US wars in Afghanistan and Iraq’.<sup>24</sup>

It seems beyond dispute that the military operations in Iraq and Afghanistan have deepened feelings of marginalisation and anger among many British Muslims, and that the government’s refusal to acknowledge a possible link to involvement in violent extremism has been unhelpful. However, to suggest that accepting such a link, or even adjusting foreign policy would ‘solve’ the problem of domestic Islamist violent extremism, is naïve because it doesn’t

address why a small minority are drawn to terrorist violence, ‘underscored by the number of people who feel the same level of grievance and identification, yet do not turn to violent expression’.<sup>25</sup> Regarding that small minority of British Muslims involved in violent extremism, the simple equation of apparently anti-Muslim British foreign policy leading to an Islamist domestic terror response doesn’t convince for a number of reasons. Sidique Khan was already moving in extreme Islamist circles in 1999, and by early 2001, before 9/11, was trying to recruit young Muslims for training in Afghanistan with two Muslims from Derby who later carried out suicide bombings in Israel. Indeed, ‘The Khan family and, it seems, at least a couple of dozen others, had known that Sidique was a potentially violent radical for at least six years before 7/7.’<sup>26</sup> The claim that 7/7 could have been prevented by MI5 is based on the fact that Khan and Tanweer met the ‘Crevice’ plotters in 2004 but were not followed up. The so-called Crevice plot involved a group of young Muslims plotting to cause large explosions at venues such as the Blue Water shopping centre in Kent and the Ministry of Sound nightclub in London. They had attended a terrorist training camp and purchased 600 kilograms of Ammonium Nitrate, enough to cause several large-scale explosions, but were under surveillance, leading to arrest and long-term imprisonment. The ringleader, Omar Khyam, from Crawley in Sussex, had attended an Islamist training camp in Kashmir in 2000, again before 9/11, and then returned to raise funds for Islamist fighters in Afghanistan and Kashmir. This picture of British Islamists preparing for violent extremism not only before the 2003 invasion of Iraq but also before 9/11 is highlighted by the arrest in December 2001 of British Muslim convert Richard Reid after he attempted to explode a bomb hidden in his shoe on a transatlantic flight from Paris to Miami. Reid had trained in the same Afghanistan terror camp as fellow Briton Saajid Butt from Gloucester. Butt withdrew from the long-planned airline plot at the last minute, was arrested and imprisoned for 13 years. Similarly, Dhiren Barot, a Hindu convert to Islam, was jailed in 2007 on terror charges, after having fought with Kashmir militants and other Islamists since the late 1990s.<sup>27</sup> Clearly, the threat of Islamist violent extremism predates the invasion of Iraq or even 9/11. However, what will never be known is whether British Islamist extremists such as Omar Khyam and Sidique Khan, who initially volunteered to fight in Afghanistan, would have planned attacks on Britain without the foreign military involvements, as ‘the motivations of those who received training abroad before September 2001 did not necessarily centre upon the desire to attack civilian populations in western states’.<sup>28</sup> Certainly, violent Islamist extremists identified more recently have clearly been motivated by foreign policy issues. Roshonara Choudhry, the talented young Muslim student jailed for life after stabbing her local MP, Stephen Timms, in 2010, said in her police interviews shortly after the attack that ‘I thought that it’s not right that he voted for the declaration of war in Iraq ... I feel like I’ve ruined the rest of my life. I feel like it’s worth it because millions of Iraqis are

suffering and I should do what I can to help them'.<sup>29</sup> For Jonathan Githens-Mazer, this showed that 'we can definitively put to rest Tony Blair's claims that foreign policy isn't linked to terrorism at home'.<sup>30</sup>

### A foreign hand?

It seemed self-evident to some people that the carefully planned and coordinated 7/7 attacks must have been commissioned and controlled by Osama Bin-Laden and Al-Qaeda in an echo of the 9/11 attacks. That in itself was a misunderstanding of how 9/11 had been planned,<sup>31</sup> but support for this came from the fact that a statement of responsibility for 7/7 was issued by a previously unknown group within hours of the attacks. Written in Arabic, the prose and content identified the statement as almost certainly the work of Bin-Laden's associate Ayman al-Zawahiri, with the sites of the four London explosions intended to mirror his phrase about the four points of the compass.<sup>32</sup> The video statement by two of the 7/7 attackers subsequently released largely consisted of a speech by al-Zawahiri. However, analysis of the Al-Qaeda central leadership based in Afghanistan suggests that their role has often been to finance, advise and support proposals and plots brought to them, rather than necessarily initiating and actually planning themselves. Indeed, both Sidique Khan and Omar Khyam went to Afghanistan to volunteer their military services to the Taliban but were directed to 'do something back home' by the Islamist leadership there.<sup>33</sup> Dhiren Barot had led a group that planned to explode bombs on the sections of the London Underground under the Thames river and had merely submitted a 'business' plan to Al-Qaeda for financial support – the ideas and motivation they already had themselves. Similarly, the 2004 Madrid bombers had no direct contact with Al-Qaeda and did not seek any funding, leading Gupta to observe that 'modern jihadi terror groups are linear, open-sourced, decentralised conglomerations of small, quasi-independent groups drawn more by inspiration from Bin Laden than a direct instruction from him'.<sup>34</sup> This sort of 'leaderless struggle', inspired by ideology rather than orders, is very reminiscent of the anarchist terrorism that posed a real threat to Western states in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, which included assassinations of the Russian czar and the president of the United States. The new US president made defeat of the anarchist threat his number one priority, but there was no central command or control structure to attack, as increasingly appears to be the case today: 'Al Qaeda today is mostly an idea, more a violent Islamist revivalist social movement than a terrorist organisation'.<sup>35</sup> Whilst the possible influences of 'gateway' Islamist organisations or radical preachers are discussed below, the sobering reality is that most British violent Islamists convicted or having been involved in plots are 'self-starters', and it is more productive to focus on the interrelated issues

of the ideology or beliefs guiding self-starters and the small-scale interpersonal dynamics within groups of them, with these two factors seeming to be at the heart of the threat of violent extremism.

### **Ethnic segregation, poverty and marginalisation?**

Rather than the plight of Muslims abroad, is it the lived reality of Muslims in Britain and other European states that has primarily produced this domestic Islamist terror threat? In the wake of the 2004 Madrid and 2005 London bombings, a prominent American academic commentator on national security highlighted ‘Europe’s Angry Muslims’,<sup>36</sup> characterising the Muslims in the United Kingdom, France and the Netherlands as poor, ghettoised and peripheral to their national societies, with the blame being put on policies of ‘multiculturalism’, which have allowed separate and oppositional identities to develop. This, of course, skirted the fact that France has emphatically rejected multiculturalism but still has a problem of both ghettoisation and Islamist violence.<sup>37</sup> The contrast was made to the United States, where the Muslim population was portrayed as diffused, integrated and unconflicted over their national American identity. However, in the years since that 2005 article, the United States has faced a number of Islamist terror incidents and plots very similar in nature to those faced by Britain.<sup>38</sup> These have seen settled and apparently successful American Muslims<sup>39</sup> get involved in Islamist violent extremism, with the most graphic example being the shooting dead of 13 fellow military personnel at Ford Hood, Texas by a Muslim military psychologist. These developments have now led to Congressional Hearings on domestic radicalisation and the first signs that dedicated anti-radicalisation policy measures may be developing in the United States.<sup>40</sup>

Nevertheless, as Chapter 2 discusses in more detail, Muslims in many of Britain’s towns and cities *are* significantly ethnically segregated, often living ‘parallel lives’. The acceptance of this reality, and consequent action to address it, has been central to the post-2001 shift of emphasis within UK ‘race relations’ policy approaches, as discussed more in Chapter 2. Analysis of the 7/7 bombers and how that plot and the close relationships sustaining it grew does suggest that the close-knit and somewhat insular nature of the Pakistani-origin community in Beeston enabled radicalisation to develop without external reporting,<sup>41</sup> based on certain ‘taken-for-granted’ attitudes and norms within the community.

In the wake of the 7/7 attacks, professional colleagues from different ethnic backgrounds praised the work with young people of Sidique Khan, and white neighbours spoke very positively about Shezad Tanweer as a polite and promising young man. This led the Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) to suggest that the 7/7 bombers ‘were nurtured in cohesive communities’.<sup>42</sup>

However, whilst Beeston did not have rigid ethnic segregation in the manner of the towns and cities facing riots in 2001, it had, and has, significant localised segregation, and a long history of youth racial tensions encompassing a cocktail of ‘race’, territorialism and machismo. Geraldine is a white, Irish-origin local authority officer, who grew up in Beeston during the late 1980s and early 1990s, and remembers ethnic, physical and cultural segregation hardening in the area as she got older:

When I look back at my time growing up in Beeston, there seems to be a big difference between the late 1980s and the 1990s. I grew up on the Cross Flatts side of the park and I had friends from lots of different backgrounds, but at the time I don’t think much was made of it – it was just normal. I had friends who were Irish, Caribbean, Polish, Italian, Sikh as well as white British living on both sides of the park. But by the time I went to high school in 1990, it seemed like the park was a dividing line, between ‘white Beeston’ on the one side, with a small percentage of people generally accepted as comfortably integrated from lots of other backgrounds, and ‘Asian Beeston’ on the other, with very few people who weren’t of Asian origin. Again, looking back, they were collectively labelled ‘Asian’ by everyone, but actually they were predominantly Muslims from Kashmir, Pakistan or Bangladesh – and the Sikh and Caribbean families I had known had moved out too. If I’m really honest too, I remember thinking that the ‘white’ families who still lived there were quite chaotic and intimidating.

When I think of multicultural places, I picture New York or London – people of all backgrounds living in every street across all income brackets. When I look back to growing up in Beeston, it was at best bi-cultural with one version of multiculturalism on one side and another version on the other side.

Rai (2006) in his thoughtful analysis of the 7/7 attacks and their political context quotes ex-school friends of Hasib Hussain saying that he often got into fights with non-Muslims and that ‘it was always whites against Asians and there were so many fights’.<sup>43</sup> This was little changed from the previous generation represented by Sidique Khan. Luke taught Sidique Khan at Mathew Murray High School (MMHS) in south Leeds in the late 1980s, and comments,

The social climate in south Leeds generally and MMHS at that time – late 1980s – was anything but multicultural. When I arrived at MMHS in 1985, almost every single desk had swastika graffiti on it – literally almost all. The management didn’t understand racism as a problem because they were ignorant and racist themselves by and large. When Sidique got to the school, the balance of power had shifted so that the Asian kids were less of a minority, and there was an uneasy peace between them and the white kids that occasionally flared into running warfare that brought heavy policing to Holbeck. At this time, the Pakistanis had a ‘one in, all in’ policy that made them a formidable force. I never saw Sidique involved in fighting, but there would have been no ambiguity about whose side he was on. So the climate was one of fear and loathing. As an Asian kid in MMHS at that time you would have had to face ignorance, prejudice and racism on a daily basis; it was impossible to escape it. It was very difficult to talk about it to the young people as a teacher because the battle lines were drawn up and there was so

much tension constantly bubbling away under the surface. I was threatened with disciplinary action by the school management for doing too much stuff about racism at one point. They didn't know how to deal with it and they couldn't handle it appropriately. The Pakistani parents seemed very conservative and they controlled what their sons did at school, and many girls left school early or were limited in their choices. The white girls felt very oppressed by the behaviour and attitudes of many of the Pakistani youth, and this fuelled their racism. It would not be an exaggeration to describe it as an environment of hatred, and I was strangely unsurprised when I heard about Sidique, although I had no idea that it would lead to terrorism as such.

Such ethnic segregation, racism and racial tension is problematic for society in a number of ways, as Chapter 2 discusses, but recent demographic analysis shows that British Muslims have been no more likely to be involved in Islamist violent extremism activity if they come from 'dense', clustered and segregated Muslim communities than if they come from much smaller and apparently 'integrated' settings.<sup>44</sup> Omar Khyam, ringleader of the Crevice plot, came from Crawley in Sussex, where the Muslim population was too small for the local authority to qualify for initial *Prevent* funding. Similarly, Saajid Butt came from Gloucester, again a Muslim community of limited size in an overwhelmingly white area. Government statistics show the Pakistani and Bangladeshi-origin communities, who represent the substantial majority of Britain's Muslims, as having higher rates of unemployment, poor housing and poverty than other ethnic backgrounds, and much higher rates than the white majority communities. Gupta (2008) notes that Aristotle saw poverty as the root cause of political unrest and violence, but Jason Burke, a journalist with a long-term involvement in the coverage of Islamist violence, found that 'fewer than 20% of UK militants come from genuinely deprived or low income backgrounds'.<sup>45</sup> Some militants, such as the ex-criminal Richard Reid, or Hasib Hussain, who achieved little at school, could be characterised as marginalised, but others had higher education qualifications or involvements and were seemingly both 'integrated' and personally 'successful'. Sidique Khan, with his wife and child, qualifications and a good job, and the two people involved in the Glasgow Airport bombing suggest that personal social circumstances and experiences cannot explain terrorist involvement.

Indeed, the varied social backgrounds of those involved in British Islamist terrorism means that 'the security services can identify neither a uniform pattern by which a process occurs nor a particular type that is susceptible'.<sup>46</sup> Here, it is clear that any suggested link between ethnic segregation or economic marginalisation and terrorism is misplaced, but also that 'integration' and apparent success is no guarantee of moderation. Some generalisations have been offered, such as in the government's *Draft Report on Young Muslims and Extremism*, which suggested that 'by and large most young extremists fall into one or two groups: well-educated undergraduates or with degrees and technical professional qualifications in engineering or IT, or under-achievers

with few or no qualifications, and often a criminal background'.<sup>47</sup> That does mirror what is known about Islamist extremists internationally but sheds only limited light on how preventative policies should be targeted. Given that close to 50 per cent of young Britons now go on to higher education, and that university participation rates for Pakistani and Bangladeshi young people are rising steadily, such profiling suggests a very large potential target group. This is also true for the increasing numbers of young Muslims involved in the criminal justice system, as discussed below. What is clear is that members of Britain's Pakistani and Bangladeshi communities are having increasingly diverse experiences in relation to education and employment, with what can be termed 'class differences' becoming more apparent.<sup>48</sup>

Perhaps the key issue is not personal poverty or marginalisation but perception by an individual, based on his or her acceptance of the Islamist 'single narrative' outlined above, that *their people* are marginalised and oppressed. However, which Muslims are likely to be attracted to this 'single narrative' is far from clear. Gupta (2008) outlines psychological explanations for terrorism in general, including Freud's belief that unresolved sexual issues motivate a revolutionary to act against natural authority figures, based on a feeling of humiliation. Such a simplistic equation of sexual frustration equals terrorism seems to be answered by the reality that many of the Western-based Islamist terrorists have lived lives of sexual freedom, with many of the 9/11 and Madrid attackers being womanizers<sup>49</sup> and the 7/7 inquest identifying that Shezad Tanweer had a 'secret affair' with a girlfriend for three years, with his last meeting with her just days before the 7/7 bombings.<sup>50</sup> Other non-Freudian psychologists focus on frustration/aggression, social learning and the attractions of 'group-think' as possible explanations for violent extremism, but all available data suggest that those involved in Islamist violent extremism are 'normal' by the standards of psychological tests.

### **Radicalisation: Mosques, 'preachers of hate' and recruiters?**

Much of the popular media discussion of the nature and causes of the Islamist terror threat has focused on the role of some mosques and so-called 'preachers of hate', but caution is needed here over the role of mosques. Many Islamists attracted to violent extremism had previously broken ties with local mosques, either because their radical views meant that they were no longer welcome or because the traditional and conservative approach, with sermons delivered in community languages, felt irrelevant to the interests of younger Muslims. Even in mosques where illiberal social and political attitudes are seen as the norm, the link between such 'extremism' and 'violent extremism', a distinction problematically at the heart of government approaches to *Prevent*, is less clear. For the 7/7 bombers, the mosque link does not stand up. Dissatisfaction with



the irrelevance of the local mosque and hostility from his family and local community to his 'love marriage' to an Indian-origin woman from a different Muslim tradition led Sidique Khan, along with his associates in Beeston, towards prayer and religious study meetings in local gyms and hired rooms, and to the performing of religious marriage ceremonies in the local radical 'Iqr'a' bookshop.<sup>51</sup> This mirrors the experiences of many young British Muslims, leading some to seek their own understanding and practice of being a 'Muslim' away from mosques, in political groups, community-based meetings with invited preachers, or in informal study circles, all of which have provided great opportunity for radicalisation unchecked by community scrutiny or norms.

It is, however, clear from media investigations that some mosques have been sites of extreme political, religious and social attitudes being expressed. This was illustrated by the WikiLeaks disclosures of American secret intelligence files relating to Islamist prisoners held at Guantanamo Bay, which focused on the role in radicalisation of Finsbury Park Mosque: 'the Guantanamo files disclose that by the late 1990s, the mosque in north London had become a "haven" for extremism where disaffected young men from around the world were radicalised before being sent to al-Qaeda training camps in Afghanistan'.<sup>52</sup> The files suggested that at least 35 Muslims, evenly split between Britons and foreign radicals granted asylum in Britain, were further radicalised at the mosque through viewing propaganda and preaching by key figures such as Abu Hamza and Abu Qatada, both of whom were foreign nationals granted asylum. Here, the British network of extreme Islamists was enlarged by the presence of a significant number of exiled Islamist radicals from North Africa and the Middle East in Britain, especially in London. This presence was the direct result of political approaches to asylum policy in the late 1980s and early 1990s, when the British government granted leave to remain to such activists, believing that it was better to have them living in the open and under surveillance in Britain. However, for many commentators this allowed an extremist free for all, with the extreme attitudes of such activists influencing young British Muslims as well as other exiles, and turning the British capital into 'Londonistan',<sup>53</sup> as well as spreading their radical influence nationally.

As suggested above though, radical mosques such as Finsbury Park, now purged of extremism and under the control of a new management committee, have been an exception, and other sources of radicalisation within Muslim communities need to be analysed. These include 'preachers of hate', radical political groups, prisons and the Internet. Many of the most 'extreme' preachers and speakers within Muslim communities are banned from mosques and instead speak at community centres and other meeting places: It is very likely that Germaine Lindsay was 'introduced to (Sidique) Khan through his associations with the radical preacher Abdullah al-Faisal',<sup>54</sup> who spoke twice in Beeston prior to being jailed in 2003 for incitement to racial hatred. The head of the Hamara community agency in Beeston employing Sidique Khan was also

linked to the appearance of radical preachers at venues in Leeds. Oliver Roy, one of the world's leading analysts of modern Islamist militancy, suggests that 'Islamist preachers have replaced far left militants and social workers' in being influential on marginalised Muslim youth in Western countries.<sup>55</sup> Intermeshed with the influence of such preacher-led meetings has been the role of Islamist political groups, something that has grown significantly in Britain over the two decades since the *Satanic Verses* controversy and the first Gulf War. The HUT, or the 'party of liberation', has been a group with origins in the ideologies of Qutb and Mawdudi and a belief in the re-establishment of the 'Caliphate' or pan-Islamic state. Operating in English and working across any traditional Muslim factional lines has made it attractive to some young Muslims, with HUT campaigning for Muslims to boycott democratic participation in wider society. The founder of the British branch of HUT, Omar Bakri Muhammed, went on to establish the even more militant Al-Muhajiroun. That group and its offshoots have staged high-profile stunts, such as the demonstration against British troops returning home from Afghanistan to Luton that sparked the establishment of the EDL.<sup>56</sup>

It seems highly likely now that Sidique Khan initially made contact with other Islamists, such as Omar Khyam and the two Derby-based Israel suicide bombers, through Al-Muhajiroun circles, such as Omar Bakhri hosting a fundraising barbeque in London, the proceeds of which enabled Omar Khyam and Sidique Khan to travel to the Pakistani/Afghan border for military training in 2003. A significant number of the members of such Islamist political groups have previously been involved in far left groups such as the Socialist Workers Party, becoming disillusioned with their lack of focus on Muslim faith and political concerns. Ex-HUT activist Ed Husain describes the attractions of a Muslim-focused group operating in English and overtly concerned with political issues like Palestine/Israel which mosques and older members of Muslim communities wanted to downplay. Former senior HUT official Shiraz Maher has used the illegal drugs analogy to characterise HUT and similar groups as 'gateway' organisations to Islamist violent extremism, not advocating violence themselves but radicalising individuals and putting them in close touch with others in ways that can facilitate further small group or cell radicalisation.<sup>57</sup> This role has led to the banning of Al-Muhajiroun and its successors, and calls post-7/7 for the banning of HUT, a controversial political stance in a situation where the BNP has elected councillors and Members of the European Parliament nationally, and the EDL has been allowed to stage provocative public rallies.

Political groups such as the HUT have been successful particularly in attracting educated young Muslims towards radical Islamism, with activity on the campuses of universities and further education colleges a central plank of their operation. Social movement theory suggests that this is a very traditional way for radical political movements to grow, as they are often based around

educated but politically frustrated young people.<sup>58</sup> To date, at least six different members of British university Islamic societies have been convicted of terrorism offences amid concern that radical Islamist political meetings and viewings of Islamist propaganda DVDs on campuses have created ‘mood music’ that provides the context for the further radicalisation of a minority of Muslim students.

A key route to radicalisation for more marginalised young British Muslims has been Islamist activity within prisons and Young Offenders Institutes (YOIs). Muktar Said Ibrahim, the ringleader of the 21/7 failed bomb plot, was radicalised whilst imprisoned in Feltham YOI in West London and then sought out combat training in Afghanistan. Similarly, Richard Reid converted to Islam whilst in prison in the 1990s in an echo of the conversion of many Black American prisoners to the Nation of Islam.<sup>59</sup> There have been between 100 and 200 Muslims in British prisons for terrorist-related offences at different points over the past few years at the same time as the number of people in prisons/YOIs identified as Muslims has been rising generally. This has created interrelated concerns not only around the management of these radicals but also around the further radicalisation of ‘normal’ Muslim prisoners and even the conversion to Islam in its radical form by other prisoners. The concern that Islamists committed to violent extremism are still a threat whilst incarcerated is well-founded, with research into such prisoners in the United Kingdom and Spain suggesting both that such networks can use prison as organisational and educational bases as the IRA or the Basque ETA previously did and prey on vulnerable prisoners to convert and/or radicalise them.<sup>60</sup> One of the key Madrid bombers appears to have been radicalised during an earlier prison spell. Caution is needed over the rate of conversions to Islam, as factors such as group protection or even food preferences may also be involved, but it is clear prisons are a site of tension around Islamic radicalisation.

### Group dynamics

All the available data of young Muslims for Britain and other Western countries who have become involved in Islamist violent extremism suggests not only that there is no single economic or educational ‘profile’ of such terrorists but also that psychologically these people appear to be ‘normal’. In analysing British Islamist terrorism, Jason Burke highlights ‘the apparent banality of the men who perpetrate it’.<sup>61</sup> The question, therefore, is why a small number of people are able and willing to make the journey towards the most extreme acts of violence. The suggestion here is that the answer is in group dynamics and peer pressure, rather than in individual characteristics. If this is true, it casts

serious doubts on attempts to 'profile' possible Islamist terrorists in advance of events: 'it is the psychology of the group, not the individual that is key.'<sup>62</sup> Social psychologist Scott Atran has spent many years researching terrorism and suicide bombings, including the 2004 Madrid and 2002 Bali Islamist attacks. He concludes that 'small group dynamics can trump individual personality to produce horrific behaviour in ordinary people'.<sup>63</sup> For instance, five of the seven Madrid bombers came from the same small area of a housing estate in Tetuan, Morocco, with five of their other friends having previously gone to Iraq to fight as jihadis. Similarly in Indonesia, 'the Bali plot and plots after spewed from a tangled web of discipleship, kinship and marriage, social networks of Afghan alumni and other friends, and not really from any command and control organisation'.<sup>64</sup> The input of 'Al-Qaeda central' based in Pakistan on the Bali plot was minimal, and all the evidence from the Madrid plot was that they had nothing to do with it. Instead, for Scott Atran, the Madrid conspiracy developed from the group dynamics among a group of North Africans who together regularly watched emotive jihadist material and who had a charismatic central figure. This saw a coming together of Islamists and petty criminals, with the criminals actually coming to the fore as the plot took on a momentum of its own. A close analysis of this plot leads Atran to focus on how small groups can 'self-radicalise' simply through discussion and the viewing of video/online imagery and then develop terrorist plans. Group psychology and dynamics are crucial, with psychology evidence suggesting that 'to stand alone and resist conforming may be emotionally costly'.<sup>65</sup>

That perspective draws on evidence such as Hannah Arendt's study of the Holocaust and the German roles within it that highlighted the 'banality of evil', something confirmed by the later experiments of Stanley Milgram which showed volunteers willing to torture in response to orders. A key facet of the Madrid plot was how much time the plotters spent together in the months beforehand, something mirrored in the 9/11 plot that involved three of the four key suicide pilots being close friends together from student days together in Hamburg, Germany. They had attempted to become jihadis together in Afghanistan, and when they returned, they spent much of their time praying together and watching extreme Islamist video material. Here, the small Islamist group became their world, as it appears to have done for other groups of plotters. The three 7/7 bombers from Beeston in south Leeds spent a great deal of time together in local gyms, youth projects and the radical 'Iqr'a' bookshop, praying, watching videos and discussing Islamist perspectives with friends. This was cemented with the bonding experience of a white-water canoeing trip to Wales, just as the 21/7 attackers took part in an outdoor terrorist training/preparation trip in the Lake District and the Crevice plotters undertook a similar trip to Pakistan. Such intense group experiences helped to develop the central importance of the group and its concerns to their individual lives,

making the further movement towards more extreme political positions and ideas for action seem natural and normal. In such ways, such small groups of radicalised young Muslims are undergoing a similar process of group formation and development as those people involved in religious ‘cults’ or extreme political groups, with the group becoming their life. The suggestion that the 7/7 attackers had together been ‘brainwashed’, by themselves or anyone else, has been dismissed on the basis that they all individually carried on with their normal lives, but it is clear that they ‘had hidden the most important part of their lives from their parents, their families and from many of their friends’.<sup>66</sup> This may well have been a long-term strategy for Sidique Khan, with one of his former teachers Luke commenting that: at school ‘he came over as clever but careful – he guarded his image carefully’.

A key part of the small group dynamics central to these Islamist plots has been the role of a charismatic leader. For the 7/7 attackers, this clearly was Sidique Khan. Older than the others, he already had a lot of status within Beeston’s Muslim community through his youth work and his role in the ‘Mullah Boys’ that had successfully worked against the influence of hard drugs in the preceding decade. Both Tanweer and Hussain attended youth activities run by Khan at the Hamara Youth Access Point as well as meetings and sessions at the ‘Iqr’a’ bookshop and local gyms. From when Hussain had been about 14 years old, Khan had been regularly visiting him at home to talk and pray with him, a relationship that in retrospect might be regarded as a form of ‘grooming’. Similarly, Germaine Lindsay is described by Patrick, someone who was very close to him and his family during Germaine’s childhood, as ‘very intelligent but very vulnerable’, someone who could be influenced by charismatic older figures. Despite not pursuing education past the age of 16, Lindsay showed himself to be very academically talented as well as an impressive sportsman. That talent, his good looks and enquiring mind all suggested that he could be whatever he wanted to be, but instability was a feature throughout his life. Never really knowing his biological father, who remained in Jamaica, Germaine experienced further instability as stepfathers moved on and his young sister went to live with her father. This culminated in his mother leaving him to live alone at the age of 17, when she emigrated to the United States after marrying a man she had never previously met. That marriage and abandonment of Germaine followed the conversion to Islam by both mother and son, with Germaine’s mother having been a long-term religious ‘seeker’ who had moved through a number of different Christian churches and sects. Patrick remembers Germaine talking of Muslim ‘friends’ at that time, ‘but those friends were converters’, almost certainly older Muslim radicals, possibly African-Caribbean converts as Germaine then became, who preyed on his vulnerability, rather than school-age, Asian-origin friends. Evidence suggests that Germaine fell under the influence of African-Caribbean convert and Islamist extremist Abdullah el-Faisal, and it was at

one of his talks in Yorkshire that Germaine first met Sidique Khan, a more local mentor figure.

Other British Islamist plots have had a clear ringleader or charismatic figure, such as Omar Khyam for the Crevice plot, and for the Madrid attacks such a figure was Sehane Fakhret, 'the Tunisian', who inspired the successful coming together of a very ramshackle group of individuals. Such charismatic individuals clearly form the key role of terrorist 'leader' or the 'political entrepreneur' who 'frames', explains and sells political explanations and proposed remedies to 'followers'.<sup>67</sup> This role had already been identified prior to 7/7 by the British government through its analysis of previous plots domestically and abroad: 'The Security Service has some evidence that those who go on to become involved in terrorist-related activity have been radicalised as a result of associating with loose networks that revolve around a respected key individual.'<sup>68</sup>

Whilst this focus on small group dynamics and the role of charismatic leaders within them appears very convincing, they do not help explain the individuals who have planned and carried out Islamist terror acts entirely alone. A good example is Roshonara Choudhry, who stabbed her local MP Stephen Timms in May 2010 in response to his support for the invasion of Iraq, and whose radicalisation seemed to be solely based on viewing of Islamist images and information via the Internet. In particular, she obsessively listened to and watched sermons and speeches by American-born Islamist radical Anwar al-Awlaki (subsequently killed in an American drone attack), finding his websites without any help, and viewing the material alone, as well as viewing other jihadist material: 'I was looking at YouTube videos about the resistance in Afghanistan and Iraq ... I didn't want to tell anyone because I know that if anybody else knew, they'd get into trouble, 'cos then they would be implicated in whatever I do, so I kept it a secret'.<sup>69</sup> Other examples are Major Nadal Malik Hassan who killed fellow soldiers stationed at Ford Hood in Texas and Farouk Abdulmutallab, the 'underpants bomber' who tried to explode a bomb sewn into his trousers on a plane landing in Detroit, Michigan in 2009. Both of those individuals had been in Internet contact with Anwar al-Awlaki, based in Yemen, although 'it was likely that they sought out the popular Internet preacher because they were already radicalised to the point of wanting further guidance to act'.<sup>70</sup> Such radicalisation can come from repeated viewing of Islamist material on the Internet, with Germaine Lindsay having already raised concerns whilst still at Rawthorpe High School in Huddersfield through his attempts to find websites celebrating the 9/11 attacks.<sup>71</sup> It is clear from these discussions of radicalisation and of the small group processes within it that viewing of Islamist material on DVD or via the Internet has played a crucial role. However, any policy responses have to acknowledge that a lot of these emotive images are actually carried by mainstream media outlets that repeat them throughout news cycles, so negating the need for Islamists to search for other sources.

## Conclusion: No easy answers

This chapter has outlined how the phenomenon of young British Muslims committed to violent extremism defies easy or singular explanation – causation is multifactorial, with the strong role played by small group or ‘cell’ dynamics and by the influence of charismatic leader figures within such groups meaning that individual, ‘risk-based’ profiling is only likely to be of limited help. This suggests that any ‘hearts and minds’ policy approach, such as *Prevent*, needs to be multi-pronged, nuanced and realistic about what it can and can’t achieve, as the example of a ‘lone wolf’ attacker such as Roshonara Choudhry indicates. Above all, it suggests that *Prevent* needs to be careful to not further exacerbate some of these causal factors, such as by the overemphasis of singular ethnic or faith identities, feeding the physical and cultural segregation that can allow ‘space’ for minorities within such singular identities to move further towards ‘extreme’ interpretations of that singular identity, and by fuelling the sense that this singular identity is under attack through policies specifically aimed at one identity or community. That analysis has been at the heart of the significant rethink of British policy approaches to ‘race relations’ and the relationship between common and community-specific identities since the 2001 riots and the consequent emergence of the community cohesion policy agenda. That cohesion analysis and agenda is examined in Chapter 2 and is used to develop the argument that *Prevent* has counterproductively failed to understand and utilise that cohesion analysis, rendering *Prevent* ‘between two stools’, whereby it is neither effective as a counterterrorism strategy nor congruent with efforts to promote greater cohesion and integration.

## 2

# Community Cohesion

## A changed policy context

### **Introduction: The changed policy context of community cohesion**

Chapter 1 outlined the significant threat of Islamist violent extremism which Britain has faced over the past decade and which it is likely to continue to face for some time in the future. The key concern of this book is how effective to date the resulting policy and practice responses to ‘preventing violent extremism’ have been and what lessons can be drawn for the direction and emphasis of future policy. To make sense of those specific policy responses, it is important to examine the wider context of Britain’s increasingly diverse multicultural society and the significant changes to the language and emphasis of ‘race relations’ policies,<sup>1</sup> governmental approaches to managing relationships between different ethnic groups and their places in the wider British society, that have taken place since the watershed moment of the 2001 riots in three towns and cities across northern England.

One of the most controversial aspect of this undoubted shift of emphasis within race relations policy approaches has been the governmental belief that past policy approaches have hardened and enabled, to an unhelpful extent, the development of separate ethnic or faith identities at the expense of commonality and community cohesion. The meaning and practice of this new policy priority of community cohesion, and its implications for the British state’s approach to distinct ethnic or faith communities, is the focus of the first part of this chapter. For many critics, this community cohesion policy agenda has really been about Britain’s perceived ‘Muslim problem’,<sup>2</sup> with the 2001 riots largely involving young Muslims and the community cohesion concern apparently focusing on the physical and cultural separation of British Muslim communities. That Muslim separation, and the increasingly strong communal self-identification as ‘Muslims’, allegedly at the expense of wider identification with and loyalty to ‘Britishness’<sup>3</sup> is explored in the second part of the chapter. Here, primary research data and wider academic evidence around the strength, meaning/s and possible implications of ‘Muslim identification’ in Britain are considered. These discussions not only shed light on the review in Chapter 1 of what faith identification means for British Muslims and how they are understanding and



living it, but also address the issue of Muslim acceptance of 'Britishness'. This provides a starting point for the consideration in later chapters of how *Prevent* policies to date have impacted on British Muslims and how they might be more effective in the future.

## The 2001 riots and their aftermath

The violent disturbances in several towns and cities across the north of England during the summer of 2001 can be seen as a watershed for British policy in that the official government analysis of the events prompted a distinct new direction for race relations policy approaches.<sup>4</sup> Each of the 2001 outbreaks of violent disorder was largely dominated by young Muslim men of Pakistani and Bangladeshi origin in conflict with the police and on some occasions with white young men. Violent disorder in Oldham, Greater Manchester between 24th and 28th May was followed by similar scenes in the Harehills area of Leeds on 5th June and in Burnley, Lancashire between 21st and 23rd June. The most serious rioting occurred in Bradford, West Yorkshire on 7/8th July, when the heightened atmosphere created by the threat of a far-right BNP incursion into the British city with the largest proportion of Muslim residents led to extremely intense rioting by young Muslim men that resulted in 326 police officers being injured, an estimated £6 million pounds of damage, and very severe prison sentences for many of those convicted for their roles. Many other towns and cities in the ex-industrial north and Midlands were viewed as being at risk of riots over the same period, with the common thread for the areas so assessed being significant Muslim populations living in concentrated local areas.<sup>5</sup>

To some commentators, this outbreak of violence among ethnic communities seen as law-abiding in previous times was no surprise, and it was explicitly connected to the Islamist violent extremism which emerged in Britain in the following years. The '30-year rule' was identified by some in relation to immigrant communities in Britain: 'it takes about 30 years for a sizeable second generation to establish itself and then become frustrated with its status, both within its own community and the wider society.'<sup>6</sup> This was true of the African-Caribbean community that had started to arrive in Britain after the Second World War, which experienced significant youth unrest from the mid-1970s onwards, culminating in their pivotal role in the 1981 and 1985 inner-city riots. A further parallel is the socio-economic status of the Pakistani and Bangladeshi communities representing the bulk of Britain's Muslims. Educational underachievement and especially unemployment rates are much higher for Britons of those backgrounds than the national average, especially compared to the white population. Relevant here is the 'human capital' of the first generation of Muslim settlers, their concentration in industrial areas of the north that have witnessed profound de-industrialisation

and growing social exclusion, and the effects of racism that have increasingly concentrated on Pakistani- and Bangladeshi-origin populations as the most culturally distinct from the white norm.<sup>7</sup> Certainly, the answer to the question of why riots happened in Oldham, Burnley and Bradford, rather than in areas of the Midlands or southern England, must focus on the profound economic marginalisation experienced by both Muslim and white working-class communities in those and neighbouring northern ex-industrial towns that have seen little development of a viable post-industrial economy. However, some commentators saw this 2001 rioting as less about economic experiences than as a result of mistaken, multiculturalist social policy approaches that had allowed distinct and oppositional communities and identities to grow, Muslim ‘ghettos’ that had little connection with or loyalty to wider British society: ‘multiculturalism had a dual appeal; it allowed these states to seem tolerant by showering minorities with rights while segregating them from, rather than absorbing them into, the rest of society.’<sup>8</sup>

It is certainly true that the resulting national and local government inquiries into the 2001 disturbances were much more interested in the longer term situation around ethnic segregation than in the facts and detail of what had actually happened. The government established a Community Cohesion Review Team under the leadership of Ted Cante, and its resulting report focused heavily on long-term issues and national implications, with an urgent need to promote ‘community cohesion’. Local inquiries were carried out in Oldham and Burnley,<sup>9</sup> whilst a review of ethnic relations in Bradford prepared before the July 2001 riots was published shortly afterwards.<sup>10</sup> These local reports had a more substantial but still limited focus on the actual events, meaning that taken together the post-riots inquiries had the impact of downplaying specific local causal factors, such as persistent political agitation by far-right groups in Oldham and Bradford, clumsy and ineffective policing in both the lead up to and during rioting, and irresponsible local media coverage. Therefore, it is hard to avoid the conclusion that the 2001 riots provided national government with the moment to move forward on an agenda they were already considering<sup>11</sup> because of longer term concern about ethnic separateness within British society.

### **The emergence of community cohesion**

The Cante Report proposed that government prioritise the development of greater community cohesion as a response to the ethnic segregation and racial tensions, the ‘parallel lives’, identified by the riots and the resulting inquiries. Here, the suggestion was that Britain’s multiculturalism was less successful in creating a positive and pluralist society than had previously been assumed, and that new approaches were urgently needed to prevent the current divides and tensions from worsening. This analysis was immediately accepted by national

government, with community cohesion rapidly becoming both a priority in its own right and a central plank in the government's wider racial equality strategy.<sup>12</sup> Advice was given to local authorities and other public bodies to promote and measure community cohesion, with evidence that this focus on community cohesion was gradually becoming embedded within the core priorities of government at all levels.<sup>13</sup> To date, this priority has outlasted the previous Labour government, with the coalition government elected in May 2010 continuing to highlight its importance, although seeming to increasingly favour the term 'integration' rather than community cohesion.

'Community cohesion' was a new policy term that appeared to have been rapidly adapted from literature on social/economic cohesion. Through analysis, both of the literature around it and the policy implementation of it, a number of key themes can be identified:

- ethnic segregation and 'parallel lives'
- problematic bonding social capital
- the role of 'agency' both in causing and overcoming segregation
- the impact of past policy approaches
- the need for 'cooler' identities and more emphasis on commonality

The most controversial aspect of community cohesion has been its interrelated focus on the 'fact' of substantial ethnic segregation in Britain and on the considerable role of 'agency' within it. All the areas experiencing riots and/or racial tension in 2001 had significant levels of ethnic segregation, as measured by Indexes of Isolation and Dissimilarity. The picture painted here was one of very considerable physical and cultural segregation, white and ethnic minority, mainly Muslim, communities living 'parallel lives' with only the most cursory and superficial of cross-community interactions. This was supported by data about multiracial towns and cities in general, and about increasing levels of ethnic segregation in British schools.<sup>14</sup> Research among young people in such northern towns and cities has highlighted how young people see their lives and areas as rigidly segregated, with 'race' and generic territorialism combining to create powerful sense of local 'borders' and the need to violently defend them.<sup>15</sup> Much of the academic heat over this issue has come from the implicit suggestion of the cohesion reports that ethnic segregation is getting worse, and that it is voluntary to a very significant extent. Carefully researched responses<sup>16</sup> have suggested that generally the reverse is true, and that this reality is obscured by significant demographic differences between ethnic communities. Some of that evidence is disputed, with the trend on segregation in Bradford hotly contested,<sup>17</sup> but this diverts from the perceived reality that the community cohesion reports were focusing on, namely that ethnic segregation was already very profound in many areas. Here, community cohesion can be

seen as a mark of the frustration that such ethnic segregation is not obviously breaking down but instead may be ‘normalising’. Underpinning this, of course, is a reality often not acknowledged by politicians that the most profound form of social segregation in modern Britain is that based on social class.<sup>18</sup>

Central to this concern with segregation is the concept of problematic ‘bonding social capital’. The work of Putnam (2000) and others has popularised the concept of social capital, with it becoming central to the social policy strategies of Britain and other Western countries. However, in advocating the importance to individual and community well-being of strong and inclusive community networks, Putnam distinguishes two types of social capital. ‘Bonding’ social capital is the traditional form of community – the communities we all feel part of because of where we live and the social class, ethnic and faith backgrounds we have – ‘people like us’. This has many strengths but can on its own be dangerously insular and prejudiced against any sort of external difference. It needs to be balanced by forms of ‘bridging’ capital – networks and links that allow us to positively interact with people and areas that are different to us, so learning from and understanding ‘others’ more, and enabling access to jobs and contacts outside of our own communities. The analysis of community cohesion is clearly that in many towns and cities of largely monocultural communities and ‘parallel lives’, too few Britons have ‘bridging’ capital links, so fuelling mutual distrust, fear and lack of respect. The solution for community cohesion is to find ways of building contact, dialogue and links across ethnic lines between individuals and groups in all sorts of ways, with this positively building mutual understanding and respect, and shared understandings and identities through a greater focus on commonality. The concurrent attempts by leading politicians of all parties to promote and positively discuss notions of a modern, inclusive ‘Britishness’ and to ensure that all new British citizens understand basic English language and cultural norms can be understood as consistent with this policy focus.

In outlining this apparent reality of significant ethnic segregation and the consequent lack of ‘bridging’ social capital in many apparently ‘multicultural’ areas of Britain, community cohesion puts considerable stress on the ‘agency’ or responsibility of individuals and communities. The reports do not overtly suggest that community preferences are responsible for ethnic segregation, as individual and institutional white racism was clearly central to the development of segregated housing areas in towns such as Oldham. However, the introduction to the Ouseley report into ethnic relations in Bradford talked bluntly of ‘a worrying drift towards self-segregation’, and even the Commission for Racial Equality, the then government agency charged with ensuring racial equality, focused on ‘congregation’, or voluntary clustering, among the Muslim communities of Oldham, Bradford and Burnley.<sup>19</sup> Whilst the community cohesion reports were clearly even-handed in blaming attitudes and behaviour in communities of *all* ethnic backgrounds, some critics have

detected a one-sided focus on the ‘cultures’ of ethnic minorities, especially Muslims, as problematic. It is indeed true that community cohesion has called for greater use of the English language by all citizens and challenged Asian communities to look carefully at the continuance of sub-continental marriage links and prolonged family visits in relation to the continued educational underachievement of many young Muslims.<sup>20</sup> Rather than a lurch back to the assimilationism of the early 1960s, this arguably represents an honest and politically consistent discussion around rights and responsibilities with communities made up of citizens, not ‘immigrants’. The suggestion of community cohesion is that too often individuals and organisations of all ethnic backgrounds have accepted de facto ethnic segregation and hardened it through their personal choices over housing, schooling and leisure. Consistent with the wider New Labour social policy,<sup>21</sup> community cohesion takes a communitarianist approach in believing that the state alone cannot make people of different backgrounds get on together, and that communities have to play an active and responsible role in the process of coming together and creating shared dialogue and interests. That ideological position explains the reluctance of governments to promote greater cohesion by insisting that schools or housing areas become more ethnically mixed, although that may have been an implicit goal of the ‘Building Schools for the Future’ programme that sought to create new high schools in areas of educational underachievement.

Underpinning this community cohesion understanding of the state of British ethnic relations, and the remedies needed, is a critique of previous state policy approaches to ‘race relations’. This criticism has been wrongly and unhelpfully extended by others to a blaming of ‘multiculturalism’ per se,<sup>22</sup> but the cohesion analysis actually focuses on the enhanced ‘political multiculturalism’ phase of policy that was developed in response to the 1981 riots and the profound ethnic marginalisation that they highlighted. In keeping with policy generally in this area, political multiculturalism approaches developed organically from below in response to community demands as much as they did through national government guidelines. They involved much greater efforts to tackle the significant ethnic minority educational underachievement, racial discrimination and marginalisation in service delivery, as well as to promote ethnic minority employment in the state sector. Central to this was the approach of ‘ethnic monitoring’, the measuring of the position of each ethnic group and progress for them, which culminated in the inclusion of an ethnicity question for the first time in the 1991 National Census. Such data enabled target setting by public organisations for greater ethnic equality and training and action plans to make progress on achieving those targets in relation to ethnic minority employment, participation or service delivery. This necessarily encompassed a policy concern with greater ‘equality’ for each separate ethnic group, a concern with different ‘needs’ and requirements, at the expense of a focus on commonality. This justified, and much-needed at the time, approach

of ethnicity-based measurement and action has brought significant progress towards greater ethnic equality in Britain over the past three decades, but it involved a ‘strategic essentialism’,<sup>23</sup> a policy acceptance of distinct ethnic or, increasingly, faith groups. This was cemented from the early 1980s onwards by enhanced funding by national and local bodies for ethnic-specific organisations and their facilities. Such an approach was partially in recognition of past ethnic minority marginalisation from public service provision, but also a policy attempt in the wake of inner-city riots to ensure compliant minority communities through the control of a layer of ‘community leaders’ that could speak for and informally police ‘their’ communities.<sup>24</sup> Community cohesion understands this approach to ensuring ethnic equality as having a distinct downside, the promotion of separate ethnic identities, facilities and concerns, and consequent damage to notions and experiences of commonality. Whilst having been a necessary policy approach previously, it arguably now needs to be re-calibrated and re-balanced. This nuanced position of Cattle, and the consequent government decision to both accept his analysis and to move away from further use of the term ‘multiculturalism’, now deemed unhelpful, proved to be a green light for long-term opponents of multiculturalism per se to blame it for any difficulties regarding ethnic minority citizens in Britain.

Implicit in this community cohesion concern with common values and needs, and a shared identity, is the belief that policy needs to encourage and enable more de-centred and intersectional forms of ‘identity’. Here, in a genuinely diverse and multicultural society, ‘hot’ forms of strong, essentialised identities must, of necessity, become somewhat ‘cooler’ and more flexible if society is to work peacefully and positively.<sup>25</sup> Arguably, the last Labour government developed and used the human rights framework of individual rights and responsibilities to balance the continued focus on group rights and identities enshrined in equality legislation. This approach suggests that the rights and equality of any ethnic or religious group must be balanced by their responsibility to accept the equal rights of people with different values and lifestyles, and that no one form of identity can be seen to ‘trump’ others or be used to police or speak on behalf of them. It also suggests that policy will, of necessity, be in conflict with any community identities claimed as more important than common forms of national citizenship, perhaps providing the context for why recent British policy concerns with ‘race relations’ have appeared to focus on Muslims over and above the need to ‘prevent violent extremism’.

### Community cohesion in practice

The themes of community cohesion outlined above have been highly contested, but the considerable academic criticism has drawn almost exclusively on the

analysis of content and discourse of community cohesion reports, policy documents and accompanying ministerial pronouncements.<sup>26</sup> Very little empirical evidence of how community cohesion has actually been understood and implemented has been produced, and the empirical data that have been produced have too often been studiously ignored. As with previous phases of multiculturalism, the approaches to community cohesion have been developed as much through practice on the ground as through national government guidance or directive. Research by the author as to how youth workers in Oldham understood and worked with community cohesion in the wake of the 2001 riots found strong support for, and acceptance of, the key themes outlined above.<sup>27</sup> The aims and content of their professional practice with young people had altered significantly as a result, with community cohesion becoming a major priority. The focus for their cohesion work was the promotion of ‘meaningful direct contact’ between young people of different ethnic backgrounds, with such contact built into all their work. This was done through the ‘twinning’ of youth projects serving diverse backgrounds, regular residential trips away to utilise neutral spaces, and events that brought young people from across the area together. Some of this focused on wider efforts to promote young peoples’ empowerment and democratic participation through initiatives such as the Youth Parliament scheme. Key to this community cohesion practice was young people’s voluntary participation in this ‘direct contact’ and that the contact was built around experiential, fun activities, and shared experiences and interests, rather than differences. However, the charge that community cohesion is a new form of assimilationism that demands the disappearance of distinct identities was refuted by this research. Instead of denying difference, youth workers were working with and positively accepting the distinct ethnic, social and faith identities held by young people and their communities, *augmenting* these identities with overarching common identities, rather than seeking to replace them. Within this, preparation was done in local, often ethnic-specific, groups and facilities, with such security used as a springboard for involvement in cohesion programmes of direct contact.

It must be acknowledged that the stress on direct cross-ethnic contact, both in this case study work in Oldham and in the national community cohesion strategies, is controversial, with any relationship between increased cross-ethnic contact and prejudice reduction highly contested. Some critics actually see increasing ethnic diversity itself as problematic and likely to lead to growing social rifts and tensions. In an influential essay,<sup>28</sup> David Goodhart drew on the work of ‘social capital’ theorist Robert Putnam<sup>29</sup> to suggest that Britain’s increasing ethnic diversity was stoking tensions and undermining support for collective institutions such as the welfare state. Indeed, it must be acknowledged that ‘there is much evidence that intergroup contact does not necessarily reduce intergroup tension or prejudice and that it may even increase tension’.<sup>30</sup> Such material suggests that interethnic contact in situations of societal tension or

inequalities can intensify, rather than change, an individual's initial attitude or disposition. Therefore, an individual already holding prejudiced attitudes towards the 'other' can have that deepened by interethnic contact. This can be particularly true if there is a clear difference in the perceived status of the two groups meeting or if individuals participating have aggressive or unbalanced personality traits that will always dispose them towards prejudice.

In the Oldham case study outlined above, community cohesion practice was utilising key elements of 'contact theory', a social psychology-based approach to prejudice reduction in situations of significant social divides and tensions.<sup>31</sup> Contact theory evidence from situations of profound segregation such as Northern Ireland suggests that to make meaningful reductions in communal divisions, contact has to take place over time, be in groups to avoid tokenism, the need for participants to feel that they have choice and control within the process, to often take place in 'safe', neutral settings, and to involve no threat or disrespect to the identities or histories of those taking part. Here, contact theory would suggest that government is right to not 'force' people to live or mix together, as the perception of coercion could be counterproductive. Certainly, evidence from attempts to engineer 'socially mixed' housing developments of privately owned and publicly rented housing in the United Kingdom is that this has often not been successful, and that community-building efforts focused on relationships between distinct housing areas have been more successful.<sup>32</sup> What the academic evidence around interethnic contact also suggests is that 'in many contact situations it is not sufficient to bring the antagonistic groups into contact and that these groups should have or should be given superordinate goals to make them cooperate across group lines. Only such superordinate goals can make the contact effective, thereby reducing prejudice and group tension'.<sup>33</sup> This can be seen in the successful Muslim/white cooperation in political campaigns such as the anti-Iraq war campaign,<sup>34</sup> or in the Oldham youth work case study discussed above, where residential trips focused on teamwork and common youth issues. In both cases, superordinate goals and processes were central to successful interethnic contact.

The community cohesion youth work practice outlined above, and discussed in detail elsewhere,<sup>35</sup> fulfils those conditions, so making possible a 'rooting and shifting' of individual identities and attitudes.<sup>36</sup> Such practice does not deny racism and other forms of structural inequality, but it also does not essentialise or reify particular forms of identity. The professionals guiding this work clearly acknowledged the reality of ethnic divides and of racism within the Oldham area, but they also were ambivalent as to whether 'race' alone can explain the present or be the key to a more productive future. These processes of community cohesion were therefore also engaging with 'difference' around geographical space, gender, social class, ability/disability and sexuality, so operationalising the more complex and intersectional understandings of identity being signposted by national government policy.



This complexity can be seen in the initial experimental ‘Pathfinder’ community cohesion activity funded by central government and in the advice given to local government as to the operationalisation of community cohesion.<sup>37</sup> Recent research into the operationalisation of community cohesion by Bradford and Kirklees local authorities in West Yorkshire identified cohesion to be a significant policy priority and there to be significant community support for continued progress on it. However, it also highlighted the challenge that community cohesion, with its complex and intersectional understandings of identity, poses to the existing equality and diversity policy agendas, of necessity based around essentialised and rather fixed notions of group identity and experience.<sup>38</sup>

### **Refusing Britishness?**

Whilst community cohesion in practice is accepting and working with distinct ethnic, faith-based and social identities, it is clear from the analysis above that this post-2001 policy direction sees ‘hot’, separate communal identities that are potentially antagonistic to overarching national identity as problematic. The pivotal role of Muslim youth in the various 2001 violent disturbances, the 9/11 attacks that took place as the Community Cohesion Review Team gathered evidence, and the rapidly growing understanding that some young British Muslims were also being attracted to violent extremism, all contributed to a political focus on Muslims and their identity within the emergence of community cohesion.<sup>39</sup> Whilst the community cohesion reports themselves were balanced in their equal focus on white racism and the need to strengthen measures against it, a broader ‘moral panic’ about Muslim identity and its threat to Britain grew alongside it and arguably overtook it. This suggested that ‘multiculturalism’ had enabled and encouraged separate and oppositional identities among ethnic minorities in general and Muslims in particular. Such separate identities were seen as threatening the social cohesion essential to Britain’s welfare state<sup>40</sup> and as having made the growth of a domestic terror threat more likely.<sup>41</sup> The fact that community cohesion policy approaches no longer used the term ‘multiculturalism’, and that even equality campaigners were prepared to attack the concept, fuelled such viewpoints. Trevor Phillips, then head of the Commission for Racial Equality (now subsumed within the Equality and Human Rights Commission), condemned ‘multiculturalism’ for creating ethnic divisions and leaving Britain ‘sleepwalking towards segregation’, in a disastrously misjudged speech made just weeks after the 7/7 attacks.<sup>42</sup> Such a linkage was repeated by Prime Minister David Cameron in February 2011, when he used the Munich Conference on Security to launch a broad attack on multiculturalism and supposed Muslim separateness in general, rather than focus on the specific terror threat.<sup>43</sup>

This broad attack on distinct Muslim identity in Britain, and on policy approaches that have supposedly encouraged it, has been further developed by right-of-centre commentators<sup>44</sup> and by various Conservative-leaning think tanks. Prominent among them was a report from ‘Policy Exchange’<sup>45</sup> that painted a picture of radicalised young Muslims living increasingly separate lives. Surveying young British Muslims, the authors reported that ‘86% of respondents also believed that their religion was the most important thing in their life. When asked the same question, only 11% of the wider British population felt the same’,<sup>46</sup> and ‘7% said they admired organisations like Al-Qaeda’.<sup>47</sup> The blame for this apparent growth in a distinct religious identity among young Muslims was squarely laid at the door of ‘multiculturalism’: ‘it is the multicultural approach that pigeonholes people and pressures them to keep separate from the mainstream.’<sup>48</sup>

It is undoubtedly true that claims on behalf of Muslims as a distinct community and identity in Britain have grown markedly since the late 1980s. Prior to that, political claims were made by minority communities under the collective terms ‘black’ or ‘ethnic minority’, both intended to signify a common non-white experience of marginalisation and racism. Such terms were seen increasingly as irrelevant to the experiences of different South Asian communities,<sup>49</sup> and the post-1981 phase of political multiculturalism responded by recognising and funding specific ethnic communities, such as African-Caribbeans, Pakistanis and Bangladeshis. Whilst that policy approach did not initially recognise faith as a form of identity, it helped to open the door to such claims being made through its focus on distinct, essentialised ‘communities’. The watershed moment for the emergence of ‘Muslim’ as a distinct identity in Britain came in 1989, with the *Satanic Verses* controversy over the controversial book of that name by Salman Rushdie.<sup>50</sup> The specific identity claims made by Muslims from there on fitted with the wider approach of political multiculturalism in its focus on specific ‘needs’ and demands of monolithic ‘communities’, made on their behalf by layers of ‘community leaders’, so allowing British Muslims to ‘surf the wave of multiculturalism’.<sup>51</sup>

The problem for Britain, according to another right-of-centre think tank, the Social Affairs Unit,<sup>52</sup> was that the ‘Muslim community leaders’ who stepped forward to utilise the twin opportunities of *Satanic Verses* and ethnic-specific multiculturalist policy approaches were unrepresentative Islamists with very specific political agendas. Often these groups and individuals were both funded from abroad, by states such as Saudi Arabia and Kuwait, and had links with international Islamist groups. This can be seen in the fact that the first British demonstration against Rushdie’s book was organised in December 1988 in Bolton, Lancashire by a Deobandi group with little local support, whilst the national anti-Rushdie campaign was coordinated by the Islamic Foundation that has close ties to the conservative Islamist group Jama’at-e-Islami. Utilising controversies like *Satanic Verses*, and filling the vacuum of the lack

of effective national coordination or representation among Britain's locally focused Pakistani and Bangladeshi communities, Islamist individuals and groups quickly became self-appointed national spokesmen for British Muslims. An example here is the Muslim Association of Britain, highly prominent in the post-2003 'Stop the War' coalition, which was largely founded by activists of Arab origin who drew inspiration for their overtly political Islamist positions from the Egyptian-origin Muslim Brotherhood. The strategic networking by Islamist-dominated Muslim groups with non-Muslim local authority officials and other ethnic minority groups enabled them to benefit from the broader political context of 'political multiculturalism', whilst their use of English and their overtly political approach made such Islamist groups and causes attractive to younger Muslims disillusioned with left-wing groups. These 'causes', such as the first Gulf War, and the plight of Bosnian Muslims during the break-up of Yugoslavia, were energetically exploited, along with domestic demands for greater accommodation of Muslim lifestyles connected to the emerging identity issues of younger British Muslims, as is discussed below.

To a significant degree, previous policy approaches of 'political multiculturalism' have influenced this growth of a distinct British Muslim identity and its organised political forms. In 1981, Bradford Council energetically encouraged the formation of a city-wide umbrella body, Bradford Council of Mosques, but was then shocked that by 1989 Islamist-influenced leaders were organising a public burning of Rushdie's book that was broadcast worldwide and which did considerable damage to Bradford's public image.<sup>53</sup> Similarly, the national governments of both Conservative John Major and Labour's Tony Blair actively encouraged the formation and funding of the Muslim Council of Britain (MCB), built on a national network of mosques, as the representative voice of British Muslims, despite the fact that leading figures in this movement had close links to Jama'at-e-Islami and were far from representative of most British Muslims whose traditions were a localised and spiritual form of Islam. The fact that in 2006 the then Labour government broke off funding and official contact with the MCB after pro-jihadi comments by a leading MCB official can be understood as a change in government policy, rather than a shift in the MCB's outlook.

The picture of British Muslims having a strong attachment to their faith as their primary form of identity, in contrast to the approach of other Britons, painted in the Policy Exchange report, is seemingly borne out by other academic evidence, but how should we understand this – is this *prima facie* evidence of a problematic, separate identity that provides the pool from which a minority of faith-motivated terrorists can be drawn? Research by the author and colleague Pete Sanderson into the identifications favoured by young people of all ethnic backgrounds in the Oldham and Rochdale areas of Greater Manchester used a variety of qualitative research approaches, including interviews, questionnaires, word associations and an 'identity ranking' exercise to

investigate these issues.<sup>54</sup> In the latter exercise, participants were asked to rank their identifications with labels such as ‘Muslim’, ‘British’, ‘English’ and local/town identity, enabling the researchers to capture the reciprocal character of the processes of identification and categorization in relation to ethnicity, religion, locality and ‘nationality’. It highlighted the stress Muslim young people put on their faith identification, in clear contrast to the approach of other young people, and in keeping with the findings of other research processes<sup>55</sup>:

| Self-ascribed ethnicity   | Rank Religion<br>1 or 2 (%) | Rank English<br>1 or 2 (%) | Rank British<br>1 or 2 (%) |
|---|-----------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|
| White British, English, white, white English, white Christian, British ( <i>N</i> = 57)   | 7                           | 75                         | 56                         |
| Asian Pakistani, British Muslim, Pakistani Kashmiri, Pakistani, British Asian, Bangladeshi/Bengali, British Bengali, British Asian ( <i>N</i> = 54) | 93                          | 3                          | 20                         |
| Black African, Black British, mixed race, other ( <i>N</i> = 16)  | 44                          | 56                         | 44                         |

However, contrary to the claims of right-of-centre think tanks, the majority of Muslim young people surveyed were positive about ‘British’ identity. In total, 63 per cent of those self-identifying as Muslim definitely agreed with the statement ‘I am proud to say that I am British’, and only 10 per cent definitely disagreed. Whilst this was less than the 80 per cent of the non-Muslim young people who agreed with the same statement, the difference is arguably surprisingly limited, given the significant criticisms of and misgivings about British foreign policy of recent years, such as the interventions in Afghanistan and Iraq, frequently expressed by Muslim young people during the research process. In contrast to the ‘indifference’ about national identity found among young adults elsewhere,<sup>56</sup> studies of young Muslims consistently find them clear and positive about British national identity. A survey of Pakistani-origin young people in Bradford found that ‘young people in this sample make clear that they consider themselves as “British” as opposed to “Pakistani” – 87% said they describe themselves as “British”, 11% said they describe their identity as being “Pakistani” and 2% as being “English”’.<sup>57</sup>

The data from Oldham and Rochdale on Muslims and national identity presented above supports this, and evidence from the 2003 Home Office Citizenship Survey found that ‘Muslims, as a group, are only slightly less likely

to feel that they belong to Britain than Whites and are, in fact, more likely to feel that they belong to Britain than those in the African-Caribbean group'.<sup>58</sup> The large majority of Muslim young people surveyed by the author and colleague described themselves as British Muslim or British Asian, mirroring data gathered from a Bradford survey of Pakistani-origin young adults that detected a 'bi-cultural' affiliation.<sup>59</sup> This type of national identity can be seen even more clearly in Scotland, where the necessity linked to devolution of discussing what 'Scottishness' means, and the associated process of building an authentic national identity, has had positive impacts on non-white ethnic minority willingness to associate positively with Scottishness, in clear contrast to feelings about 'Englishness' in England. Research among Scottish young people of Pakistani origin as devolution became real<sup>60</sup> found that almost 60 per cent used a 'bi-cultural' term to identify themselves, with 'Scottish Pakistani' the most popular. For that sample, there was no conflict between 'Scottish' and 'Pakistani', leading to the observation that 'hyphenation is still a much underused resource in the re-configuration of plural identities in Britain'.<sup>61</sup>

### Problematic Muslim identity?

Although the allegation that young Muslims lack identity with, or loyalty to, Britain seems to be clearly misplaced, the strength of commitment to Islamic faith as their preferred form of identification, a stress on religion clearly at odds with other young Britons, does need to be understood further. One explanation is that this is a defensive identification in the face of very significant Islamophobic political and media discourse in the United Kingdom following 9/11 and 7/7. However, is this undoubtedly strong faith identification among young British Muslims also a development prompted by Islamist propaganda and political agitation? Does commitment to the *ummah*, the global Muslim community of believers, trump any professed loyalty to Britain or to its values and democratic systems? In short, how worried should we be about such a strong communalist identity?

Olivier Roy (2004) identifies that because of post-war immigration and the increasing effects of globalisation, one-third of the world's Muslims now live as a minority, many of them in Western countries, and in that context, 're-Islamisation is part of this process of acculturation, rather than being a reaction against it'.<sup>62</sup> Here, the strong identification with Islamic identity for many young Western Muslims is a product of the need to explicitly consider what being a Muslim means when it is no longer sustained by social authority and popular convention in the way it is in Muslim-majority countries. This leads Roy to suggest that 'acculturation does not automatically entail integration. It also leads to the creation of dynamic and fluctuating sub-cultures, one of the most visible being a so-called "Muslim youth culture"'.<sup>63</sup> This suggests that the

strong identification with Muslim faith identity by young Britons is actually part of the increasing individualisation in Western, and indeed, global society, with such forms of solidarity and identity being a modern (re-)creation rather than being a community import or reclamation from the past. Others agree that for the parental generation of British Muslims ‘religion was a kind of social glue. For their children, however, religion takes on more individually oriented, spiritual and political dimensions ... it is the backbone of a strong personal identity’.<sup>64</sup> Part of the emerging Muslim youth identity is their identification with the *ummah*, but emotional attachment to this concept ‘does not transcend residential segregation or marriage within ethnically bounded groups’.<sup>65</sup> That continuing, ethnically focused reality represents the significant maintenance of ethnic community ties and obligations, with youth re-workings of Islam arguably representing a way of moving on from that, as is discussed below. Much of the discussion of new technologies, such as satellite TV and the Internet, has focused on their potential for maintaining transnational identities concerned with the country of origin of migrant communities at the expense of the host country. However, such technologies may well also be playing the role of creating the ‘imagined community’ of the *ummah*, including its radical and potentially violent extremist form, for a small minority.<sup>66</sup>

There is clear evidence that much of the ‘re-Islamification’ of young British Muslims is more about negotiating their place as a younger British-born generation and as a minority community in an increasingly secular society, rather than being a melancholic step backwards.<sup>67</sup> This suggests that there is considerable progressive potential in this strong Muslim identification as well as the danger that it can become a form of dangerous radicalisation for a few. A large-scale qualitative survey of young Muslims in Bradford<sup>68</sup> found that they regarded community and clan network norms and traditions as a very significant restriction on their modernist aspirations and lives. Such norms around gender roles, marriage partners and individual choice were seen as historic community traditions that had been imported and which were no longer helpful or relevant. In this context, young people were arguing for changed possibilities with families and communities by ‘appealing to Islam, with its insistence on a basic equality between all believers, to trump such parochial and restrictive loyalties’.<sup>69</sup> What young people are doing here is ‘de-coupling’ religion and culture<sup>70</sup> in order to negotiate changed individual roles and relationships whilst maintaining relationships with, and places within, family and community. This supports Roy’s assertion that the strong faith identification of young Western Muslims, including its minority radical Islamist form, is actually a modernist and individualistic development, with this faith adherence being lived out individually, rather than through community norms, as de-coupling religion and culture leads to a greater focus on the religion itself. Relevant here is the discussion in Chapter 1 of Sidique Khan’s own ostracism after a love match across community boundaries, his role in performing such

marriages for others, and the fact that Islamist extremists have been much more likely to discuss Islam in private study groups and political organisations than in community-based mosques: ‘most radical militants are engaged in action as individuals, cutting links with their “natural” community.’<sup>71</sup>

This suggests that the strong faith identity of young Muslims in Britain and other Western countries is part of significant generational tension: ‘it is a conflict between tradition and individuality, culture and religion, tribalism and universalism, passivity and action.’<sup>72</sup> There may well be a substantial gender factor in the way that young British Muslims reinterpret a ‘true’ Islam that is de-coupled from ethnic culture. Here, the increased religiosity among young Muslim women, symbolised by the significant growth in numbers wearing the ‘hijab’ headscarf, can be understood as a deployment of ‘true Islam’ to justify greater individual freedom, such as involvement in higher education and employment, and greater say in marriage partners.<sup>73</sup> This is all of a piece with the increasingly strong and progressive role played by young Muslim women in community organisation and provision. In contrast, the Muslim identity of young men is sometimes used more negatively, both to symbolise and defend ‘territory’<sup>74</sup> against young men of other areas and communities, and to police the behaviour of Muslim young women and non-Muslim ‘others’ within their own communities. Certainly, the author’s field research among young Muslims in Oldham and Rochdale, Greater Manchester found a significant minority of respondents, especially young men, making highly negative, faith-based judgements about non-Muslims through terms such as ‘drunkenness’ and ‘godless’ being utilised, as this excerpt from two different youth group shows:

White people: Shameless, not believing in God, no respect for other people.

I don’t understand their tradition – they haven’t really got one; they haven’t got a background.

### **A minority of Islamist extremists**

The discussions above suggested that the strong Muslim faith identification of many young British Muslims can be understood as a product of two interrelated forces. First, the post-1981 phase of ‘political multiculturalism’ governmental policies that have privileged specific ethnic and faith identities generally, so enabling the claiming of the reality and importance of a distinct Muslim identity in society by Islamist-influenced leaders, and a consequent policy response to that expressed ‘need’. Second, the considerable generational tensions and changes experienced by migrant communities in the context of globalisation, which has seen Islamic identity reworked and re-interpreted in ways de-coupled from ethnic culture to enable individuals to negotiate their progress within community and society. It is suggested here that, rather than

being a reactionary and melancholic step backwards, this increased religiosity among young British Muslims is actually a modernist development as part of the increased individualisation of globalised society. For many young Muslims, this Islamic faith identity is a positive and progressive force but, as Chapter 1 outlined, for a small minority it is part of a world view that takes them towards violent extremism. Chapter 1 outlined the interrelated factors that take some individuals in that direction, but those who have studied the young British Muslims involved in violent extremism are clear that generational community tensions are central: 'It is the internal frictions within a traditional Pakistani community in Britain that best explain the radicalisation.'<sup>75</sup>

It certainly seems to be the case that those involved in Islamist violent extremism in Britain and internationally have not been those with a significant background and deep knowledge of Islamic teachings. Rather, they have more often been unobservant people with superficial, at best, knowledge, who have often only recently 'rediscovered' Islam as 'born-again' in response to problems in their life or converted. In both cases, a 'de-cultured' Islam studied away from any community context is something easier to misunderstand or to be presented in an unchallenged but highly questionable way. For instance, the 9/11 attackers had fairly 'normal' and only vaguely observant lives in their countries of origin, but they became 'born-again' Muslims in Europe, as did a number of the Madrid attackers: 'An individual re-Islamisation in a small cell of uprooted fellows.'<sup>76</sup> Here, Islamist violent extremists create their own 'community' and are unbound by any traditional norms, so explaining the girlfriend that Shezad Tanweer slept with just days before the 7/7 attacks and the 9/11 attackers who drank alcohol in the run-up to the attacks: 'most of these militants undeniably behave in a more western than traditional way.'<sup>77</sup> This suggests that superficial 'integration' is no defence against the attraction of violent extremism. That non-traditional lifestyle and the use of streetwise English, in contrast to the community languages of mosques, can appeal to unobservant young Muslims or 'seekers' of other backgrounds, with the purity and certainty of a 'de-cultured' Islam, underpinned by the 'single narrative' that supplies a ready-made victimhood and cause to fight for.

That appeal of Islamist extremism for a marginalised minority can be seen within the context of the wider appeal of Islamist activism more generally, both for young Muslims negotiating their place in a society with many internal and external barriers, and to other people who want to see community advancement. For instance, external bodies were positive about the seemingly progressive community voluntary activity that Sidique Khan and other members of the 'Mullah Boys' were carrying out with young Muslims in the Beeston area of south Leeds, in contrast to the conservatism of the older generation. Leeds council area Youth Service manager at the time, Maz Azghar, commented that 'these guys were doing good work on drugs, racial issues and education aspiration issues'.<sup>78</sup> Such activist figures, and Islamist political groups or study



circles they are part of, can offer much to individual young Muslims focused on their individual identity and place, and also angry about Muslim community experiences of marginalisation at home and abroad, but they can also be, in some eyes, the ‘gateway’ to violent extremism, as Chapter 1 outlined.

Here, the wider context of significant ethnic, physical and cultural segregation in British towns and cities generally, and affecting British Muslims in particular because of historic, economic, social and cultural factors, is relevant. As outlined in the first part of the chapter, the resulting policy response of community cohesion highlighted the danger of separate and inevitably oppositional identities growing in communities of *all* ethnic backgrounds if greater efforts were not made to enable ‘meaningful direct contact’ and the building of shared values, identities and understandings through it. In such monocultural communities, norms and taken-for-granted assumptions can contribute to the creation of space for a minority to develop more extreme attitudes and actions, as Chapter 1 highlighted on the 7/7 attackers.

### **Conclusion: The importance of community cohesion**

This chapter has outlined the post-2001 shift in Britain’s policy approach to ‘race relations’ and its relevance to the attraction of some young Muslims towards violent extremism. It has argued, using empirical evidence, that community cohesion can be understood as a re-balancing of multiculturalist policy approaches, rather than rejection of them. Whilst not causing ethnic segregation or racial tensions, previous approaches of political multiculturalism, whilst effectively tackling ethnic disadvantage, have become increasingly problematic in their focus on essentialised ethnic difference. Inadvertently, they have exacerbated the hardening of separate ethnic and religious identifications that have been engendered by the profound economic and social changes wrought by modern globalisation, changes having particularly negative effects on the ‘losers’ of both white and Muslim communities in ex-industrial areas.

The chapter has argued that those previous policy approaches have played a significant role in the strengthening of Muslim identification in Britain, but also that this faith identity is a product of and response to globalisation. Whilst this strong Muslim faith identification is a positive and progressive identity basis for the large majority of law-abiding young Muslims in British society, it can be seen as the starting point for the journey towards violent extremism for a small minority of Islamist radicals, for the reasons previously outlined in Chapter 1. Here, ‘contemporary Islamic radicalism, far from being an expression of ancient theological beliefs, is really a reaction to new political and social changes: the loss of a sense of belonging in a fragmented society, the blurring of traditional moral lines, the increasing disenchantment with politics

and politicians.<sup>79</sup> The evidence offered here is that, contrary to the claims of right-of-centre think tanks, most young British Muslims are ‘proud to be British’ and that their faith identity is a progressive de-coupling of religion and culture for many, but that it can allow a minority to develop an antagonism to ‘others’, just as a minority of white working-class young people express racialised hostility and blame that groups like the EDL are currently exploiting.

The cohesion analysis argues that too much focus on essentialised difference can strengthen ethnic segregation and allow space for those more extreme forms of separate identifications to flourish, as well as encouraging the racialisation of deeper social and economic problems. Its response is to propose policy approaches that focus much more on common needs and experiences, and shared identities, underpinned with contact and dialogue. The chapter has offered empirical research evidence suggesting that there is significant support for this approach from practitioners engaged in communities experiencing significant ethnic segregation and tension as well as attractions to extremist identifications among some young people. It is in this context of the need to further develop cohesion and integration, and underpinning interethnic contact and respect, that the book will now examine the aims, development and content of Britain’s *Prevent* strategy.

# Preventing Violent Extremism

## Introduction: States responding to terror

The previous chapters analysed both the facts and possible causes of the Islamist terror threat facing Britain and the changing political context of ethnic relations since 2001. The heightened concern post-2001 with ethnic segregation and ‘parallel lives’, which has overtly focused on British Muslims, has inevitably shaped how anti-terrorism measures have been understood and experienced. For Githens-Mazer and Lambert (2011), the 2001 riots combined in the minds of many politicians and commentators with the 9/11 attacks on New York just weeks later, and that as a result ‘*Prevent* was quite simply born out of a panic induced confusion/correlation of Islam, or sects of Islam, with bases for engaging in Islamically inspired political violence’.<sup>1</sup> Indeed, it is argued here that neither the home-grown Islamist terror threat nor the effectiveness of anti-terrorist policy measures to prevent it can be discussed in isolation from broader analysis of ethnic relations, ‘identity’ and the state’s relationship with British Muslims. This suggests a two-way relationship, with the broader issues shaping both the nature of the terrorist threat and the way that the state understands and responds to the threat, but that policy response also having the potential to impact negatively on British Muslims and their perception of ethnic relations, so worsening both the threat itself and the state’s ability to positively engage with Muslim communities in order to address the threat.

The UK government response to this Islamist terror threat, the threat of violent extremism, has come in the form of the original 2003 CONTEST counterterrorism strategy and the subsequent 2009 CONTEST 2 refinement. These strategies have contained four distinct components, Pursue, *Prevent*, Protect and Prepare. The focus of this book is on the second of those components, *Prevent*, a ‘hearts and minds’ preventative approach to reducing the long-term terror threat by ‘draining the pool’ of potential terrorists. This UK policy response has developed within the context of a European Union-wide Counter-Terrorism Strategy launched in 2005 and containing four key strands, one of which is *Prevent*. This was followed up by the 2007 EU *Strategy for Combating Radicalisation and Recruitment Implementation Report* and the *Counter-Terrorism Action Plan*. Such EU strategies have been designed to support and underpin the strategies and approaches of individual member states, meaning that preventative counterterrorist work in Europe has been primarily locally

determined and led. As a result, subsequent EU documents, such as the 2008 document *The EU Counter-Radicalisation Strategy: Evaluating EU Policies Concerning Causes of Radicalisation*, have focused on sharing experiences from individual states, so emphasising the importance for the international community of critically evaluating the policy approaches of individual states, as this book attempts to do in the case of the United Kingdom.

The content, implications and effectiveness of the highly contested *Prevent* UK policy agenda to date are examined here across a number of chapters. This chapter details the development, content and rationale of *Prevent* since its launch in 2006, including the refinements made to it both by the previous Labour government and by the Conservative/Liberal Democrat coalition government elected in May 2010. In discussing the design and implementation of *Prevent*, this chapter identifies a number of problematic features of the policy agenda, both in relation to the actual effectiveness of *Prevent* activity in reducing the terror threat and in its arguably negative impact on ethnic relations and on the relationship between British Muslims and the state. These problematic features are explored in greater depth in subsequent chapters through use both of empirical research data and broader academic and media discussions.

In analysing the implementation and impacts of *Prevent* to date, broader questions of how governments, particularly democratic ones, should respond to domestic terrorism need to be borne in mind. English (2009) notes how terrorists often aim to provoke a heavy-handed state response, so leading to a spiral of violence as civilian outrage produces more terrorist recruits. Here, terrorist actions are deliberately aimed at reducing or even obliterating the middle ground of public opinion, so overreaction is the worst possible tactical response by governments.<sup>2</sup> In the wake of terrorist events such as 9/11 or 7/7 and the domestic public and media responses to them, though, it is very hard for governments to avoid an overreaction, a crackdown that involves kicking down doors and arresting suspects, often identified on the basis of crude ethnic or political ‘profiling’. The counter-effectiveness of such approaches was graphically shown by events in Northern Ireland in the early 1970s, when escalating Nationalist opposition to the British forces originally introduced to protect them from Loyalist violence led to large-scale internment of young Catholic men and disproportionate violence by British forces, most graphically seen in the shooting dead of 13 unarmed civilians on ‘Bloody Sunday’ in 1972. These state actions led to a huge growth in recruitment to paramilitary organisations such as the Provisional IRA, and destroyed any nationalist community cooperation or information sharing with the authorities: ‘state violence against civilians played a dramatic part in stimulating the growth of precisely the organisation against which the state action had been directed.’<sup>3</sup> On that basis, a modern counterterrorism strategy that has a clear ‘hearts and minds’ preventative approach, such as *Prevent*, should be welcomed as a

balanced approach, especially as other countries, such as the United States, have lacked such a coherent counter-radicalisation programme until very recently.<sup>4</sup> The ending of terrorist threats internationally has come precisely through such a combination of states *not* overreacting, bolstering middle ground opinions rather than polarisation in society and also addressing grievances. Such approaches can lead to reassessment and reduction in support for the ‘cause’ within communities and networks from which terrorists draw.

Here, the purpose of *Prevent* can therefore be understood as a ‘hearts and minds’ approach aimed at people seen as vulnerable to persuasion towards terrorism and who might ‘reject and undermine our shared values and jeopardise community cohesion’.<sup>5</sup> Such a prioritisation of community engagement within the overall CONTEST strategy acknowledges that ‘intelligence is the most vital element in successful counter-terrorism’.<sup>6</sup> This approach attempts to focus both on increasing the resilience and addressing the grievances of communities, and on identifying vulnerable individuals as well as challenging and disrupting ideologies sympathetic to violent extremism. Here, ‘resilience’ can be understood as resisting the appeal of, or even standing up to, extremist political activity and terrorist recruitment attempts within Muslim communities. It is by those standards that the effectiveness of *Prevent* policy approaches in the United Kingdom since 2003 should be judged.

### **A lethargic response? Pre-7/7 developments**

The British state recognition of and response to the scale and threat of the international Islamist terror threat outlined in Chapter 1 can be seen as sluggish both before and after the pivotal global event of the 9/11 attacks in which 67 Britons died alongside almost 3,000 American citizens.<sup>7</sup> This slowness was replicated internationally with the United States failing to heed warnings during the 1990s from its own experts about Al-Qaeda.<sup>8</sup> For the United Kingdom, this failure to comprehend the growing threat of violent Islamist extremism was not only about Cold War mindsets but also about the generational focus on the terror threat around the Northern Ireland conflict. The result has been that post-9/11 counterterrorism measures generally, and ‘hearts and minds’ *Prevent* policies in particular, have appeared to be reactive, designed and implemented under considerable political and media pressure. This is particularly surprising, given that foreign Islamist extremists had gathered in London as asylum seekers and refugees from the early 1990s, making it a key centre of organisation for global violent Islamism and leading worried French security officials to dub it ‘Londonistan’. Indeed, Bin-Laden established a media information office in London titled the Advisory and Reformation Committee in 1994. For right-of-centre commentator Melanie Phillips, until first 9/11 and then the grave shock of

the 7/7 attacks, Britain ‘paid virtually no attention to the extraordinary network of terrorism and extremist incitement that had developed under its nose’.<sup>9</sup>

The initial response of the Blair government to 9/11 was the use of the law, with five significant new pieces of legislation concerned with terrorism enacted between 2000 and 2008. This included the strengthening of the Terrorism Act in November 2001 that proscribed a number of Islamist organisations and failed attempts to deport foreign Islamist radicals that eventually led to the still controversial alternative of control orders being introduced as part of the 2005 Prevention of Terrorism Act.

Alongside new legislation came a new counterterrorism strategy, CONTEST, concerned with the threat to Britain of international terrorism. That strategy identified four distinct components, Pursue, *Prevent*, Protect and Prepare. In March 2009, the government launched a revised strategy, CONTEST 2, which acknowledged that, initially, *Prevent* had been the least developed strand of CONTEST. In foregrounding *Prevent* in the revised CONTEST 2 strategy, the government was here formalising priorities that in practice had been devised and developed subsequent to the original CONTEST strategy, especially in the wake of 7/7. The main objectives for *Prevent* identified in CONTEST 2 were as follows:

- to challenge the ideology behind violent extremism and support mainstream voice;
- to disrupt those who promote violent extremism and support the places where they operate;
- to support individuals who are vulnerable to recruitment, or have already been recruited by violent extremists;
- to increase the resilience of communities to violent extremism; and
- to address the grievances which ideologues are exploiting.<sup>10</sup>

Each strand of CONTEST had its own ministerially led committee, or TIDO (Terrorism International Defence and Overseas), with all accountable to an overarching Strategy and Delivery TIDO, chaired by the government’s security and intelligence co-ordinator based in the Cabinet Office.<sup>11</sup> The first holder of this post was Sir David Omand, former director of the Government Communications Headquarters (GCHQ). Omand acknowledged the slow initial progress on *Prevent* in March 2010, when giving evidence to the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Homeland Security (APPGHS): ‘when you came to *Prevent*, it was much less clear what it was that should be done, and so a lot of time was spent with research, led by the Security Service, trying to work out where you could most effectively intervene.’<sup>12</sup> Alongside this, a multiagency Joint Terrorism Analysis Centre (JTAC) was established,

serviced and hosted by Thames House, the MI5 headquarters. Charles Farr, current director general of Office for Security and Counter-Terrorism (OSCT), commented to the CLG Select Committee Inquiry in 2010 that the government felt that ‘we need a strategy to stop people becoming terrorists in the first place’.<sup>13</sup>

Despite the appearance of CONTEST in 2003, and the enactment of anti-terrorism legislation, government was slow to understand either the scale of the violent Islamist threat or the necessity to engage with the ideological challenge of the single narrative and the supposed need to take violent action in its name that it posed. By 2003, British Security Services ‘had become convinced that British Muslims represented the top terrorist threat and from that year to 2005 there would be a 300% increase in MI5’s domestic investigative targets’.<sup>14</sup> However, it was only after events in 2004 that the government rethought the scale of its response in general and the need for a more active *Prevent* component in particular: ‘sparking the government into action were the March 2004 Madrid bombings.’<sup>15</sup> This combined with the identification and arrest of the ‘Crevice’ plotters, and the August 2004 arrest of Dhiren Barot, all British-based Islamist terrorists, led to enhanced action. One thing these events in 2004 prompted was a joint FCO and Home Office report, *Draft Report on Young Muslims and Extremism*. The draft of this report included a letter from Cabinet Secretary Sir Andrew Turnbull to John Grieve of the Home Office that commented, ‘there is a feeling that parts of the Muslim community, particularly young men, are disaffected. This includes some that are well-educated with good economic prospects.’<sup>16</sup> The report offered a thoughtful summary of attitudes and positions within Britain’s Muslim communities, drawing on a variety of recent polling data and academic sources. It clearly identified the varying backgrounds of those young Muslims attracted to violent extremism and the role of charismatic individuals within small peer groups of potential terrorists. The report clearly identified a minority of young Muslims with little affinity for British identity and values, and with support for radical Islamist political positions. The shape and focus of the *Prevent* programme to be unveiled in subsequent years can be seen in this draft report, in its pinpointing of the need for dialogue that disrupts ‘career paths’ of those drawn towards terrorism and the need to target particular arenas such as further and higher education campuses. However, the tensions and dilemmas for the later *Prevent* programme can also be identified in the questions that the report poses but fails to clearly answer over how government should respond: ‘should programmes be targeted specifically at the Muslim community or be “ethnically-blind”?’<sup>17</sup> The analysis and initial questions over Muslim attitudes posed in this report were subsequently investigated further by MI5 through their research project ‘Project Rich Picture’. By November 2006, as *Prevent* was being initiated, MI5 claimed to be monitoring 1,600 people in 200 terrorist networks around 30 active plots, with an 80 per cent increase in case loads during 2006 alone.<sup>18</sup>

The 7/7 London bombings of July 2005 came at a time when the government still lacked engagement with Muslim communities over counterterrorism or a clear *Prevent* strategy. One immediate response was a new commitment to consultation with Muslim communities that led to the ‘Preventing Extremism Together’ (PET) working groups, even though at the same time Blair was explicitly denying any links between terrorism and foreign policy and issuing his own pre-emptive 12-point plan.

### ‘Preventing Extremism Together’

In the wake of 7/7 bombings, the government established seven working groups under the collective title ‘Preventing Extremism Together’, whilst also establishing the Commission on Cohesion and Integration,<sup>19</sup> whose subsequent report re-energised many of the original community cohesion recommendations. The PET process had significant Muslim involvement, and ranged across issues of economic, social and educational experiences, creating an expectation that it would lead to an explicit focus on ‘Muslim’ disadvantage. In fact, the government was already focused on educational and economic ‘social exclusion’ of Pakistani- and Bangladeshi-origin young people and communities,<sup>20</sup> so arguably addressing underlying root problems, but showed no inclination to integrate this as an explicitly holistic Muslim policy initiative. Such a governmental position can be seen as consistent with the wider approaches to ‘identity’ and citizenship discussed in Chapter 2 and to the multifactorial understanding of marginalisation identified in Chapter 1. The mismatch between what the PET process seemed to promise and what it actually delivered led to significant disillusionment among many of the Muslim groups and activists who engaged positively in this partnership activity with government. For instance, the conveners of one of the PET working groups later commented that ‘although our recommendations were “commended” by the Home Secretary, none were followed up or implemented, and members of the working group were not invited to be involved in contributing to the *Prevent* agenda’.<sup>21</sup>

As a result, *Prevent* emerged the following year as an agenda concerned with radicalisation and issues of ‘values’ and community organisation that might be contributing to it.<sup>22</sup> The subsequent focus on ‘values’ can also be seen as stemming from some of PET’s conclusions and the political/media response to them. PET highlighted deprivation, discrimination and Islamophobia as causes of terrorism and called for changes in foreign policy. This combined with the decision of the MCB to boycott Holocaust Memorial Day because it did not reflect all types of ‘genocide’ and pro-Palestine suicide-bombing statements by senior MCB official Daud Abdullah led key elements of the Blair government



to conclude that they could not work with existing Muslim representatives, and that attitudes and ‘values’ in broader sections of Muslim communities were problematic. The very involvement of such organisations, despite their clear democratic constitution, in PET led right-wing columnist Melanie Phillips to comment that ‘the government had quite simply handed over policy on extremism to the extremists’,<sup>23</sup> highlighting the political pressures on the Labour government.

### ‘Preventing Violent Extremism’

The tensions apparent in the PET process meant that the government formally launched its *Prevent* strategy in 2006 whilst under attack, from one side by right-wing think tanks and influential sections of the media who demanded confrontation with broader section of ‘un-British’ Muslims, and from another direction by many British Muslims and liberal non-Muslim supporters who argued for changes to foreign policy and for domestic policy approaches that encouraged dialogue and partnership focused on Muslim marginalisation, rather than approaches of blame and communal suspicion. The resulting compromise *seemed* to favour the ‘values-based’ suspicion of wider Muslim attitudes and be based on the ‘conveyor-belt’ theory of radicalisation that sees wider cultures of intolerance and extremism with Muslim communities acted out within mosques and political groups, and providing the starting point for some individuals to move further towards violent implementation of these widely held beliefs. The cutting off of contact with groups such as the MCB, and some of the language accompanying the launch of *Prevent*, seemed to support this, but the actual implementation of the policy in subsequent years pragmatically left a lot of decision-making to local authorities and other bodies at local levels, so ensuring somewhat less reactionary *Prevent* activity in practice.

The forthcoming *Prevent* strategy was announced in a speech in October 2006 by Ruth Kelly, the Secretary of State for the newly formed DCLG, following the dismemberment of the over-large Home Office. Kelly said,

Security responses alone will not be enough. There is a battle of ideas here – it is all about us reasserting shared values and winning hearts and minds.

All of us must play a part. That means government. And it also means communities and individual citizens themselves.

I am clear that our strategy of funding and engagement must shift significantly towards those organisations that are taking a proactive leadership role in tackling extremism and defending our shared values. It is only by defending our values that we will prevent extremists radicalising future generations of terrorists.<sup>24</sup>

Further details were subsequently announced,<sup>25</sup> with the initial *Prevent* activity commencing in April 2007. This was to involve DCLG funding for

work with Muslim communities in identified local authority areas under the banner of 'Preventing Violent Extremism' and work with young Muslims in specific sections of society, alongside Home Office support for police-focused work. The content and detail of this programme are discussed below. The context for this new *Prevent* initiative was a speech in January 2007 by Deputy Assistant Commissioner Peter Clarke, head of Counter-Terrorism Command at the Metropolitan Police, suggesting that Britain was losing the battle for 'hearts and minds' within Muslim communities.<sup>26</sup> The underlying target group for *Prevent* was explained by Charles Farr, director general of the OSCT, in evidence to the House of Commons Home Affairs Select Committee in 2009, when saying that beyond Islamist terrorists already identified, 'there is a much larger group of people who feel a degree of negativity, if not hostility, towards the state, the country, the community, and who are, as it were, the pool in which terrorists will swim ... We have to reach that group. That is to a degree what *Prevent* is all about.'<sup>27</sup>

The creation of a programme to channel money towards work with Muslim communities through the DCLG, the department also concerned with local authorities, equality and community cohesion, could be seen as a progressive, partnership-based approach, working with Muslim communities rather than carrying out surveillance on them. That was certainly the view of Sir David Omand, the author of *Prevent* and the overall CONTEST strategy, who saw the split of *Prevent* work between the security-focused Home Office and the DCLG as vital: 'There was a deliberate attempt to get the Local Government Department to lead this, and to try and do it in a way that is based on the locality and not the ethnicity.'<sup>28</sup> However, McGhee (2010) suggests that this could also be understood as 'forcing responsibility for countering extremism onto Muslim communities through a process of devolving responsibility downwards',<sup>29</sup> so asking for front-line vigilance against people in their own communities. McGhee does acknowledge, though, that this communitarianist approach does avoid the 'othering' of British Muslims in trying to create partnership between the state and 'responsible' Muslims. Whether 'responsible' Muslims are the same thing as politically or religiously 'moderate' Muslims is an ongoing tension within *Prevent*. Similarly, whether *Prevent* has actually been able to avoid appearing to target and stigmatise Muslims as an ethnic group and community, as Sir David Omand hoped, has also remained a controversial issue. This approach to building partnership against extremism and intolerance can be seen as consistent with the wider strategic approaches taken by government towards 'identity' in multicultural society, as outlined in Chapter 2, and towards intolerance and 'hate crime' generally: 'government is attempting to promote the intolerance of extremism alongside the now familiar intolerance in Britain with regard to other forms of hatred, prejudice and discrimination.'<sup>30</sup>

In announcing the creation of the Preventing Violent Extremism Pathfinder Fund in February 2007, DCLG minister Ruth Kelly said, 'Violent extremism

seeks to drive us apart. Together, we will overcome it.’<sup>31</sup> The *Prevent* Pathfinder Fund made available an initial £6 million for 2007/8 from the Safer and Stronger Communities Fund, via regional Government Offices to 70 local authorities of communities whose populations included 5 per cent or more Muslims. This was for action programmes aimed at Muslim communities in general, and, within those communities, at those most at risk of recruitment or ‘grooming’ by extremists, or at those ‘justifying or glorifying violent extremist ideologies and terrorism’. The aims and logic of this approach for local funding via the DCLG was explained in the April 2007 publication *Preventing Violent Extremism: Winning Hearts and Minds*.<sup>32</sup> The population calculation used for the geographical targeting was based on six-year-old data from the 2001 Census; it was subsequently amended for the three-year, £45 million programme for 2008–11 to include first all local authorities with a minimum of 4,000 Muslims, then with 2,000 Muslims, within their population, but this lower threshold still excluded Crawley in West Sussex, home of three of the five Muslim young men convicted over the ‘Operation Crevise’ plot to bomb the Bluewater shopping centre in Kent and the Ministry of Sound nightclub in London. The very use of population data to target and distribute funding betrayed the lack of quality intelligence government and its newly created OSCT had on the ‘map’ of violent extremism.

Consistent with more general New Labour policy design, the ‘Pathfinder’ *Prevent* initiative stressed the need for locally designed approaches whilst at the same time offering explicit objectives that all local authority funding bids should address, and have agreed by the regional Government Offices. Acutely aware of the danger that government language, particularly if aping American-style ‘war-on-terror’ formulations, could further alienate and radicalise sections of Muslim communities, the *Prevent* documentation uses ‘we’ consistently. Indeed, the government also established a Research, Information and Communications Unit (RICU) within the Home Office, with one of its key functions being to help the various arms of national and local government avoid ‘aggressive rhetoric’ and use language that encourages the positive involvement of Muslim communities.<sup>33</sup> The RICU has been one of a number of aspects of the *Prevent* strategy that has drawn inspiration from policy approaches previously used by the state during the Northern Ireland armed conflict, as acknowledged by a ‘senior civil servant’ quoted in *The Times* in 2004: ‘We did the same in Northern Ireland in the 1980s when, as well as deploying police and troops on the streets, we had a massive programme of investment in the local community, raising living standards. We also set about bridge-building with the Catholic community.’<sup>34</sup>

In parallel, further development to *Prevent* came in the 2008–11 expansion through significant funding to the YJB for work with young offenders in secure institutions and in the community, and to the Prison Service, both reflecting well-founded concerns that radicalisation of individual Muslims was taking

place during incarceration. The important role played for recruitment to radical Islamist political groups by further and higher education settings also led to a funding focus on universities and colleges,<sup>35</sup> confirmed as such by the testimony of ex-activist Ed Husain, who was previously involved in the Islamist group HUT. *Prevent* funding also led to 300 new dedicated police posts nationally, some of them attached to the newly established regional CTUs. This all added up to a 2008–11 *Prevent* budget of £140 million, some £85 million of which came from the DCLG and the security-focused remainder from the Home Office. Information sharing and ‘tension monitoring’ were seen as a key part of the *Prevent* strategy, particularly the developing work with offenders, colleges and universities, with the hope that extremist activity could be identified and effectively countered. Underpinning this has been a significant strengthening of relationships between police forces and educational institutions across the full age range of children and young people, with the ACPO aware that there is a ‘pressing need to develop the growing relationships between the police and education sector at every level with regard to preventing violent extremism’.<sup>36</sup> The *Prevent* approach to prisons, young offenders and further and higher education institutions is discussed in more detail in Chapter 5.

### Preventing Violent Extremism in practice

The pressure from central government on the identified local authorities, and their local partners, to be involved in *Prevent* monitoring, information sharing and ‘forums against extremism’ was significant from the start. This pressure came on local authorities through the Local Area Agreements under the Comprehensive Spending Assessment to adopt ‘National Indicator 35’ around developing ‘resilience to violent extremism’, as this extract from the April 2008 Local Government Association (LGA) briefing document *Strategic Issues: Preventing Violent Extremism* shows:

The selection or non-selection of National Indicator 35: Building resilience to violent extremism emerged as a contentious issue during LAA negotiations. The Home Office, via the Office for Security and Counter-Terrorism (OSCT), have produced a ‘heat map’ which identifies 30 areas with a high risk of producing violent extremists and are seeking a good take-up of NI: 35 across this group. ... The HO believe that local authorities that do not select NI: 35 are not prioritising *Prevent* and concluding that little or no *Prevent* work is being undertaken. To persuade local authorities to select NI: 35, the HO is applying pressure via the Police, and senior officials during LAA negotiations which has had only limited success.<sup>37</sup>

Some of the local authorities receiving *Prevent* funding refused to adopt it initially, but all were required to report on it to Government Offices.

Despite these ongoing local authority anxieties, pressure from government saw *Prevent* continue to grow to the point where all local authorities with significant Muslim communities were involved, although a number of Muslim community groups refused to participate or accept funding.<sup>38</sup> The relationship between national and local government at the heart of *Prevent* operation, and the experiences of those trying to implement *Prevent* at the local authority level, are also examined in detail in Chapter 5.

The 2008 DCLG document, *Pathfinder Fund: Mapping of Project Activities 2007/2008*, the product of a ‘light-touch’ review requested by the Prime Minister’s Office, claims that as many as 44,000 people, most of them young people, had been engaged by the initial *Prevent* ‘Pathfinder’ year programme nationally.<sup>39</sup> By government’s own admission, these were overwhelmingly Muslim young people taking part in broad and unfocused monocultural youth activities. Government acknowledged that the monitoring and evaluation data from the programme to date were weak and unreliable, so admitting that little independent evaluation had taken place. An exception was Kirklees in West Yorkshire (home of two of the 7/7 bombers), where independent evaluation identified a lack of clarity over the aims of the well-meaning work and its relationship to community cohesion.<sup>40</sup> The national expansion of *Prevent* from April 2008 did lead to new guidance over evaluation approaches, but this was confined to vague suggestions that local authorities ‘might’ decide to develop external evaluation of programmes.<sup>41</sup> Throughout the 2007–11 period, evaluation and assessment of *Prevent* activity funded via local authorities and other public bodies remained largely weak and limited. For instance, the evidence submission to the 2009–10 House of Commons CLG Select Committee Inquiry into *Prevent* from the ACPO commented that ‘the apparent lack of evaluation of *Prevent* initiatives has made the “value for money” assessment of *Prevent* difficult’.<sup>42</sup> One issue that was highlighted by local authority funding from early on was the unhelpfulness of the funding title ‘Preventing Violent Extremism’. Clearly, such concerns cannot be separated from deeper concerns about the overall aims and assumptions of *Prevent*, but they highlighted the reality of ‘preventing violent extremism’ being a negative title and starting point for constructive ‘hearts and minds’ work. The Kirklees research highlighted the use of ‘Pathfinder’ as a suitably opaque title deployed as an understandable avoidance strategy. Similarly, the acronym PVE or the generic-sounding ‘*Prevent*’ also played obfuscation roles in local *Prevent* implementation. Acknowledging these concerns, the government formally dropped the ‘Preventing Violent Extreme’ title, settling instead for using *Prevent* as a working operational title as well as a strategic one: ‘We have recently revised our guidance to local authorities about *Prevent* acknowledging that the term “Preventing Violent Extremism” attached to local funding can in some areas be a barrier to promoting good community based work. We have acted on this by removing the label from the funding.’<sup>43</sup>

What this *Prevent* activity has involved and how we can understand it is the subject of the following chapters, but the main aspects can be briefly summarised here.

Muslim young people have clearly been the main focus of many of the *Prevent* activities to date, with funding either used directly by local authority education departments and Youth Services or channelled to community organisations working with Muslim young people, using a variety of approaches and techniques, through youth work, schools and arts and sports activities. These youth-focused activities have included the promotion of local ‘anti-extremism’ forums and ‘road shows’ on extremism and Islamophobia. Alongside this has been what in reality has been community development or capacity-building work within Muslim communities that implicitly suggested weak and underdeveloped ‘civil society’ in and around Muslim communities and limited capacity in the past to counter extremism. This led to a significant focus on educational standards in general, and citizenship education specifically, in after-school mosque schools and madrassahs, and capacity-building training, support and movement towards charitable status for many mosques and other Muslim community organisations. Such local work has been mirrored at the national level. The *Prevent* strategy included 30 national projects through the Community Leadership Fund, particularly aimed at women, young people and a broader range of faith leaders. This included the establishment of a Young Muslims Advisory Group and a national Muslim Women’s Advisory Group, both clearly intended to promote more polyphonic and ‘modern’ leadership with British Muslim communities, with *Prevent* here providing ‘the facilitation of the emergence of new, “acceptable” leadership within the Muslims communities of Britain’.<sup>44</sup> More controversially, *Prevent* has also been involved in the promotion of new national Muslim faith organisations, with funding going to the British Muslim Council and the Sufi Muslim Council, and has attempted to promote ‘moderate’ versions of Islam, such as through the ‘Radical Middle Way’ anti-extremism road show. The implications of this *Prevent* intervention in the organisation and leadership of Muslim communities, and the promotion of particular interpretations of Islam itself, are discussed more fully in Chapter 4.

### *Prevent* under pressure

From its initiation in April 2007, both the assumptions and operational reality of *Prevent* were highly controversial. Tensions were identified between those who wanted a more judgemental and security-focused approach to Muslim ‘extremism’ in general and those who saw dangers of further marginalisation of Muslims in the targeted nature of *Prevent* and so wanted a much more

modest and pragmatic approach. The first camp, largely right-of-centre in its politics, questioned what was being achieved with *Prevent* funding and whether it was making the country any safer. The Tax Payer's Alliance (TPA), a 'small state' campaigning group closely connected to the Conservative Party, used Freedom of Information requests to identify how *Prevent* money was actually being used at the local level, following the failure of the Conservative Opposition Communities spokesman Paul Goodman MP to obtain this data from government. Releasing their conclusions in September 2009, the TPA commented that 'there have been on-going concerns about the groups receiving funding and it has not been clear how taxpayers' money has been spent'.<sup>45</sup>

The TPA used this data to publicise how local authorities had used the money in very different ways, both in whether they were actually spending it on activity clearly related to the *Prevent* agenda or not and how they allocated it. The clear suggestion was that significant amounts of *Prevent* funding were *not* ending up on the activities, or with the local organisations, that the central government expected. For instance, despite the government breaking off official contact with the MCB in 2006, 'Around £850,000 has been given to the Muslim Council of Britain's official affiliates through different *Prevent* funding stream.'<sup>46</sup>

At the same time, *Prevent* came under sustained criticism from the left of British politics over the allegation that it was actually a front for state surveillance activities against British Muslim communities. Leading this critique was the think tank and Race Equality campaigning organisation, the Institute of Race Relations (IRR), and its director Arun Kundnani. The IRR used similar approaches to the TPA, and supported this with research activity among local authority and voluntary sector staff involved in the actual implementation of *Prevent* at ground level. The result was the IRR report *Spooked*, which alleged that

there is strong evidence that a significant part of the *Prevent* programme involves the embedding of counter-terrorism police officers within the delivery of local services, the purpose of which seems to be to gather intelligence on Muslim communities.<sup>47</sup>

This report was quickly picked up by *The Guardian* newspaper, who ran a story headlined 'Government Anti-Terrorism Strategy 'Spies' on Innocent',<sup>48</sup> and quoted Shami Chakrabati, the head of civil liberty watchdog 'Liberty', as describing *Prevent* as 'the biggest spying programme in modern Britain' and an affront to civil liberties. Despite immediate and flat denials by the government, these serious allegations have persisted throughout the life of *Prevent*, and are discussed more fully in Chapter 6.

The fact that both these political critiques had been developing throughout 2009, combined with growing disquiet on the ground, had led the House of Commons Select Committee for Communities and Local Government, the independent group of backbench MPs charged with scrutiny of the work

of DCLG, to establish an Inquiry, with a call for written evidence released during summer 2009, and evidence sessions commencing in December 2009. Written submissions were made by a wide range of local government agencies, police bodies and voluntary/faith sector organisations. Witnesses appearing to give evidence included Arun Kundnani, Professor Ted Cantle, the DCLG minister John Denham MP and Charles Farr, director general of OSCT. The significant evidence generated through this Select Committee Inquiry into *Prevent*<sup>49</sup> highlighted how difficult it is to quantify 'success', especially if *Prevent* is seen as a longer term approach rather than concerned with the prevention of terrorist plots now. Indeed, oral evidence to the Inquiry from the ACPO suggested that *Prevent* represented a 'generational' struggle to influence young Muslims. That Inquiry process acknowledged that *Prevent* had enabled stronger relationships between local authorities and Muslim communities in some areas, had strengthened the organisation and transparency of some Muslim community organisations, promoted the voices of women and young people within community processes, and had highlighted the need for more open debates within Muslim communities around the causes of domestic violent extremism.

However, the Select Committee Inquiry was particularly concerned about the role of DCLG in what is, essentially, a counterterrorism strategy and how *Prevent* related to the broader work on community cohesion and integration that DCLG is primarily focused on. In its final report, which 'proved to be a robust assessment of evidence that it had elicited in reviewing the performance of *Prevent*',<sup>50</sup> the Select Committee concluded that *Prevent* was damaging and confusing the cross-community cohesion and integration work that local authorities were developing in the wake of the 2001 Cantle Report and government's resulting prioritisation of community cohesion. Here, it commented that 'the single focus on Muslims in *Prevent* has been unhelpful'<sup>51</sup> and highlighted the problematic stress on 'values' and types of religious belief in saying that 'a particular worry for many witnesses in this context is having religious orthodoxy mistaken for extremism ... We believe that there has been an excessive concentration on the theological basis of radicalisation in the *Prevent* programme'.<sup>52</sup> There was a clear inference that *Prevent* approaches to 'moderate' or 'extreme' versions of Islam were counterproductive attempts at social engineering. In contrast, the report praised the minority of *Prevent* initiatives that had enabled robust and open debate around political and social issues, including foreign policy, such as the 'Project Safe Space' work coordinated by the UK Youth Parliament and ACPO. Unfortunately, in the Select Committee's view, such work focused directly on the root issues underpinning violent extremism was an exception: 'We are concerned that much *Prevent* money has been wasted on unfocussed or irrelevant projects, as a result either of misunderstanding of *Prevent* or of a lack of willingness and capacity of local organisations to deliver.'<sup>53</sup>



Whilst finding the charge of spying within *Prevent* unproven, the persistence of the concerns led the Select Committee to call for an independent investigation into the allegations. It concluded overall that the impact of the problems and contradictions of *Prevent* outweighed any positive impacts, and so called for significant reshaping of the programme: ‘Our Inquiry has shown that the current overall approach to *Prevent* is contentious and unlikely ever to be fully accepted in its existing form by those it is most important to engage.’<sup>54</sup> In particular, the Select Committee recommended a much greater distinction between the *Prevent* programme and ongoing cohesion and integration work, although they saw that cohesion activity as a vital part of the long-term attempt to undermine support for violent extremism: ‘funding for cohesion work in all communities should be increased. That work should be done on a thematic basis and not on a monocultural or individual community basis. It should clearly be targeted at disadvantaged and excluded groups.’<sup>55</sup> This apparently monocultural focus on Muslims within *Prevent* had been one of the most common criticisms and, before the Select Committee Inquiry had even got underway, the government had responded through the creation of a smaller and separate Connecting Communities Fund aimed at white, working-class communities that were supposedly ‘under pressure’ but in fact vulnerable to BNP agitation. These issues are discussed in greater detail in Chapter 4.

The CLG Select Committee was largely Labour Party dominated, but reaction to its report from the other main parties was supportive. Caroline Spelman, the Conservative shadow communities secretary, said, ‘It is clear that too much money has been wasted on unfocused and irrelevant projects which have created confusion and increased the risk of alienating the very communities it ought to engage.’ Chris Huhne, the Liberal Democrat home affairs spokesman, said, ‘The *Prevent* programme alienates and marginalises Muslim communities, and exacerbates racist bias and ignorant views ... Everyone wants to combat radical Islamism but that should not mean gathering and keeping intelligence on innocent people.’<sup>56</sup> During the Select Committee process, Conservative communities spokesman Paul Goodman highlighted the TPA data on the use of *Prevent* funding and called for a fundamental review of the programme,<sup>57</sup> something the Conservative-Liberal Democrat coalition was to deliver in its first year in office. This aim had already been trailed by Conservative shadow security minister Dame Pauline Neville-Jones when she said that ‘*Prevent* should be aimed at bringing citizens and communities together’ rather than focusing on Muslims only,<sup>58</sup> a theme apparently developed by Sayeeda Warsi, chairman of the Conservative Party, who commented in speech to the 2009 Party Conference that ‘state multiculturalism is not integration, is not unifying and is not the British way’. Somewhat contradictorily, Warsi also called for the state to accept and work with ‘faith’ much more.<sup>59</sup> The negativity of ‘state multiculturalism’ had been a theme of David Cameron’s for some time in opposition: ‘It means treating groups of people as monolithic blocks rather

than individual citizens.<sup>60</sup> The logical conclusion of such a position is that viewing Muslims as one undifferentiated group is unhelpful and misguided, but in a speech in October 2009 on ‘The Future of Britain’s Counter-Terrorism Strategy’, Neville-Jones indicated that the ‘values’ of particular groups or communities were indeed their concern: ‘government should tackle extremism itself, not just extremism when it turns violent.’<sup>61</sup> This analysis was built on a speech she had given earlier in 2009, ‘Society’s Role in Preventing Terrorism’, that solely focused on British Muslims, talking about the dangers of ‘gateway organisations’, the ‘pretensions’ of the MCB in speaking for British Muslims, and the idea of creating a register of ‘extreme’ individuals and groups.<sup>62</sup> This meant that in the run-up to the 2010 general election there were clear tensions within the Conservative party over *Prevent*; on the one hand talking about positive, colour-blind cohesion work, but on the other hand suggesting a ‘values-based’ crackdown on ‘extremism’ generally within Britain’s Muslim communities.

### Coalition government: A new approach?

The Conservative failure to win an outright majority in the general election of May 2010 arguably exacerbated the internal tensions indicated above, as the Conservatives were forced to form a coalition with the Liberal Democrats, a party with significant numbers of Muslim local activists and who had already expressed unease about *Prevent*. An early measure was the decision to divert £50 million of the *Prevent* money earmarked for local authorities between 2010 and 2012 towards the pilot phase of a new national youth volunteering scheme, the NCS, explicitly concerned with social cohesion. David Cameron and his Shadow Cabinet had been developing their ideas on NCS for some years whilst in opposition, as part of their emerging ‘Big Society’ agenda. The ‘Big Society’ is an overtly communitarianist policy approach which appears to believe that the state must contract in order for volunteerism and civic society to have the space to grow. The concern with shared identity and values was overt in the original design of NCS, with the hope that it would be ‘contributing to a sense of Britishness, with the requirement for young people to develop a sense of what being a British citizen means to them’.<sup>63</sup> The NCS promised a 6-week-long summer programme for 16-year-olds, including residential experiences and volunteering programmes within local communities, with £13 million of diverted *Prevent* money providing 11,000 places for summer 2011 and a large expansion planned for summer 2012. A 2011 report by the House of Commons Education Select Committee into Services for young people highlighted that this 6-week NCS programme cost £1,233 per head, almost exactly the same as German youth volunteering programmes cost for a whole year of involvement.<sup>64</sup> NCS funding initially was distributed via third sector

youth and community agencies and explicitly avoided using local authorities, making early criticism of NCS as being geared largely to more middle-class young people and having little lasting effect on the poorer young people with less social capital who do take part as hardly surprising. Above all, for all the faults of *Prevent*-funded activity via local authorities outlined above and explored further in subsequent chapters, it *was* making some progress around citizenship and identity issues and the democratic engagement of Muslim young people in some of Britain's poorest areas; 'NCS, on the other hand, is devoid of emphasis on political engagement and other contentious issues, instead focusing on issues of adulthood and responsibility.'<sup>65</sup>

This early diversion of *Prevent* funding was followed in November 2010 by the coalition government's decision to review *Prevent* under the independent oversight of Liberal Democrat peer Lord Carlile, although they decided explicitly not to examine the allegations of 'spying' outlined above in a 'rebuff' to the CLG Select Committee.<sup>66</sup> What should have been a rapid review and subsequent policy announcement in January 2011 turned into something much more protracted, with the review eventually published on 7th June 2011. The substantial delay seems to have been a product of significant political infighting, not just within the two-party coalition but among leading Conservatives over the future direction of *Prevent*. This infighting mirrored tensions inherent in Labour's previous approach, and which were already evident in pre-election Conservative thinking, as highlighted above. They focused on the question of 'values', whether *Prevent* focuses pragmatically on individuals at risk of attraction to violent extremism or whether it sees the terrorist threat as symptomatic of problematic, anti-British, anti-democratic 'values' within wider sections of the Muslim community and so demands public adherence to those 'shared values'. The first public sign of these tensions came in February 2011, when David Cameron called for 'muscular liberalism' to uphold British values and explicitly criticised British Muslims during a speech at a counterterrorism conference in Munich, the same day as the far-right EDL was holding an anti-Muslim demonstration in Luton. Cameron also criticised the previous government's approach to *Prevent* of being prepared to work with law-abiding Islamists, suggesting that it was the equivalent of funding the far-right BNP to work with white youth attracted to violent neo-Nazism: 'Would you allow the far right groups a share of public funds if they promise to help you lure young white men away from fascist terrorism? Of course not.'<sup>67</sup> As well as being an implicit slur on many Muslim organisations,<sup>68</sup> this analogy was a regurgitation of arguments in an article by Dean Godson, research director of the right-of-centre think-tank Policy Exchange, who wrote in 2008 that 'it's as if the government responded to a violent insurgency from the neo-Nazi terrorists of Combat 18 by turning to Nick Griffin of the BNP'.<sup>69</sup> Just weeks before Cameron's Munich speech, Baroness Sayeeda Warsi, chairman of the Conservative Party

and the only Muslim in the Cabinet, commented in a speech rumoured not to have been cleared by Conservative Party HQ, on how Islamophobia had become increasingly fashionable around British dinner tables.<sup>70</sup>

The subsequent appearance of the *Prevent* review was clearly understood in its delay, tone and content as illustrative of these ongoing political tensions. *The Independent*, in its Editorial of 8th June 2011, commented that ‘few issues have divided the Coalition as dramatically as the question of how to meet the threat of home-grown terrorism’. They saw one group of ministers, including Cameron and Education Secretary Michael Gove, as advocating ‘a radical new approach based on confrontation’, whilst another group that included Liberal Democrat leader Nick Clegg and Baroness Warsi as rejecting ‘the idea that there is a connection between reactionary religious attitudes and support for terrorism’. *The Independent* also suggested that the concerns of the latter group were shared by senior figures in the security and police services who wanted to work pragmatically to reduce the terror threat. *The Independent* saw the Cameron/Gove group as having triumphed and the new *Prevent* strategy as leaning ‘strongly towards a confrontational approach’, as did the *Financial Times* in its Editorial of the same day, ‘UK takes values-based approach to countering extremism’. Some commentators were blunter in their assessment: ‘The document represents a triumph for the hawkish neo-con faction in the cabinet.’<sup>71</sup> Such an apparent strengthening of the ‘values-based’ approach to *Prevent* was certainly consistent with concurrent developments in Germany, where the right-of-centre, Christian Democrat-led government was hardening the approach of its own anti-Islamist extremism programme, ‘Initiative Strengthening Democracy’. This required that ‘all federally-funded associations will have to sign a statement in which they swear allegiance to the German constitution’ and be held responsible for the political statements or behaviour of any of their members. This represented the triumph of the ‘slippery slope’ perspective that lumped non-violent German Muslims with questionable political and social attitudes together with the small minority of Islamist violent extremists. This policy approach has proved hugely politically controversial in Germany.<sup>72</sup>

This triumph seemed to be confirmed by the appearance of the former security minister Dame Pauline Neville-Jones on Radio 4’s ‘Today’ programme on the day of the *Prevent* strategy release, with Neville-Jones talking of ‘people who may have the same values as terrorists’ and saying ‘there are plenty of Muslim groups in this country, I fear, that do actually hold values ... which are not in accordance with the rule of law and democratic values’.<sup>73</sup> However, *The Guardian*’s Editorial of 8th June saw the new strategy more as a ‘convenient fudge over the precise definition of extremism’. They acknowledged though that this new approach might cause problems in practice as ‘it risks outlawing people who express legitimate opposition to foreign policy’, so exacerbating the very ideological marginalisation that *Prevent* intends to address. In contrast,

*The Times* Editorial of the same day welcomed the new direction, saying that ‘it is now time to stop handing money to questionable religious organisations’.

These political tensions and the need to satisfy differing audiences could be seen in the significant differences between how ministers ‘trailed’ the new *Prevent* strategy in the media and what it actually said. Pre-launch interviews with, and leaks to, right-of-centre newspapers *The Daily Telegraph* and *The Times* suggested a new and hard line, with *The Daily Telegraph* running ‘Universities “Complacent” over Islamic Radicals, Theresa May Warns’, on 5th June 2011, and with claims that funding would be withdrawn from some organisations. The actual *Prevent* report was somewhat more circumspect, suggesting that the pre-release media work had been much more to do with wider party political positioning than the content of the actual strategy.

### The revised *Prevent* strategy

The following were the new objectives identified for *Prevent* in June 2011:

- respond to the ideological challenge of terrorism and the threat we face from those who promote it;
- prevent people from being drawn into terrorism and ensure that they are given appropriate advice and support; and
- work with a wide range of sectors and institutions (including education, faith, health and criminal justice) where there are risks of radicalisation, which we need to address.<sup>74</sup>

In launching this revised *Prevent* strategy, the government acknowledged that ‘the *Prevent* programme we inherited from the last government was flawed’.<sup>75</sup> In claiming that the previous approach had confused integration/cohesion and counterterrorism, the revised strategy appeared to accept the findings of the CLG Select Inquiry, saying that, ‘as a general rule, the two strategies and programmes must not be merged together’.<sup>76</sup> Here, the government identified the significant degree of local decision-making and the lack of ring-fencing for the funding as leading to what they identified as the ‘convergence’ of *Prevent* and cohesion. This claim is partly based on evaluation returns from local authorities but, as identified above, this data is significantly unreliable. It also raises issues of what exactly ‘hearts and minds’ *Prevent* work *should* look like, if it is not to have any connection to cohesion and will not, primarily, be locally determined. The overlap between cohesion and *Prevent* was identified by the Select Committee Inquiry as problematic and as fuelling concerns over spying, so the new strategy proposed a formal policy split, with the Home Office leading on *Prevent* and DCLG

concerned only with cohesion and integration. *Prevent* was now to focus on work in 25 areas identified as ‘hotspots’ of potential radicalisation, with local coordinators to be funded directly by the Home Office in order for them to direct local *Prevent*-funded activity. However, the local partnership boards they will work with are likely to be very much the current local structures largely coordinated by local authorities, with this immediately suggesting that the formal Home Office/DCLG, *Prevent*/cohesion split is somewhat artificial.

The June 2011 list of 25 identified areas for *Prevent* activity was a significant departure from the previous approach of identifying a larger number of local authorities on the basis of their communities’ Muslim populations. The new strategy stated that ‘in future, simple demographics will not be used as a basis for prioritising *Prevent* work’.<sup>77</sup> This revised and reduced list of target areas did *not* include key local authorities in the north of England such as Oldham, Rochdale or Calderdale, all of which had experienced terror arrests and convictions, and racial tensions involving Muslim communities. In particular, it did not include Kirklees in West Yorkshire, home of two of the 7/7 attackers: ‘Funding will be made available by the Home Office to the 25 priority areas for project work on a grant basis and for activities which address specific local risks and are designed to establish specific *Prevent* benefits.’<sup>78</sup> The OSCT will have oversight of this funding, which ‘in the future will be prioritised on our assessment of the risk of radicalisation in specific areas’.<sup>79</sup> The analysis behind this is suggested in the comments that ‘radicalisation tends to occur in places where the terrorist ideologies, and those that promote them, go uncontested’,<sup>80</sup> and that ‘Islamist extremists can purport to identify problems to which terrorist organisations then claim to have a solution’.<sup>81</sup> This seems to represent the ‘values’ approach coming to the fore, although despite the pre-publication hype, the review found evidence of only a ‘small number’ of extremist organisations<sup>82</sup> receiving *Prevent* funding in the past, leading *The Guardian* to conclude that ‘official review finds scant evidence of state funds going to extremists’.<sup>83</sup>

The revised *Prevent* strategy also signalled a potential reduction in the dedicated funding to the police, despite positive comments on how *Prevent* has helped to build police contact with and understanding of Muslim communities. This change was based on concerns from the police themselves that they had been too dominant in *Prevent*, with ‘the number of people employed by the Police to deal with *Prevent* exceeds the numbers who have been employed by local authorities’.<sup>84</sup> However, the Police and the Security Services through the regional CTU ‘hubs’ are likely to remain central to *Prevent* as it moves forward. Any reduction in the police role, alongside an intelligence-based approach to targeting activity, could be seen as a partial governmental admission of Police/Security Service ‘overstepping’ within *Prevent*, despite their denials of any ‘spying’. However, that sits uncomfortably with the new *Prevent* strategy’s statement that ‘there are some 12,000 students training for health

qualifications within universities each year. Work has started to ensure that *Prevent* is included in the undergraduate curriculum<sup>85</sup> and their trumpeting of the fact that over 15,000 front-line public sector staff have already received ‘Workshop to Raise Awareness of *Prevent*’ (WRAP) training, all of which suggests that doctors or social workers diagnosing ‘radicalisation’ is the same thing as noting child abuse or hard-drug use.

Other key operational elements of *Prevent* were retained but challenged to sharpen their focus. This included the information and communication work of RICU, which was required to comply with the renewed emphasis on ‘values’: ‘going forward, we will want to emphasise the connection between extremist and terrorist ideologies.’<sup>86</sup> As trailed in pre-release media work, the new strategy also criticised both universities themselves and student bodies such as the Federation of Student Islamic Societies (FOSIS) for not doing enough: ‘we are concerned that some universities and colleges have failed to engage in *Prevent*.’<sup>87</sup> Good progress was reported in the prisons sector, but the government quoted recent research by the University of Huddersfield for the YJB to suggest that the youth justice field now needed a risk-based, smaller and better targeted programme in the same way as local authorities. The increased emphasis on intelligence-led approaches to individuals at risk of radicalisation within the revised *Prevent* strategy could be seen in the prominence of the Channel programme within the plans for the future. It highlighted that Channel had worked with 1,120 people between April 2007 and December 2010, with the majority being aged 11 to 25 years old, 290 being under 16, and an astonishing 55 under 12 years old. The very significant ethical questions raised by this demographic profile were not directly addressed in the document, with discussion instead focusing on the need to ensure that Channel did not stray into broader cohesion or social work issues: ‘we recognise the risk that the criteria for entry to these programmes can be too broad.’<sup>88</sup> The implication was that Channel would be focused on the 25 priority areas identified by the strategy. Channel is discussed further in Chapter 6.

This document reiterated the judgement of CONTEST 2 (Home Office 2009): ‘The most significant terrorist threat we face comes from Al Qaida, its affiliates and like-minded terrorist organisations inspired by violent Islamism.’<sup>89</sup> This apparent need to focus on Islamist terror was supported by the belief that extreme right-wing terrorism in the United Kingdom has been ‘much less widespread, systematic or organised’<sup>90</sup> in comparison, with those arrested being isolated individuals without training or support. The revised *Prevent* strategy went on to admit that 17 people currently serving sentences in UK prisons for terrorism-related offences had links with far-right groups, ‘though none of these groups are themselves terrorist organisations’, and that ‘extreme right-wing plots have predominantly been undertaken by people acting on their own or with one or two associates’.<sup>91</sup> This dismissive characterisation of the far-right terrorist threat could arguably be equally applied to many of the Islamist

terror threats in the United Kingdom in recent years, with individuals or small groups emerging from legal organisations like HUT.

The sense that the revised *Prevent* strategy was offering a misguided analysis of the far-right terror threat was heightened just weeks after its launch, when a Norwegian far-right activist, Anders Behring Breivik, killed 77 people in a bomb attack in Oslo and a mass shooting at a socialist youth camp held on the island of Uttoya. Shortly before he commenced his attacks, Breivik emailed a detailed manifesto that railed against multiculturalism and the ‘Islamification’ of Europe to hundreds of far-right activists across Europe, including many members of the EDL.<sup>92</sup> These events in Norway inevitably shone light on the claim of the revised *Prevent* strategy that ‘people involved in extreme right-wing terrorism have not received the same training, guidance or support as many of those who engaged with Al Qaida or Al-Qaida-influenced organisations. Nor have they ever aspired or planned to conduct operations on the scale of those planned by their Al-Qaida counterparts’.<sup>93</sup> The European-wide nature of this Islamist-obsessed mindset is demonstrated by the fact the Norwegian media assumed, and reported as fact, for several hours initially that this mass shooting and bombing was an Islamist attack.<sup>94</sup> In the wake of the Norwegian attacks, Labour’s shadow Home Secretary Yvette Cooper wrote to Home Secretary Theresa May, asking her to reconsider the scope and focus of *Prevent*. Similarly, the National Association of Muslim Police Officers claimed that the UK authorities had been in denial for years about the scale of the right-wing terror threat, and their president, Zaheer Khan, ‘said his group’s warnings in private meetings with officials to take the threat of extremist right-wing violence more seriously had been re-buffed’.<sup>95</sup> The counter-argument deployed here was that Breivik was the usual far-right ‘lone wolf’<sup>96</sup> who demonstrated the lack of a far-right network of ideology and inspiration comparable to Islamist extremism. This complacent fallacy, which badly underestimates the growing far-right terror threat and its clear links to ‘legal’ UK groups like the BNP and EDL, is discussed further in Chapter 4 as part of the book’s arguments that *Prevent* needs to take a much more holistic approach towards the dangers of violent extremism. In its attempts to downplay the far-right threat, *Prevent* also overplays the coherence of the Islamist threat, as Chapter 1 suggested.

### Conclusion: *Prevent* – flawed and friendless?

This chapter has outlined the origins, assumptions and content of *Prevent* policy approaches in the United Kingdom since its inception in 2006 as part of the CONTEST strategy. In doing so, it has detailed the significant modifications made to *Prevent* by both Labour and Conservative-Liberal Democrat coalition governments, and the substantial criticisms and concerns



expressed over this sensitive policy area. Whilst the United Kingdom should rightly be praised for a ‘hearts and minds’ counterterrorism approach that tries to reduce support for, or involvement in, violent extremism, it is clear that *Prevent* remains remarkably friendless, even after successive modifications, because of its significant flaws. Those flaws arguably reflect the sharply differing political views *within* each major party over how the causes of violent extremism can be understood and how government should react, with the result being clumsy and contradictory compromises. Those disagreements also centre on what *Prevent* ‘success’ looks like, and how it should be measured, with one former official who has studied *Prevent* and counterterrorism developments commenting that ‘I feel that the metrics by which success/progress could be monitored or benchmarked are not particularly tight’.<sup>97</sup> These flaws, their implications for *Prevent* activity in practice, and the questions they raise are addressed in subsequent chapters. Chapter 4 addresses the monocultural focus on British Muslims, which remains problematically at the heart of *Prevent*. It also examines the implications of this for the wider government priority of community cohesion and integration, and the impacts that the contradictory approach of *Prevent* is having, and is likely to continue having, on its present basis. Underpinning this focus on Muslims is the tension over ‘values’ and ‘means’, and a flagrant lack of concern with the growing far-right terror threat. Chapter 5 takes this debate further by discussing how *Prevent* has actually been implemented at local level and what impacts it has had. That chapter focuses on local authorities and the difficulties they have experienced over clarity, control and direction in relation to both national government and the Police and Security Services. It also examines specific sectors targeted by *Prevent*, such as higher and further education, prisons and youth offending sector. Chapter 6 directly addresses the allegation that *Prevent* has been a front for surveillance activity, examining the very significant role for the Police and Security Services in both the design and delivery of *Prevent* activity and how we might understand this. This enables clear conclusions to be reached around the current effectiveness of *Prevent* against its stated aims, and what a *Prevent* approach that was more in tune with cohesion approaches, and so a more effective ‘hearts and minds’ counterterrorism programme that addresses all forms of extremism, might look like.

## British Muslims

### A suspect community?

#### Introduction: Muslims under the spotlight

From the moment it was operationalised in April 2007, *Prevent* has focused on Muslim communities, and particularly on young Muslims, as the evidence examined in Chapter 3 made clear. This focus on Muslims might appear self-evident given the serious threat of Islamist violent extremism Britain faces, but it is argued here that this focus, and the way that it has been framed and operationalised by *Prevent*, has been self-defeating, both to the cause of preventing violent extremism and of promoting community cohesion. This chapter examines the stark contradiction between *Prevent* and the wider policy goal of community cohesion and integration adopted as a priority by the UK government since 2001, and discussed in Chapter 2. The result has been a monocultural focus on Muslims within *Prevent* that is not only at odds with that goal of community cohesion but also has been counterproductive, in its impact on the feelings of British Muslims and in the consequent damage to relationships between Muslim communities and the state. The suggestion here is that *Prevent* has been both flatly in contradiction to community cohesion and has represented clumsy attempts at ‘social engineering’ through a ‘values-based’ (Birt 2009) approach, apparently continuing under the coalition government, which has had a negative impact by enforcing the ‘otherness’ of Muslim communities. It is also argued here that previous policy experiences of trying to operationalise ‘anti-racist’ educational programmes in areas of significant racism and racist violence by white people suggest the need for caution in the way *Prevent* has been, and is, proceeding. The evidence from such ‘hearts and minds’ work aimed at white young people indicates that *Prevent*’s approaches of state-funded, community-based interventions in specific, ‘named’ communities around ‘values’ and ‘attitudes’ risk provoking a counterproductive backlash within the Muslim communities targeted as well as within other ethnic and faith communities denied similar state funding by this Muslim-focused policy.<sup>1</sup> The associated lack of focus within *Prevent* to date on far-right violent extremism has significantly contributed to the feeling among British Muslims that they are being unfairly singled out as an entire community, whilst dangerously ignoring a growing terrorist threat graphically illustrated by the July 2011 events in Norway.

## A monocultural contradiction to community cohesion?

Chapter 2 outlined the violent events in several towns and cities in northern England in 2001 and the policy rethink that this provoked. The resulting policy priority of community cohesion had very clear things to say about the need to strengthen common identities and interests across different ethnic and faith communities, and the importance of cross-community contact work to build it. Implicit within this new policy approach was a critique of the previous phase of multiculturalist policy operation, which had overtly focused on the needs and position of each separate ethnic community. Those policies developed in the wake of the watershed 1981 riots and the consequent analysis of structural racial discrimination, and saw an emphasis on support and funding for facilities and structures within specific ethnic communities. The hope there was that strong organisations and channels of communication within specific ethnic communities would both counter ethnic isolation and discrimination, and provide safety valves for future tensions. Such approaches indeed made a contribution to significant advances in racial equality,<sup>2</sup> but they also had a clear downside that was exposed by the 2001 disturbances: the policy focus on ethnic-specific needs and concerns had cemented physical and cultural ethnic segregation and fatally weakened cross-ethnic dialogue and contact. The post-2001 rethink now saw such approaches not only as unhelpful but also as part of the problem in that they both promoted separate and exclusive identities within each community and provoked prejudiced envy whenever another community apparently received government focus or support. Chapter 2 outlined research evidence on how such community cohesion work was being successfully operationalised with young people in racially tense areas like Oldham, Greater Manchester,<sup>3</sup> but the *Prevent* programme outlined in Chapter 3 is in clear contradiction to such community cohesion assumptions, aims and approaches. The result has been tensions and disagreements over how *Prevent* relates to community cohesion ever since *Prevent* was launched in 2007. As a thoughtful investigation by the *Financial Times* into *Prevent* in 2010 put it, ‘The relationship between “community cohesion” and preventing terrorism is the sore heart of *Prevent*.’<sup>4</sup>

Alongside the post-2001 focus on community cohesion came a clear government presumption that funding for specific ethnic communities and for ethnic-specific agencies and facilities can now only be justified if tangible community cohesion benefits are identified.<sup>5</sup> The partial acceptance of this analysis can be seen within the *Prevent* agenda, with its priority focus on Muslim youth, women and new religious leadership outlined in Chapter 3, rather than traditional ‘community leaders’. There also appears to be an acknowledgement that past policies involved public support for ethnic-specific organisations with questionable political positions, with the *Prevent* commitment to ‘fundamentally rebalance our engagement towards those organisations that uphold shared values and reject and condemn violent extremism’.<sup>6</sup>

However, in the light of this move to community cohesion, the Muslim-specific focus of the overall *Prevent* agenda and funded activity can only be seen as a self-defeating contradiction. The evidence from local authority *Prevent* programmes to date is overwhelmingly of work exclusively with groups of Muslim youth, as discussed above. Given the demographic profile of the terrorist plots outlined above, the need for such a Muslim-focused approach may seem obvious, and some Muslims have defended the monocultural focus of *Prevent* on that basis. For instance, Hanif Qadir, an ex-Islamist radical who now runs a de-radicalisation project in east London, comments that ‘we have to accept that we’ve got a problem, and accepting *Prevent* is accepting that we’ve got a problem’.<sup>7</sup> Some Muslim-only *Prevent* provision may well continue to be needed for young people actively exploring the meaning and implications of Islamic faith identity, but the post-2001 community cohesion analysis suggests that ethnic segregation is actually the context for this growth in violent Islamist ideologies, a growth arguably taking place well before post-2001 developments in British foreign policy. Here, the profound physical, cultural and political ethnic segregation caused by racial discrimination, and cemented by policy concerns with specific ethnic ‘needs’, has created inward-looking mentalities within some Muslim communities, just as it has in some ‘socially excluded’ white communities, and a strengthening of essentialised ethnic and religious identities that has enabled minorities within those communities to move towards extremism. The government describes Islamist violent extremism as a threat to cohesion, but arguably this extremism is an outcome of the lack of cohesion. Such an analysis is equally relevant to the white, working-class communities, who are identifying with the BNP and other far-right groups such as the EDL. Here, the structural economic ‘social exclusion’ those white communities share with many Muslim Pakistani/Bangladeshi communities is further fuelling this growth in ethnic-specific and defensive ‘identities’.<sup>8</sup>

In addition, analysis of the 2001 disturbances clearly identified that competition over ethnicity-based government regeneration funding, and white resentment over the (incorrect) perception that Asian communities unfairly benefitted from that funding, was a key part of the racial tension preceding the disturbances.<sup>9</sup> This drove government’s post-2001 determination to avoid ethnic-specific funding and regeneration schemes; yet *Prevent* appears to be exactly that – a Muslim-specific funding stream that has real potential to further fuel white, working-class feelings of ‘unfairness’, whilst leaving some Muslim young people feeling that they have been ‘targeted’ using broad and negative generalisations about their communities.

The logical conclusion of the analysis above is that the response to extremist Islamist ideologies is *not* more work with groups of Muslim young people but instead programmes of integrated cohesion activity that move further and faster in altering the perceptions of young people and adults of all ethnic and religious backgrounds by bringing them together for shared programmes of activity

focused on regeneration and community development, fun, common experiences and on shared concerns. Such programmes, if planned and implemented creatively, have much more potential to grow a meaningful and shared national 'identity' than any speeches by politicians. Good examples of such work have existed within *Prevent* to date, such as the UK Youth Parliament's 'Project Safe Space' discussed in Chapter 3, but such cohesion-based work has been a very small minority of the *Prevent*-funded work so far. Early *Prevent* guidance to local authorities from the DCLG explicitly said that *Prevent* is *not* the same as a wider concern for community cohesion, but local authorities in key areas like West Yorkshire made clear from the outset that they struggled to see the distinction between the two policy areas.<sup>10</sup>

The downside of ethnic-specific funding and its role in the 2001 northern disturbances outlined above led to an emphasis, reinforced by the Commission on Cohesion and Integration's 2007 recommendations, that policy and funding should work across ethnic groups, so building shared identities. The design and implementation of *Prevent* has been in clear contradiction to that approach and has had the predictable results of creating suspicion, competitive claims and 'virulent envy'<sup>11</sup> from other ethnic minority faith groups envious of the very considerable government support for Muslim faith organisations and infrastructure, whilst vehemently denying that their faiths have any problems with 'extremism'. For instance, Dr Indarjit Singh of the Network of Sikh organisations commented in oral evidence testimony to the CLG Select Committee Inquiry in relation to Muslim communities that 'they have been getting additional funding for all sorts of projects and they therefore see themselves in a sort of favoured status as a result of radicalisation'.<sup>12</sup>

A more worrying envy comparison has come from certain white communities, particularly those white, working-class communities who have been marginalised by post-industrial restructuring and the dominant neoliberal political responses to it.<sup>13</sup> A 'white backlash' against the implementation of some anti-racist/equal opportunities policy measures and the fact that such perceptions of ethnic unfairness contributed to urban unrest had already been identified, and community cohesion was meant to offer a holistic solution. However, it is far from clear how much that new vision has been accepted by government and operationalised, judging by the monocultural focus of *Prevent*. The result has been two-way envy and resentment, with Muslim communities asking why 'extremism', including its violent political form of far-right activists discussed below, was not being addressed in some white communities, whilst non-Muslims have questioned why such significant public resources were being directed towards often bland and generalised youth and community development activities for Muslims only. The growing political strength of the BNP<sup>14</sup> did lead the Labour government to establish the Connecting Communities Fund,<sup>15</sup> aimed at certain white, working-class areas, in practice witnessing far-right-related political tensions, but described by

DCLG as being ‘communities under pressure’. However, despite the impression created, this fund was *not* part of *Prevent* because far-right terrorism is not viewed as international in nature and so did not fall within the CONTEST remit that directs *Prevent*, and had modest resources attached to it. Connecting Communities was only operational for a short time in 2009/10 before Labour’s defeat in the May 2010 General Election brought it to a halt. In that short lifespan, though, Connecting Communities received praise from local authority practitioners and the CLG Select Committee Inquiry for actively encouraging cohesion-based approaches within funded work and for targeting areas on an intelligence and ‘risk’ basis rather than on crude demographics. However, that risk-based approach to the targeting of funding, which was subsequently adopted by the coalition government for *Prevent* funding from 2011, has its own risks, as then DCLG minister John Denham highlighted in giving evidence to the Select Committee Inquiry: ‘risk-based funding clearly has a problem in that you are indicating somebody’s assessment of risk and that has both a presentational and practical problem.’<sup>16</sup>

This policy expansion to white, working-class areas was accompanied by explicit guidance by DCLG minister John Denham: ‘cross-community activities could form a legitimate part of *Prevent* activities’ and the promise of money to support it.<sup>17</sup> Both these initiatives went some way to answer the criticisms of *Prevent* outlined above, and Denham also used a speech in December 2009 to *Prevent* practitioners from across the country to explicitly refute the allegations of *Prevent* as surveillance of Muslim communities or as an attempt to change the values and leadership of Muslim communities. However, the amendments to the Muslim-only focus of *Prevent* were minor at best, and the interpretation of purpose by Denham suggested more questions than answers. For Denham, *Prevent* ‘is a crime prevention programme’, and that a distinction from cohesion needs to be maintained:

Community Cohesion – building a strong society with shared values and a strong sense of shared identity – is a broader and more ambitious aim, involving every part of every community equally, not just the Muslim communities. *Prevent* needs to remain focussed on preventing crime.<sup>18</sup>

Whilst addressing discussions around surveillance and political interference, this crime prevention formulation is highly problematic for two reasons. First, assuming the ‘crime’ to be prevented is terrorist activity, why has *Prevent* activity worked with such large numbers of Muslim young people, yet focused so little on political, social and individual/psychological factors likely to make at least some young Muslims at risk of being involved in violent extremism? The evaluation evidence available suggests that engagement with such issues has been studiously avoided in practice for a number of reasons, leaving much *Prevent* activity via local authorities and community groups as bland and generalised youth activities for Muslims only.<sup>19</sup> Crime prevention

youth activities, such as Youth Inclusion Projects managed by local YOTs, have worked with smaller numbers of carefully targeted young people, often referred by relevant agencies. The ‘Channel’ programme, which is discussed more fully in Chapter 6, would seem to fit the ‘crime prevention’ understanding reasonably well, but the broader *Prevent* activity to date simply doesn’t fit any meaningful understanding of that concept. Second, it avoids discussion of how the monocultural approach of *Prevent* discussed above may actually be reinforcing the likelihood of some young Muslims being attracted to violent extremism. The community cohesion analysis of ethnic relations in Britain discussed in Chapter 2 was precisely that ‘parallel lives’ had encouraged tensions between communities, and separate, oppositional identities. This reality has been confirmed by more recent research among young people in Oldham and Rochdale, Greater Manchester, with significant numbers of white and Muslim young men having prejudiced and antagonistic attitudes towards ‘others’.<sup>20</sup> Denham focused on how building resilience against extremism among Muslim communities was a key aim of this ‘crime prevention’ *Prevent* policy, but arguably you cannot build resilience against intolerance, racism and hatred of other ways of life without individuals and their communities having the confidence, skills and links, the ‘bridging social capital’,<sup>21</sup> or cross-community links, that comes from meaningful and ongoing cross-ethnic contact. Indeed, Denham himself said, as the responsible Home Office minister, in the government’s response to the 2001 urban disturbances that the areas of the country *not* experiencing racial tensions were those who had ‘succeeded in uniting diverse groups through a shared sense of belonging to, and pride in, a common civic identity’.<sup>22</sup> The government’s consistent defence of why a *Prevent* policy separate to community cohesion, and focused solely on Muslim communities, is important and needed is that terrorists can emerge from cohesive communities, with the ACPO supporting this because of ‘the fact that the four suicide bombers in 2005 were nurtured in cohesive communities’.<sup>23</sup> However, as Chapter 1 discussed in more detail, this is simply not true – three of the bombers grew up in the highly ethnically segregated and racially tense Leeds suburb of Beeston, an area which fits the theory of ‘parallel lives’. From that perspective, attractions to violent extremism, whether radical Islamist or racist white extremism, are likely to be stronger in culturally, if not physically, isolated and monocultural communities where ethnic segregation and singular identities are the norm; yet *Prevent* has done exactly that, work with Muslims only, thereby giving the message that their Muslim faith is the only form of identity and experience that is of importance.

Whilst highly contested,<sup>24</sup> there is clear evidence that community cohesion has been understood and supported by public sector practitioners.<sup>25</sup> Research within local authorities in West Yorkshire has also confirmed considerable post-2001 progress on community cohesion and strong support for it from both elected local authority members and officers.<sup>26</sup> This meant that the

explicitly monocultural focus of *Prevent* was immediately identified, at ground level, as problematically at odds with community cohesion. More worryingly, evidence suggests that the very significant and urgent pressure from national government from 2007 onwards on local government to operationalise *Prevent* work and structures to support it has inevitably sidelined the ongoing process of embedding community cohesion understandings and practice within local authority operations as well as muddying the waters as to how *Prevent* and cohesion related to each other. Government was adamant that *Prevent* ‘is not the same as a wider concern for community cohesion’<sup>27</sup> but has consistently struggled to clarify this distinction.

### Clumsy ‘social engineering’

Whilst the terrorist bombings and other plots outlined in Chapter 1 are clearly serious, they have involved very small numbers of individuals. This was apparently acknowledged by government in introducing *Prevent*: ‘There has always been a tiny minority who oppose tolerance and diversity’,<sup>28</sup> but the same document baldly stated that ‘the key measure of success will be demonstrable changes in attitudes among Muslims’.<sup>29</sup> This impression that government was concerned with Muslim communities in general was confirmed by the broad-brush targeting of *Prevent* funding at all significant Muslim communities even though there is no evidence from plots to date that terrorists are more likely to emerge from ‘dense’ Muslim communities.<sup>30</sup> Whilst a number of DCLG *Prevent* documents talk about extremism in other communities, critics highlighted the following:

We have been unable, however, to document any practical Prevent work in the community that is not directed in some way at Muslim communities, and we have been unable to find any examples of work that focuses substantially on far-right extremism.<sup>31</sup>

This focus on Muslims per se is also highlighted by the large-scale engagement with Muslim young people and the clear emphasis of Muslim community capacity building of civic infrastructure locally and nationally,<sup>32</sup> as discussed in Chapter 3, such as enhanced training and support for mosque schools. The nature of this *Prevent* engagement with Muslim communities has proved controversial. Chapter 3 outlined how *Prevent* emerged as an agenda concerned with radicalisation and issues of ‘values’ and community organisation that might be contributing to it. In this way, *Prevent* has offered Muslim community organisations funding for capacity building through an explicitly anti-terrorism agenda. The labelling of an entire community, or large sections of it, as susceptible to terrorist involvement that is arguably inherent in this approach is exacerbated by the way government has gone about this. Birt (2009) identifies a long-running tension in government’s approach between



‘means-based’ and ‘values-based’ strategies, with the pragmatism of the ‘means-based’ approach being in tension with, and arguably sidelined by, an inherently judgemental and interventionist ‘values-based’ approach that has apparently been prioritised under the coalition government. That ‘values-based’ approach sees violent extremism as inextricably linked to problematic values, attitudes and oppositional identifications within wider British Muslim communities. The potentially counterproductive dangers of such a ‘values-based’ approach that confronts significant sections of British Muslim communities over their political and religious ‘values’ was highlighted by Sir David Omand in his evidence to the APPGHS in 2010: ‘tackling head-on through Government resource ... what you might call the Islamic world view or political Islam may be a very stupid thing to do.’<sup>33</sup> Omand went on to cite the increasingly draconian French approach to citizenship and adherence by Muslims to it, such as in the 2011 ban on wearing the burqa in public, as evidence of how dangerous a ‘values-based’ approach can be and suggested that states following such an approach may be biting off more than they can chew.

The former, ‘means-based’ approach sees Islamist terrorism in the United Kingdom as largely a sociopolitical phenomenon and so focuses on the personal and political factors attracting some young Muslim men to radicalisation, and engages with groups and individuals who can work constructively with such young men. This approach is favoured by professional practitioners on the ground being asked to operationalise *Prevent*, including the Metropolitan Police’s controversial former Muslim Contact Unit (MCU), which worked constructively with Islamist groups who dislike British society but who vehemently oppose violence,<sup>34</sup> an approach supported by strong empirical evidence,<sup>35</sup> but which was disbanded under political and media pressure. Much of the *Prevent* funding to local authorities via DCLG prior to the *Prevent* review of 2011 was in practice utilised in a ‘means-based’ manner, with local authorities taking varied approaches to use of the funding. Some authorities distributed all of the funding to local Muslim community organisations, with some even including those community groups in the grant decision-making process. Chapter 3 highlighted the tensions inherent in the creation of *Prevent*, and the ‘values’ stance taken publicly by Labour ministers, such as cutting ties with the MCB, was in practice balanced by the ‘means-based’ approach of allocating *Prevent* funding to local authorities without strictly ring-fencing the cash or second-guessing local authorities on who should be funded. Indeed, a 2011 assessment of the British *Prevent* approach to date compiled for an American audience by Professor Peter Neumann of King’s College London suggested that ‘British policymakers never quite decided if *Prevent* was about cognitive or violent extremism’.<sup>36</sup>

However, the ‘values-based’ approach has arguably dominated how past and present governments have actually viewed *Prevent*, the way they have shaped it nationally, and certainly how they have publicly talked about it.

The approach taken by the Conservative-Liberal Democratic coalition in June 2011, following the *Prevent* review, and discussed in Chapter 3, clearly represents a ramping up of this ‘values-based’ approach. In this way, since 2007, *Prevent* has arguably given the impression that government is overtly intervening to shape religious practice and to promote new types of community leadership within Muslim communities. This ‘values-based’ understanding sees a problem with the way Islam itself is being understood and practised by many second- and third-generation Muslims, leading to a need to promote and develop a more moderate and progressive British Islam. Whilst President Obama has initiated a move in the United States towards a more pragmatic ‘means-based’ approach, the British government has gone the other way, at least at the level of public rhetoric, since the 2006 airliners plot towards the ‘values-based’ approach through *Prevent*, an approach confirmed by successive refinements: ‘As part of CONTEST 2, the revised *Prevent* strategy reflects this shift in emphasis and works out its rationale in greater detail.’<sup>37</sup> One approach has been to fund new organisations, promoting them as the voice of modern and moderate British Islam. This approach saw the Quilliam Foundation (2009), headed by ex-Islamist radical Ed Husain, receive over £1 million, the Sufi Muslim Council over £200,000 and the Radical Middle Way almost £400,000 by 2009/10 from *Prevent*.<sup>38</sup> This has been supported by explicit guidance to local authorities and others receiving *Prevent* funding to prioritise work with Muslim women and young people as under-represented voices and experiences within Muslim communities.<sup>39</sup> Together, this can be seen as an attempt by government to engineer different types of leadership and representation from Muslim communities, with the assumption that this will lead to more progressive attitudes, values and behaviour. This has been supported by withdrawal of funding and engagement with national umbrella Muslim organisations, such as the MCB, not seen as taking a sufficiently robust enough position against Islamist terrorism at home or abroad. Ironically, the MCB’s formation and development in the 1990s was encouraged by both Conservative and Labour governments as a clear national voice for ‘moderate’ Muslims, even though the MCB was always led by Islamist activists whose overtly political perspectives were at odds with the vast majority of practising British Muslims.<sup>40</sup>

The MCB had considerable success in lobbying for state support for Muslim faith schools and more policy focus on religious affiliation, such as a question on faith in the 2001 Census, but its relationship with government came under increasing strain as the ‘values-based’ approach became predominant, with contact cut over the pro-Hamas views of an MCB leader. This recent attempt by national government through *Prevent* to create a new generation and type of ‘community leaders’ can be seen as a parallel of policy approaches to ethnic minority communities in the wake of serious urban disturbances in the early 1980s,<sup>41</sup> and has clearly provoked resentment from more established

Muslim community groups. The dangers of such a ‘values-based’ approach were highlighted by the CLG Select Committee Inquiry, which commented that the need ‘to debate ideas from a range of perspectives and not drive the more “radical voices underground was a concern in much of the evidence we received”’.<sup>42</sup> For that reason, the Select Committee stressed the importance of the ‘violent extremism’ formulation at the heart of *Prevent* in emphasising that government’s concern was in terrorism, *not* religious or political beliefs.

However, Chapter 3 highlighted how the June 2011 review of the *Prevent* strategy by the coalition government flatly ignored that cautionary advice in deciding to focus on ‘extremism’ generally within *Prevent*. Such a hardening of the ‘values-based’ approach was indicated in February 2011, just a week after Cameron’s Munich speech, in a *Daily Telegraph* story headlined ‘Counter-Terrorism Projects Worth 1.2 m Face Axe as Part of End to Multiculturalism’. The article highlighted the case of the STREET (Strategy To Reach, Empower and Educate Teenagers) project, which was associated with Brixton Mosque in south London and which had received more than £500,000 in *Prevent* funding from government since 2007. According to *The Telegraph*, ‘the project will have its money withdrawn this year in the first step towards switching funding away from strains of Islam with which government disagrees.’<sup>43</sup> The project had been focusing on African-Caribbean converts, Somali youth and Algerian-origin exiles, all viewed by the Security Services as high-risk categories for attraction to violent extremism, and one experienced counterterrorism analyst who has studied the work of the STREET project carefully commented that ‘I didn’t get the sense that they were proposing caliphate or sharia law in the UK ... What is very clear from the discussions I had with members of STREET is “... this won’t be solved from Whitehall”’.<sup>44</sup> Brixton Mosque had become dominated by ‘takfiri’ Islamist extremists such as Abu Qatada and Abdullah el-Faisal, in the 1990s, and the mosque was attended by ‘shoe-bomber’ Richard Reid and Zacharias Moussaoui, the so-called ‘20th hijacker’, who was heavily implicated in the 9/11 planning. It has been described as one of the key ‘epicentres’ of violent Islamist extremism in Europe during that period.<sup>45</sup> Jonathan Githens-Mazer (2010) has carried out research there and the other main ‘epicentre’, Finsbury Park Mosque, and describes the battle for control of Brixton between violent jihadist and ‘Salafists’ with radical political and religious views but who were opposed to violence. One of the key roles of the Metropolitan Police’s Muslim Contact Unit, as outlined above, was to develop relationships of trust and dialogue with such Salafists and support their efforts to retake control of Brixton Mosque: ‘Abu Qatada and el-Faisal, along with many others, were actually repelled by the Brixton Salafi community, who deemed their messages of hate and violence anathema to their understanding of true Islamic practice.’<sup>46</sup> Projects subsequently initiated by Brixton Salafists, such as the STREET project, were supported by *Prevent* on the basis that the Salafists had radical views but were the most effective advocates against young Islamists being attracted

towards violence. This had involved providing youth activities, Islamic study classes and social responsibility and citizenship programmes, but had been on the radar of opposition politicians from at least 2009, when right-of-centre think-tank Policy Exchange highlighted the STREET project's Salafists roots in their report *Choosing Our Friends Wisely*.<sup>47</sup> That report claimed the effects of *Prevent* had been to 'empower reactionaries within Muslim communities and to marginalise genuine moderates', suggesting that such 'means-based' approaches within *Prevent* were actually helping to deepen the threat of violent Islamist extremism, not address it.

Ironically, the *Prevent* funding approach has sometimes resulted in working with exactly the sort of traditional Muslim community leaders, many of them MCB affiliates, that the 'values-based' approach has tried to move away from, as evidenced by the findings of the Tax Payer's Alliance investigation and the considerable *Prevent* support from local authorities in many areas for mosque schools and committees.<sup>48</sup> Indeed, the pioneering 'Peacemaker' project, which was working with young people in the Oldham area on community cohesion approaches before government adopted it as a priority, highlighted this issue in their evidence submission to the CLG Select Committee Inquiry. Peacemaker pointed out that because of its monocultural Muslim focus, and the reliance of many local authorities on established Muslim community groups to receive funding, *Prevent* funding was actually resulting in backward steps in relation to community leadership and dialogue by rewarding traditional, religious elements and leaders within Muslim communities, rather than working with those focused on racial equality issues.<sup>49</sup> This could be seen nationally in the growth of mosque-related funding as funding ceased for Racial Equality Councils in many areas. Ted Cante, the architect of the government's prioritisation of community cohesion, was scathing about the impact of much of this *Prevent* funding in his evidence to the Select Committee hearing: 'It creates the impression that the only thing that the government is interested in is their Muslimness.'<sup>50</sup> A report containing recommendations on how the United States should develop its counter-radicalisation policy approaches highlights that 'government should not give the impression that it depends on religious interlocutors to convey the message to Muslim communities'<sup>51</sup> and praises Dutch policy approaches that have worked through Dutch secular Muslims as role models of integration as well as through Islamic faith organisations.

At the local level, Muslim organisations have often felt that they are being treated as clients and service delivers, rather than strategic partners, either playing no role in delivery or having to compete with each other for funding and overtly 'sign up' to government positions against terrorism (which virtually everyone opposes) and 'extremism' (which no one can agree a definition of). The danger of this 'values-based' approach, and the fact that funding has been, and apparently will continue to be, contingent on its acceptance, is that it closes down the open debates and involvements needed to undermine the appeal of

violent extremism: ‘One effect of *Prevent* is to undermine exactly the kind of radical discussions of political issues that would need to occur if young people are to be won over and support for illegitimate political violence diminished.’<sup>52</sup> Here, in such a broad focus on Muslim communities as a whole, whilst prioritising the acceptance of certain ‘values’, *Prevent* has represented the worst of all worlds, approaching an entire faith community as being at risk of terrorist involvement, whilst ‘forcing’ particular political and doctrinal issues that have only limited meaning to most Muslims going about their ordinary, day-to-day lives. In fact, the ruling out under the *Prevent* ‘values-based’ approach of certain legitimately established Muslim organisations would seem to play into the hands of certain Islamist political groups, such as HUT, who demand that Muslims have nothing to do with any democratic, secular processes within wider society. For Birt (2009: 54), the fundamental difficulty of *Prevent* ‘is an over-emphasis upon counter-terrorism without engaging Muslims as citizens, rather than as an “at risk” set of communities’. The danger is that this tension will continue to grow under a re-energised, ‘values-based’ version of *Prevent*.

### **Learning from the experience of anti-racist education**

A further area of concern over this monocultural and increasingly ‘values-based’ *Prevent* agenda is its ability to achieve success on its own terms – that is, can the programme actually positively influence Muslim young people away from support for, or even involvement in, violent Islamist activity, through the variety of measures outlined in Chapter 3? I would suggest that there are considerable grounds for pessimism here, as the programme is currently designed, with some of the evidence in support of this assertion coming from previous attempts to educationally influence racist white young people potentially attracted to racial violence and far-right political involvements as well as from the *Prevent* programme to date.

An additional facet of the ‘political multiculturalism’ or equal opportunities approaches increasingly dominant post-1981 was anti-racist educational approaches operationalised in schools, colleges and youth work settings and largely aimed at white young people viewed as part of the dominant white majority. Whilst well-intentioned, and sometimes successful with young people of particular social backgrounds, these anti-racist educational approaches involved inherent problems and unintended consequences that should act as salutary warnings for those designing community-based *Prevent* programmes. An immediate problem is the way young people from disadvantaged backgrounds understand and interpret any educational agenda designed and enforced by those in power and concerned with changing behaviour, whether it is delivered in schools, through youth offending programmes or in the community. Anti-racist rules and programmes introduced by schools from the 1980s onwards came up

against this problem, with white, working-class pupils often rejecting these new anti-racist norms as part of their wider rejection of compulsory schooling and societal norms that felt irrelevant to their lives and experiences. The extension of the *Prevent* programme from 2008 onwards to youth work, YOTs, schools and the police has risked a similar rejection by Muslim-origin young people selected for involvement, particularly if implementation is as ‘clumsy’ as anti-racism implementation sometimes was. The most graphic example of this was the racist murder in Manchester of a young Bangladeshi man by a fellow pupil in 1986, with the independent inquiry identifying the clumsy implementation of anti-racist policies as having strongly contributed to the context of the murder.<sup>53</sup>

Central to the rejection by many white, working-class young people of ‘anti-racism’, as it was sometimes implemented educationally on the ground in schools and youth projects, was the perception of some young people that these anti-racist norms were explicitly critical of the assumptions, attitudes and cultures of white, working-class communities by ‘outsiders’, including middle-class white people. Here, white, working-class communities were often implicitly portrayed as racist and ignorant, with cultures weaker and inferior to the ethnic minority religions and cultures ‘celebrated’ by multiculturalist and anti-racist policies. This led to feelings of ‘unfairness’ among some white, working-class young people, fuelled by the perception that their attitudes and behaviour were judged more harshly than similar behaviour by other ethnic communities. Some of the strongest evidence of such a ‘white backlash’ has come from research carried out in Greenwich, south-east London. This research was commissioned by the Education and Youth Service departments of Greenwich Council in the wake of the racist murders of Stephen Lawrence and two other ethnic minority young men in the early 1990s, and in recognition of the fact that previous approaches to encourage anti-racist attitudes and behaviour among white young people in the area had failed.<sup>54</sup> The clear lesson from this research, that anti-racist projects had to be much less judgmental and engage with young people on a basis of respect and desire for honest dialogue, rather than one-way proselytising, was taken on board by other anti-racist youth initiatives.<sup>55</sup>

Such a clear, monocultural focus within *Prevent* on Muslim communities, and the associated lack of focus on racist extremism within white communities, could well have the unintended consequence of hardening a defensive and antagonistic Muslim identity among those involved in response to a perception that their whole identity and community lifestyle is being implicitly criticised and scrutinised, whilst the faults of others are ignored. Chapter 2 offered primary research evidence from Muslim young people in Oldham and Rochdale that is in line with other academic research, which suggested both strong Islamic faith identification among young British Muslims and an antagonism towards non-Muslim ‘others’ by a minority of those young Muslims. Arguably, post-9/11 popular media coverage has already had the effect of hardening such ‘defensive’ Muslim identities, and *Prevent* activity could further exacerbate

this trend. Associated with the ‘white backlash’ by some white, working-class young people against anti-racism was the perception that they were viewed as ‘all racist’, even though many vehemently denied that their *motivations* during interracial conflicts were actually racial.

A concern with the *Prevent* agenda would be that at least some of the practitioners involved in its delivery at a local level carried problematic assumptions about the attitudes of Muslim young men, fuelled by some media coverage and popular prejudices concerning religiously observant young men with beards. This leads to a focus on those responsible for implementing the *Prevent* educational agenda, such as youth workers, YOT workers and teachers. There is clear evidence from previous research among youth workers trying to implement anti-racist work with white young people in West Yorkshire that such professionals lacked confidence and felt underprepared when attempting to implement such contested policies. These feelings were based on the perception that they were implementing policies and rules around highly sensitive issues that they didn’t really understand and certainly didn’t feel confident to debate and explore with young people and communities who often had strong and forthright opinions on those issues. These perceptions by professionals tended to lead either to total avoidance of the issues or of a rigid, ‘party line’ implementation in tension with their professional training as educators, which often fuelled the negative reaction from young people discussed above.<sup>56</sup>

Similar hesitation and avoidance of controversial issues was found among local authority staff operationalising the initial ‘Pathfinder’ phase of *Prevent* in one part of West Yorkshire.<sup>57</sup> Given that any educational process hoping to make genuine progress on the *Prevent* agenda in relation to ideologies of violent Islamist extremism and how they can be countered would inevitably lead to detailed discussion of Islamic teachings and doctrine, Muslim identity and highly emotive foreign policy issues around Iraq, Afghanistan and Palestine, it is likely that the large-scale expansion of the *Prevent* programme underway since 2008 has led to one or both of these responses of ‘avoidance’ or hard-line implementation. Initial evidence suggests that ‘avoidance’ has largely been the professional response in the work funded by DCLG between 2007 and 2011, with the *Prevent* educational work focusing on Muslim young people, but explicitly *not* engaging with why some Muslim young people are actually attracted to violent Islamist ideologies, or with the broader political issues that fuel Islamist anger. In an in-depth investigation into the operationalisation of *Prevent*, the *Financial Times* commented that ‘a failure to talk about violent extremism is a striking characteristic of many *Prevent* projects’.<sup>58</sup>

Much of the activity to date in the name of *Prevent* has been good diversionary youth and community work that has provided positive and enjoyable experiential activities for young Muslims. More, not less, of such positive activities are needed for *all* young people, and especially for those in

socially excluded communities with few leisure options, but such activity to date has largely avoided explicit focus on the key concerns driving the *Prevent* agenda – the ‘sharp end’ of politics and ‘extremist’ ideologies has not been discussed in most cases, as then DCLG minister Hazel Blears acknowledged in December 2008.<sup>59</sup> It is clear that a significant number of Muslim young people, especially those aged 15 years and older, *do* want to debate and explore Muslim identity, extremism and Islam’s treatment in the media and in wider geopolitics. This interest drove the growth in Muslim students’ societies on campuses and in Islamist groups like HUT from the early 1990s onwards, so clarifying that enhanced ‘Muslim’ identification among young people predates foreign policy controversies such as Iraq.<sup>60</sup> In saying this, the book certainly does not intend to condemn ground-level professionals doing sterling work with disadvantaged young people but simply to highlight the large gap between the stated aims and focus of the *Prevent* agenda and the reality of much of its implementation. This is in contrast to the excellent work being done with young people of all ethnic backgrounds around democratic and political participation through initiatives such as the ‘Youth Parliament’ scheme that sees young people elect local representatives who meet to debate and investigate issues of importance to young people.<sup>61</sup>

Ironically, given the community cohesion concern over single ethnic group funding, some progressive, community-based Muslim organisations have been explicitly discussing political issues and the associated attraction of Islamist ideologies with young people, and these organisations are most likely to be aware of young people at risk of ‘radicalisation’. One such example is the Hamara Centre in Beeston, south Leeds. The ringleader of the 7/7 bombers, Mohammad Sidique Khan, was a part-time youth worker within one of Hamara’s projects and may well have developed the plot with two other local men whilst working there. Hamara projects have since been in the forefront of developing a meaningful *Prevent* agenda, with Muslim youth activities that enable discussion of extremism within a wider context of democratic political involvement, community cohesion, direct contact with other ethnic/religious groups and analysis of Muslim identity within wider British society.<sup>62</sup> Such activity suggests that Muslim young people are able and willing to clearly discuss ‘violent extremism’ and its underlying political discourse if professionals are confident and ready to undertake such work within an explicit context of community cohesion and citizenship activity. To date, however, too much *Prevent* funding has been retained by local authorities, with little reaching Muslim-led community/third sector organisations in some areas. This limited involvement of the community sector may well be a result of the rapid policy development and operationalisation and the inevitable ‘playing safe’ of funding decisions scrutinised by Police/Security Services,<sup>63</sup> rather than a community cohesion-inspired reluctance to fund single ethnicity organisations, but it has limited the ability of established Muslim community groups to lead, and be



seen to lead by the wider community, on the crucial issue of tackling support for, and ideologies of, violent Islamist extremism.

### Disinterest in far-right extremism

The above analysis makes the lack of focus on other types of politically motivated violent extremism within the *Prevent* agenda even harder to justify, with the government's 'it's not international in nature, so it can't fall within CONTEST, so it can't be part of *Prevent*' formulation appearing to be both spurious and a misrepresentation of what has been sometimes been happening on the ground. This is not only illustrated by the terrible events in Norway in July 2011, as discussed in Chapter 3, but also by any serious analysis of the clear links between UK far-right political organisations and acts of violent extremism over the past 30 years.

Prior to the 7/7 attacks, the most serious terrorist attacks on London in recent times had come in April 1999 from the 'nail bomber' David Copeland, a white Supremacist. Copeland carried out three bombings in 13 days. The most serious attack on the Admiral Duncan pub, a well-known gay venue in the Soho area, killed three people, one of whom was a pregnant woman, and injured over 100 people, many seriously. His other, largely unsuccessful, targets were the multiracial areas of Brick Lane and Brixton. Copeland had joined the BNP and in 1997 attended meetings in his home area of Barking, East London in the company of party official Tony Lecomber. Lecomber himself had been jailed for 3 years in 1985 on explosives charges after attempting to carry out a nail bomb attack on the headquarters of a left-wing group. Police found hand grenades and detonators at Lecomber's home, but he still only got 3 years, with the judge at his trial remarkably saying, 'you are not a terrorist in the normal sense of the word'.<sup>64</sup> Copeland left the BNP because it was not 'hard line' enough for him, instead joining the National Socialist Movement (the political wing of Combat 18) in the hope that they would launch a paramilitary struggle.<sup>65</sup> He soon learnt to build his own explosive devices with advice from far-right websites and fellow far-right activists, with deadly impact; yet it subsequently emerged that neither Special Branch or MI5 had a file on him. He was jailed for life in 2000.<sup>66</sup>

More recent court cases have exposed other attempts by far-right activists to create and use explosive devices,<sup>67</sup> whilst the 'Red Watch' website is infamous for its encouragement of harassment against anti-racist campaigners. Underpinning the political and media response to these documented incidences of far-right violent extremism over several decades is the myth that right-wing terrorists are 'lone wolves', with the implicit suggestion that they are mentally unbalanced, rather than politically motivated, and have acted entirely alone. As Chapter 3 identified, the Labour government belatedly recognised

that they had neglected far-right extremism and launched the short-lived Connecting Communities initiative in parallel to *Prevent*. As part of that, then CLG minister John Denham commissioned Gerry Gable, editor of the long-established anti-fascist monitoring magazine *Searchlight*, to investigate the ‘lone wolf’ conception of far-right terrorism. In his foreword to the resulting report, Denham commented that ‘Gerry Gable’s report lays bare the myth that most far-right terrorism is the action of isolated individuals ... In fact, those involved in apparent one-person actions have in all cases had clear and often long-standing involvement with organised groups’.<sup>68</sup> This judgement was based on the report’s analysis of case studies of almost 40 individuals with far-right views convicted for terrorist or serious violence offences and makes clear that far-right political networks have been central to their beliefs and actions in every case.<sup>69</sup> This included father and son, Ian and Nicky Davidson, convicted in May 2010 for manufacturing bombs and the chemical agent ricin, who were in contact with around 300 Nazi sympathisers worldwide via the Internet.<sup>70</sup> For Denham, the evidence compiled by Gable clearly showed how the authorities have failed to effectively monitor far-right groups and their activists in order to spot those moving towards violent expressions of their racist and nationalist extremism, leading him to conclude that ‘the evidence in this report leads to the conclusion that far-right terrorism must be treated as seriously as Islamist terrorism’.<sup>71</sup>

This perspective that ‘lone wolf’ far-right terrorists actually emerge from, and are embedded within, far-right extremist networks is borne out by the case of Anders Breivik outlined in Chapter 3. Breivik had previously been active in the right-wing Norwegian ‘Progress’ party but didn’t see them as radical enough. Breivik’s manifesto, posted online shortly before he began the attacks, was titled ‘2083: A European Declaration of Independence’ and justified his imminent attack on socialist young people, because they were the next generation who would destroy Norway and Europe through their acceptance and promotion of ‘multiculturalism’. Breivik had been a regular contributor to extremist websites such as ‘the Gates of Vienna’, which focuses on the supposed threat to Europe, and ‘the myths that Muslims, supported by liberals, cultural relativists and Marxists, are out to Islamicise Europe and that there is a conspiracy to impose multiculturalism on the continent and destroy western civilisation’.<sup>72</sup> This Islamophobic perspective of a developing ‘Eurabia’ is shared and debated on a number of pan-European far-right websites, actively developing an ideology and paranoia that some commentators see as reminiscent of the ‘Jewish conspiracy’ central to the interwar fascists/national socialists,<sup>73</sup> and arguably amplified by ‘respectable’ right-of-centre political commentators.<sup>74</sup> What is clear is that Breivik had been in active communication for some time with far-right activists in a number of countries, including the United Kingdom. Those links include contact with EDL activists and possibly the EDL’s funder, Alan Lake.<sup>75</sup> Breivik had lauded EDL campaigns against the ‘Islamification of

Britain' and claimed to have 600 EDL supporters as 'friends' on Facebook.<sup>76</sup> One academic commentator suggests of both the EDL and the BNP that 'it is clear that both have a more sinister "back stage" politics'.<sup>77</sup> This emphasises the need for CONTEST and *Prevent* to focus not also on far-right violent extremism but also on the links between that far-right extremism and Islamist extremism. The EDL is arguably living proof of that, emerging as a response to Islamist extremists publicly protesting against British army units who had recently returned from Iraq marching through Luton. It has since become a national movement encompassing former far-right activists, football hooligans and people apparently expressing a racialised anger at profound economic social exclusion and marginalisation.<sup>78</sup> Here, 'the emergent academic literature is stressing that the relationship between the far-right and Islamophobia is crucial to understanding contemporary far-right extremism, yet the issue is not satisfactorily addressed by *Prevent*'.<sup>79</sup>

The links between legal right-wing political groups and violent extremism explored above expose the myth that far-right parties are now respectable and only concerned with electoral progress, but the comparative success at the ballot box for the BNP at the time that *Prevent* was initially being devised and implemented may explain the reluctance of government to provide free publicity for such groups by publicly linking them with 'violent extremism', as criticism in 2006 of the then employment minister MP Margaret Hodge for acknowledging the rise of the BNP in east London indicated.<sup>80</sup> As a result, right-wing extremism was invoked in the introductions to a number of the government's *Prevent* documents (including an incorrect reference to 'Mosley's brown shirts!'), but this appears to have been nothing more than a superficial nod towards even-handedness. Such apparent inconsistency, emphasised by Tony Blair's post-7/7 call to ban Islamist groups like HUT whilst the BNP continued to grow, has not been lost on Muslim young people.

### **Conclusion: *Some communities are suspect?***

That disinterest in right-wing extremism is just one facet of the counterproductively monocultural focus of *Prevent* activity to date. In focusing solely on British Muslims, and in a broad-brush way that has made entire communities feel that they are the objects of the policy, *Prevent* has worked in contradiction to the wider policy goals of cohesion and integration, and has failed to understand the key analysis that cohesion offers of how distinct ethnic identities can unhelpfully harden and become extreme for a minority in conditions of segregation and policy approaches that overemphasise difference. That would suggest that the 'hearts and minds' approaches of *Prevent* should see community cohesion not as a distinct but equally important policy strand, as the government has repeatedly insisted,

but as *the* key vehicle for tackling violent extremism in specific communities, especially through the involvement of young Muslims (and young working-class, white people) in both processes of ‘meaningful direct contact’ and, within that, in processes of democratic engagement and political participation. The dangerous logic of this monocultural *Prevent* approach has been seen in the clumsy social engineering that it has too often engaged in, attempting to ‘engineer’ different sorts of communal leadership and even forms of religious practice within Muslim communities. This approach also fails to learn the lessons of previous attempts to promote ‘anti-racism’ within white working-class communities, where such well-intentioned policies have often provoked a ‘backlash’ from young people who feel that their communities and cultures are being judged unfavourably on both an ethnic and class basis, so hardening the very ‘identity’ that policy hoped to soften. The danger here is that *Prevent* has exactly that defensive ‘hardening’ effect on many young Muslims, at the same time as provoking envy from other communities jealous of the resources being targeted on one community in a blatantly ethnic/faith basis. The failure to address other forms of ‘extremism’ in non-Muslim communities simply exacerbates this inherent problem of a monocultural *Prevent*. Local authorities and other agencies charged with actually implementing *Prevent* since 2007 have had to wrestle with these issues and tensions, and that experience is analysed further in Chapter 5.

## Confusion on the Ground?

### *Prevent* in operation

#### Introduction: Orders from above

In outlining the origins, design and development of the *Prevent* strategy, Chapter 3 highlighted a number of issues and tensions inherent in the approach taken to this ‘hearts and minds’ element of the CONTEST counterterrorism policy. These issues and tensions were apparent in the early days of *Prevent*, and remain alive today, despite significant modifications in the intervening years. Principal among those problematic features, from the perspective of this book, has been the stark contradiction to the overarching policy drive for community cohesion, integration and stronger common identities outlined in Chapter 2, of a *Prevent* policy that has been targeted in a monocultural fashion at Muslims as an undifferentiated, faith-based community understood through only that ‘Muslim’ identity. Chapter 4 analysed the highly negative results of such a misguided approach, suggesting that *Prevent* has inadvertently hardened that singular Muslim identity, both through the monocultural approach mediated via layers of religious, ‘community leaders’ and through the antagonism understandably provoked among many British Muslims at such a blatant focus on one ethnic community at the same time as highly questionable foreign policy interventions in Muslim countries and assaults on civil liberties at home.

As the post-2001 community cohesion analysis highlighted, such monocultural, ethnicity-based policy approaches also inevitably provoke envy and resentment from other ethnic and faith communities. The fact that *Prevent* was jointly operationalised by the security-focused Home Office and the community cohesion-focused DCLG until 2011 only exacerbated that basic tension between monocultural focus on a ‘suspect’ community and community cohesion, between security and surveillance on the one hand and community engagement and development on the other. Arguably, the ‘values-based’ government rhetoric around the need to confront Muslim ‘extremism’, rather than simply ‘violent extremism’, which accompanied the *Prevent* relaunch in June 2011, has only deepened that problematic focus on Muslims as a community and the associated tension between *Prevent* and community cohesion.

Chapter 3 also identified the top-down manner of *Prevent's* design and execution, with a rapid operationalisation on a demographic basis selected by national government and enforced through the use of government monitoring and evaluation procedures such as 'National Indicator 35' (NI 35) in relation to local authorities. That operationalisation of *Prevent*, principally through local authorities, but also via higher and further education institutions, prisons and YOTs, is the focus of this chapter. The role of the Police and Security Services in *Prevent*, and their centrality to the sustained allegation that *Prevent* has been little more than an elaborate surveillance and intelligence-gathering operation, is explored in more detail in Chapter 6, although this chapter inevitably starts to raise some of those important issues around the relationship between *Prevent* policing and democratically elected local authorities that the subsequent chapter will explore further. In addition, issues already highlighted around the relationship between Muslim communities and arms of the local and national state attempting to implement *Prevent* will be explored further here. In doing this, two important issues need to be borne in mind. The first is that too often generalisations about the state of ethnic relations and experience across Britain have been made on the basis of localised academic study, and that the varied and contingent nature of local ethnic relations needs to be remembered. Second, there is always a significant 'space' between policies identified and funded by national government, and how they are actually implemented on the ground. For instance, there is a significant gap between national political discourse around community cohesion, and how it has actually been understood and practised. The evidence discussed in Chapter 2 on that practice in areas such as Oldham suggests that community cohesion implementation has been both more complex and more progressive than academic analysis of the national policy documentation and discourse suggests. That fact argues for more nuanced understandings of how *Prevent* has actually played out in practice, and this chapter draws on the empirical evidence on *Prevent* practice available, some of it by the author and colleagues, to analyse the experience of *Prevent* in practice.

### Local authorities and *Prevent*

Despite the suggestion of Chapter 3 that *Prevent* had been some time in the planning by national government, the initial phase of 'Pathfinder' *Prevent* funding to 70 identified local authorities emerged rapidly, with little time for planning and preparation on behalf of the local authority elected members and officers involved. Husband and Alam (2011), in their thoughtful analysis of the interplay between community cohesion and *Prevent* work by the five West Yorkshire local authorities, talk of 'the indecent speed with which *Prevent*, and

specifically the Pathfinder initiative, were introduced'.<sup>1</sup> That was highlighted in my own evaluation of learning from the initial Pathfinder year of *Prevent* funding in Kirklees, one of those West Yorkshire authorities, with one of the key local authority officers highlighting how short a time span their chief executive was given to react by national government: 'it was pretty late on in the year – very close to the new financial year ... Basically, he said, "we'll need to pull something together very quickly, some kind of proposals, and we'll need to go to DCLG for them to have a look at and for them to approve"' (Local Authority Officer 1). The unrealistic timescale for this initial *Prevent* year ironically meant that many local authorities passed funding to precisely the older, mosque-based 'usual suspects' of traditional Muslim community leaders that the national *Prevent* strategy was keen to avoid, and who the local authorities often privately acknowledged as problematic in terms of moving forward with both the *Prevent* and cohesion agendas.

The initial reaction of local authorities to *Prevent* was largely negative, not only because of the short run-in time but also because they immediately saw it as problematic to the community cohesion agenda that they had already accepted and were attempting to operationalise within their range of services:

[There were] some very crude responses which actually we saw here as doing more damage than good. And therefore we were quite careful distancing the council and other local partners from the national approach to Preventing Violent Extremism ... it was overly focused on particularly young Muslims, which we saw as driving a lot of people deeper into themselves, away from their peers, into a more introverted position, which was damaging to the long-term interests of those individual and society as a whole. (Senior manager, Kirklees Metropolitan Council)<sup>2</sup>

Chapter 3 outlined national government's position that *Prevent* is of necessity distinct from wider community cohesion policy operations, but from the start the Association of West Yorkshire Authorities struggled to see the distinction. Nevertheless, both West Yorkshire-based evaluations of *Prevent* outlined above identified how local authorities got on with this new challenge, building on their existing work. The very significant pressure from national government to participate and adopt NI 35 meant that there was no practical alternative. NI 35, 'Building Communities Resilient to Violent Extremism', asked local authorities to focus and report progress on the following:

- 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; and
- effective oversight, delivery and evaluation of projects and actions.<sup>3</sup>

Whilst some local authorities chose not to adopt NI 35, all were required to report against it. Lowndes and Thorp (2010), in their study of how three different local authorities within one English region approached the initial 'Pathfinder' year of *Prevent*, highlight how one of the three authorities did not adopt NI 35 for 2008/09. They identify positive processes of consultation regionally over the content and focus of NI 35, but 'the final version of the indicator was Home Office-led, and therefore incorporated new elements as well as those discussed at the regional steering group'.<sup>4</sup> Leicester City Council, in its submission to the CLG Select Committee Inquiry, suggested that *Prevent* should also be measured against NI 12, 'sense of local belonging', which local authorities had primarily been using to measure their progress on community cohesion, but this was not accepted by government, and Lowndes and Thorp identify NI 35 as being used by national government from 2008/09 onwards to produce increasing conformity from local authorities who had shown local creativity in the initial 'Pathfinder' phase. This analysis is supported by Husband and Alam's study of another English region, with them concluding that 'our data shows an inability of central government to yield up this level of local autonomy'.<sup>5</sup> The decision by the coalition government in June 2011 to remove the local authority-focused DCLG from *Prevent* operation and have all future *Prevent* activity in the new 25 target areas sanctioned and monitored directly by the security-focused Home Office suggests that local autonomy over *Prevent* will reduce further.

### Local variations

Notwithstanding the national government pressure via NI 35 for involvement in and conformity around *Prevent*, there have nevertheless been significant variations in how local authorities have actually so far operationalised the programme and how they have actually allocated the *Prevent* funding coming from central government. Chapter 3 highlighted the information on local *Prevent* funding allocations revealed by Freedom of Information requests by campaigners as diverse as the left-leaning IRR and the right-of-centre TPA. Those requests put public pressure on some local authorities, with some, such as the London Borough of Newham, refusing to divulge the detail of their £1.3 million spending. In response to allegations from the TPA of secrecy, Newham, which is generally viewed as having a strong record on community cohesion, commented that 'just as we do not wish to favour single groups through public policy and services, as this can foster mistrust and extremism, we also believe that we need to focus on where extremist views exist, rather than stereotyping people from particular backgrounds'.<sup>6</sup>

Despite substantial initial misgivings around *Prevent*, such as those expressed above by Newham, local authorities have formally cooperated but



in practice have demonstrated a wide range of responses. A small minority, some of which have received very substantial funding, have been vociferous in their support for *Prevent*,<sup>7</sup> but a large number seem to have subverted the funding to a significant extent: ‘many statutory and community partners have been uncomfortable with direct counter-terrorism work and have sought to employ the funds for other ends.’<sup>8</sup> An example of this was Bradford, an authority determined that *Prevent* would not negatively impact on community cohesion, as a senior manager explained: ‘we have not even called our funding stream *Prevent*, we’ve called it around capacity building within communities. For both round one and two we’ve actually focused on giving the money to communities.’<sup>9</sup> The Regional Improvement and Effectiveness Partnership (RIEP) research on the local implementation of community cohesion and *Prevent* in West Yorkshire, carried out by the University of Huddersfield, concluded of Bradford that ‘*Prevent* is seen as a potentially dangerous and inflammatory initiative for the local authority and its partners, so that whilst structures are in place to identify and address issues around violent extremism, other aspects of the *Prevent* agenda have been absorbed into the wider community cohesion one’.<sup>10</sup>

With such *Prevent* allocations made by ‘Local Strategic Partnerships’ that bring local authorities and other key public sector bodies together, local approaches have varied significantly. For instance, Dudley council in the West Midlands passed all of their £277,000 *Prevent* allocation directly to the local third sector ‘British Muslim Forum’ for them to commission activities,<sup>11</sup> with a similar approach taken in Bolton, Lancashire. Such approaches could be seen as the logical end point of the rationale for *Prevent* described in Chapter 3, whereby Muslim communities should join in partnership with the state and take positions of leadership and responsibility in addressing the threat of violent extremism, but the approach of Dudley and Bolton could also be seen as evidence of local authorities washing their hands of responsibility. A much larger number of local authorities have provided some funding for and work with local Muslim communities, funding that inevitably emphasises the ‘Muslimness’ of community groups, given the monocultural focus of *Prevent*.

The initial ‘Pathfinder’ year in Kirklees, West Yorkshire saw the funding largely utilised by the local authority itself, and only a small number of external organisations involved, an inevitable product of the short time frame for implementation. Local Muslim community groups *did* want to be involved, but this initially raised issues of capacity to deliver, especially if work was to be targeted at young people viewed as being ‘at risk’:

I think we just need to be careful ... because from experience we know there are people who could very effectively deliver on the agenda, but there will be others who are not ready yet – it’s how you build the capacity of those individuals and organisations to be involved in this. (Local Authority Officer 1)

Husband and Alam (2011) suggest that the CTU involvement in, and scrutiny of, local *Prevent* funding bids via local authorities has inevitably influenced those local authorities to play safe in terms of who and what they fund. An approach taken strongly in Kirklees has been one of funding and support by the local authority for capacity building within local Muslim communities. This included committee skills training for mosque committee members, and training and support for people running madrasahs, mosque schools for young people. This training has included child protection, health and safety and committee skills training, as well as how to introduce and use materials on citizenship within the madrasah programmes. That very considerable investment in local mosques and madrasahs was highlighted when some local Muslim community groups criticised the local authority for seemingly not passing on *Prevent* funding. That criticism was partially possible because of the downplaying of the title and source of the *Prevent* funding highlighted in Chapter 3: ‘very quickly we decided that we’d take the word *Prevent* out as quickly as possible because it gives out wrong messages’ (Local Authority Officer 2). The focus on citizenship within Kirklees madrasahs, utilising national citizenship material supported by *Prevent* funding, was mirrored by local *Prevent* work with young people in the community, which focused on ‘active citizenship’. Largely, but not exclusively, targeted at Muslim young people, this work used a variety of activities to engage young people, such as the production of DVDs and radio programmes, and a project on ‘slavery’. As with much of the *Prevent* activity supported by DCLG via local authorities to date, it is not immediately obvious how such work with young people addresses the specific goals of *Prevent*, but such activity builds relationships with young people who might otherwise be isolated and vulnerable within communities, and starts to build skills of democratic engagement and activity: ‘Through the Active Citizenship module, there’s things around looking at the media, how the media portrays this. While there was focus on the extremism side, there were also things about religion and ways of life’ (Local Government Officer 2).

Such work has also been targeted at young people viewed as being at risk of involvement in violent extremism, such as a large group of Muslim young men in one area of Kirklees whose racially based ‘turf war’ with white youth in the area had started to spiral towards more serious and organised levels of both violence and religious/racially based abuse and Internet-based propaganda:

Out of the group of 25 to 30, I think there’s the element of 2 or 3 who are hard core, the rest are like sheep ... we want to help all of them ... even the ones on the fringes who can end up going in the wrong directions. (Local *Prevent* police officer)

Lowndes and Thorp (2010) identify distinct approaches to *Prevent* by each of the three city-based local authorities they studied in one region of England,

so emphasising the importance of the local context and circumstances, and the possibility of constructive practice in the name of *Prevent* at ground level, with their evidence revealing ‘surprisingly creative outcomes, reflecting locally specific and highly dynamic “settlements” between the local state and Muslim communities’.<sup>12</sup> The theme highlighted above of capacity building and coordination within Muslim communities was a key focus here for City A, with the creation of a stronger local Muslim forum being an empowering, Muslim-led process that gave those Muslim communities an important role in the allocation of *Prevent* funds. In contrast, City B’s approach was distinctive within the region for being strongly led by the city council and embedded in a well-established ‘community cohesion’ narrative,<sup>13</sup> which Lowndes and Thorpe suggest enabled a gradual sanitisation of the *Prevent* label and encouraged strong Muslim commitment and involvement. That cohesion-based approach involved both work aimed at the identity and self-confidence of Muslim young people, and cross-community work that even involved activities that largely catered for non-Muslims. City C was ‘reluctant to highlight *Prevent* as a discrete policy area’,<sup>14</sup> and did not agree to adopt NI 35, but also had weak and underdeveloped community cohesion activity, so struggled to demonstrate clear progress. However, it did focus heavily on greater uptake by Muslim young people of youth activities offered by the city’s Youth Service, so creating a building block for the future of relationships and engagement.

### **Not all bad news?**

The empirical case study evidence summarised here from both West Yorkshire and the region studied by Lowndes and Thorp on the operationalisation of the early stages of *Prevent* suggests some caution is needed before *Prevent* is condemned. Both case studies identify the strengthening of civil society within Muslim communities through training and professionalisation, alongside the creation of new ‘governance spaces’ of representative organisations within Muslim communities. In their evidence to the CLG Select Committee, the local government think tank the New Local Government Network highlighted that ‘some local authorities are clear that *Prevent* has played a key role as a catalyst for enabling them to engage with communities with which they had no previous contact’,<sup>15</sup> something acknowledged also by both the CLG Select Committee and the June 2011 *Prevent* review. The reality of national funding being available, and the possibility, as highlighted by the case study evidence discussed above, of constructive work with that funding, meant that, in practice, both local authorities and Muslim community groups have largely engaged with *Prevent*. Husband and Alam (2011) identify how, although four of the five West Yorkshire local authorities initially refused to adopt NI 35 and so fully embrace *Prevent*, they all accepted the *Prevent* funding

through until 2011. Similarly, at a time when national government funding for community groups through other funding streams was starting to slow down, ‘participation in *Prevent*-related activity by Muslim organisations has thus to be seen in the context of the changing funding environment’.<sup>16</sup> Indeed, despite the positive connection between *Prevent* and community cohesion in City B reported by Lowndes and Thorp, some Muslim community groups felt that it was inappropriate to use *Prevent* money for wider cohesion activity: ‘This became a source of tension within the co-ordinating body: as one Muslim community representative put it: “hands off – this is Muslim money”’.<sup>17</sup> This local engagement with a source of funding, no matter how controversial, meant that the major revision to the focus of *Prevent* in June 2011, with funding now only targeted at 25 local authorities of communities deemed to be ‘at risk’, received a mixed response from two local authorities in the north of England who were no longer to receive *Prevent* funding:

Mixed views on *Prevent*. It’s obviously good news that we’re not viewed as a high risk area, but there is still work to be done and it would be helpful to have the additional funding to do it with. We’d have been surprised and concerned if we were in the top 25, so on balance I’d prefer to be lower risk with less money. (Local authority officer, Greater Manchester region, June 2011)

I think as an Authority we should be involved; we have done some excellent work in xxxxxx which we can build on. The work that we have done has contributed greatly in involving young people in positive activities and providing safe spaces for debate and discussion. (Local authority officer, Yorkshire and the Humber region, June 2011)<sup>18</sup>

### Not where we would have started

Such support for a local continuation of *Prevent* funding does not mean that local authorities nationally, or many Muslim community groups, have not continued to have profound doubts about *Prevent* and its lack of congruence with wider policy attempts to encourage greater cohesion and integration. The tensions over funding identified above illustrate the dangers of such a blatantly monocultural policy drive and funding stream. Evidence of a ‘white backlash’ against such *Prevent* funding was highlighted in Kirklees: ‘People have said, “why is it up to us to know more about Muslim and Islam, what about the opposite of that?” ... and we get that feeling a lot in the xxxxxx area, that’s where more conflict happens’ (Local Authority officer 2).

Husband and Alam (2011) report a very similar sentiment being expressed by another local authority manager in West Yorkshire: ‘From the white community there’s a resentment and a perception that resources and attention goes to the Muslim community at the expense of those white communities’.<sup>19</sup> For the New Local Government Network, the operations of *Prevent* and its impact,

as analysed in both Chapters 4 and 6, can undermine cohesion and give hope to those that oppose greater integration: ‘the *Prevent* agenda and community cohesion should support and foster one another. Many in local government fear that this is not currently the case.’<sup>20</sup> The CLG Select Committee Inquiry Report echoed such fears, not only calling for greater distinction between *Prevent* and cohesion activity, but for much greater resources and political support for cohesion-based approaches that undermine the appeal of violent extremism based on separate identities. The empirical research into the operationalisation of community cohesion and *Prevent* outlined here clearly shows real progress on the ‘embedding’ and mainstreaming of community cohesion across the functions of local authorities and the desire of local authority staff to work with, and encourage, more complex and intersectional understandings of identity which they see as reflecting reality,<sup>21</sup> but the inflexible monocultural focus of *Prevent* has been at odds with this.

In contrast, the *Prevent* review of June 2011 criticised the local authority operationalisation of *Prevent* precisely for approaches that ‘encouraged the convergence of *Prevent* and cohesion programmes’.<sup>22</sup> For past and present national government, ‘cohesion’ activity is not an effective tool against radicalisation and violent extremism, and ‘as a general rule, the two strategies and programmes must not be merged together’.<sup>23</sup> In fact, the empirical case study material quoted above, and the government’s own audit of local authority activities during the ‘Pathfinder’ phase nationally, has clearly shown that the vast majority of *Prevent* activity has *not* been ‘cohesion’, that is, activity which creates genuine cross-community dialogue and partnership, but rather monocultural Muslim youth activities and community capacity-building initiatives for Muslim community groups only. That is why I have previously suggested that *Prevent* has been ‘between two stools’,<sup>24</sup> being neither focused on anti-extremism political education with young Muslims nor meaningful community cohesion work that involves substantial cross-community contact. Here, some local authorities have attempted to use the ‘space’ of local operation to nudge *Prevent* activity towards genuine cohesion, but they have been constrained by central government control via NI 35 monitoring and regional Government Office officials, and by the regional counterterrorism policing infrastructure outlined in Chapter 6, which have all demanded an explicit Muslim focus and engagement with a counterterrorism agenda. That ‘security’ perspective was clearly outlined by a senior police officer in West Yorkshire:

There’s no two ways about it, it [*Prevent*] is part of a counter-terrorism strategy, it’s about hugely violent criminal offences. And that’s what *Prevent* is about and yes, it’s got something to do with cohesion, you can have that debate ... But actually it’s about violent extremism and that’s the most serious crime that this country can encounter which goes way and above community cohesion if that makes sense?<sup>25</sup>

Lowndes and Thorp (2010) identified a range of local authority responses to the relationship between *Prevent* and community cohesion, something mirrored in West Yorkshire: ‘in some authorities, the responsibility for managing *Prevent* and community cohesion was being effectively combined, both departmentally and operationally, while in others they remained distinct entities.’<sup>26</sup> Certainly, in Kirklees the original aim was to integrate *Prevent* with cohesion: ‘I think they need to be both done; I don’t think it can be just one or the other’ (Local Authority Officer 1), but later research by the author and University of Huddersfield colleagues into the operationalisation of cohesion and *Prevent* policies in Kirklees and Bradford by local authorities highlighted the problematic impact of *Prevent* on cohesion.<sup>27</sup> This research showed that whilst positive work was being done with communities in the names of both cohesion and *Prevent*, the strong pressure downwards from central government to engage with the *Prevent* agenda had had a clear and negative impact on community cohesion. This was not only about the negativity of *Prevent*’s monocultural focus, or its damaging impact on the status of the Muslim community, but rather how it had sidelined developing community cohesion debates and local structures in the rush to respond to the central government diktat over *Prevent*. The University of Huddersfield Regional Improvement and Effectiveness Partnership (RIEP) research found well-developed and constructive local *Prevent* structures, the so-called ‘Gold’, ‘Silver’ and ‘Bronze’ multiagency coordination groups:

The structures supporting Prevent are in place in Kirklees, including the Gold and Silver groups (Gold provides strategic direction and overview and has senior representation from all statutory stakeholders and Silver provides implementation), a Prevent Round Table and Reference Group, intelligence sharing mechanisms which enable a quick response to incidents, work with the Counter-Terrorism Unit, the Channel process, and the informal reference to NI 35.<sup>28</sup>

However, the research could find less evidence of clear cohesion structures and process, suggesting that *Prevent* has ‘crowded out’ the development of creative cohesion practice at a local level. This implication is supported by Husband and Alam’s research across the five West Yorkshire local authorities: ‘the data provides substantive support for the concerns that have been expressed elsewhere regarding the damaging impact of *Prevent* on community cohesion initiatives.’<sup>29</sup>

The national government pressure to avoid genuine cohesion activity under the name of *Prevent* has produced programmes of activities nationally that have neither been cross-ethnic cohesion work nor educational activity clearly focused on the risks of violent extremism. The latter failing has been because of the basic tensions first identified in Chapter 3 as to what *Prevent* both wants to achieve and is actually capable of achieving, alongside questions of the training, confidence and clarity of professional practitioners asked to implement *Prevent* work with young people and communities.

## Professionals in the spotlight?

A key issue here has been the skills and confidence of the practitioners on the ground actually charged with operationalising *Prevent* in their work with Muslim young people and their communities. Chapter 4 highlighted how previous attempts to promote anti-racist thinking and behaviour among white young people attracted towards racism and acts of racial violence often foundered in the past on the lack of confidence and clarity among teachers and youth workers as to what they were actually being asked to do. There is significant evidence that a similar process of professional hesitation and ‘avoidance’ has been underway within local authority *Prevent* activity and that this is a significant part of why *Prevent* activities have at times appeared bland and ‘safe’. This was highlighted in the ‘Pathfinder’ phase of activity in Kirklees, West Yorkshire: ‘The problem is we don’t have people who are experienced enough and who have understanding around this kind of agenda, that they [young people] can actually debate with confidently’ (Local Authority Officer 1).

Given that a genuine engagement with young people around the threat of violent extremism could well involve robust discussion around highly contentious political issues such as Israel/Palestine, British foreign policy and Islamic theological interpretation, all in a climate where the media and politicians are eager to seize on signs of ‘extremism’, such practitioner lack of confidence is highly understandable. The University of Huddersfield RIEP research into how Kirklees and Bradford local authorities had implemented cohesion and *Prevent* clearly identified that local authority staff, and staff in partner agencies, wanted more training, ‘safe spaces’ to discuss these difficult issues, on both *Prevent* and the equally complex issues of cohesion.<sup>30</sup> The need for training programmes that help practitioners feel clear and confident in taking on ‘hearts and minds’ work with young people around violent extremism was highlighted to the CLG Select Committee Inquiry by the UK Youth Parliament (UKYP). The UKYP had previously run the innovative, *Prevent*-funded ‘Project Safe Space’ highlighted in Chapter 4, and this experience had indicated an urgent need to upskill youth workers on this issue. However, UKYP’s application to run a national programme of youth worker training around the content and approaches of *Prevent* educational work had not been accepted by government.<sup>31</sup> It is also clear that *Prevent* has had highly problematic impacts on Muslim-origin staff working for local authorities and other organisations implementing *Prevent*. It has already been acknowledged above that *Prevent* has facilitated the building of stronger relationships between local authorities and their Muslim communities in many areas of the country, but in the process of building such relationships, local authorities have often relied heavily on the knowledge, or even the personal standing and contacts, of their Muslim staff. Husband and Alam’s study in West Yorkshire identifies ‘a strong assertion of ignorance about

the local Muslim communities within the local authority that resulted in a dependency on their Muslim colleagues to work with those communities'.<sup>32</sup> Not only does such a role expose Muslim professional to pressure from two sides, from employer and local communities, but it also emphasises their 'Muslimness', rather than their more generic professional skills and experience. Beyond this, such an exposed role has put Muslim professionals working in both the local authority and voluntary sectors in the spotlight of the Police and Security Services, with Husband and Alam (2011) reporting a resulting 'chilling affect' of Muslim professionals being very reluctant to take any risks in relation to *Prevent* activity for fear of being scrutinised over their political and religious attitudes and positions. Chapter 6 highlights how such a position is very understandable, given the documented cases of scrutiny of professionals such as youth workers by CTU Police and Security Service officers.

### Summing up: Local authorities in a bind?

The result of much of the *Prevent* activity via local authorities to date, as discussed above, has usually been positive and diversionary youth activities for Muslim young people only, activities that are well meaning but neither good cohesion work or genuinely focused on the issues and drivers central to violent extremism.<sup>33</sup> The Association of Police Authorities (APA) (2009) commented in its evidence to the CLG Select Committee Inquiry that 'many Police Authorities question whether, in practice, there is any real difference between *Prevent* and community cohesion'. The problem here, though, has been that this activity is monocultural and so ineffective in terms of cohesion, just as it has had little demonstrable focus on factors and issues likely to lead some individuals towards violent extremism. For APA, the solution was a tighter focus on Muslim 'extremism', with some evidence from 2009 onwards that police influence was being used to block *Prevent* support for more general youth activities.<sup>34</sup>

What that pre-coalition government reality on the ground exposed, as highlighted by the CLG Select Committee Inquiry, was the biggest tension within *Prevent* – the conflict between the two national government departments delivering *Prevent*, DCLG and the Home Office. Each department contributed some of the overall 2007–11 budget, with DCLG 'owning' some of the *Prevent* strategy objectives, whilst OSCT/Home Office 'owning' the others.<sup>35</sup> It is clear that the operationalisation of *Prevent* was built on real interdepartmental tensions over purpose and priority, as identified by the Local Government Association: 'Tension between OSCT and CLG on the nature of the focus of *Prevent*, and the activity which should flow from that, can be a problem at times',<sup>36</sup> with lack of consistency identified as a result. It is clear that a 'turf



war', something far from new in the history of counterterrorism policies,<sup>37</sup> has been taking place, based on significantly different views of effective ways forward, as the CLG Select Committee Inquiry process exposed:

We in local government support John Denham's view of Prevent as distinct but necessarily situated within the broader context of community cohesion and equalities ... Police and the security services will necessarily see things from a different perspective ... these messages need to be properly aligned across government.<sup>38</sup>

From this perspective, the very limited and nuanced changes in *Prevent*<sup>39</sup> and the associated launch of the Connecting Communities Fund made in 2009 can actually be understood as hard-won concessions in the right direction by a minister with a clear track record of support for community cohesion,<sup>40</sup> and the Inquiry by the CLG Select Committee as an attempt to bolster and support those moves, whilst the Home Office 'arm' of *Prevent* demanded more robust scrutiny and surveillance of, and judgements on, Muslim communities and organisations. This suggests that *Prevent*, as it stood prior to the 2010 General Election, had few friends even within government, with both DCLG and the Home Office profoundly dissatisfied with it, but for very different reasons, so introducing instability in local policy design and delivery. That instability has been subsequently addressed by the June 2011 review of *Prevent*, which cut DCLG out of the picture and so apparently created a greater demarcation between *Prevent* and cohesion. However, *Prevent* activity will still take place locally via local authorities but be directly controlled and funded by the Home Office/OSCT. Arguably, this is actually a recipe for a sharper clash over exactly what *Prevent* is about, how it impacts on DCLG-led cohesion work and what it can realistically expect to achieve.

### Extremists on campus?

The very significant focus on further and higher education institutions within *Prevent* is unsurprising, given what Chapter 1 suggested about both the nature of the ideology of violent extremism and the backgrounds of many of the people attracted towards it. That chapter highlighted Roy's (2004) assertion that Islamism, and the radical or even extreme versions that it takes for a minority, is a very modern phenomenon, a result of, and a response to, globalisation. Roy suggests that radical Islamism is closer to Leninism than religion, both in its essentially political analysis and in its revolutionary vanguardist approach to political mobilisation. Social movement theory clearly shows the importance of universities, and radicalised young intellectuals, to the growth of radical political movements, and many British radical Islamists have both been well-educated and had previous involvement in left-wing and anti-racist political

movements. This leads to a surprising consensus across the political spectrum about the importance of universities to the threat of violent extremism, with right-wing columnist Melanie Phillips suggesting that ‘British Universities have been exceptionally important breeding grounds for Islamist radicalism’<sup>41</sup> and left-of-centre writer Kenan Malik asserting that ‘it is not Mosques but Universities that provide the real recruiting ground for Islamists’.<sup>42</sup>

There is some strong evidence to support this, with the BBC highlighting in 2010 that six different members of University Islamic Student Societies in Britain had been convicted of terrorist offences.<sup>43</sup> These included some of the ‘Crevice’ plotters who made plans whilst students at Brunel University in west London. In addition, 7/7 bomber Shezad Tanweer was studying at Leeds Metropolitan University, whilst Roshonara Choudhry, who stabbed MP Stephen Timms in 2010, was coming to the end of her undergraduate degree course. The incident which highlighted the link between universities and violent extremism more than any other was the so-called ‘underpants’ bomber, Farouk Abdulmutallab, who attempted to explode a bomb on a plane about to land in the United States in December 2009. The Nigerian Abdulmutallab was a previous president of the Islamic Students Society at University College London (UCL) and was not the first Islamist terrorist to have links to UCL. This prompted UCL to establish an independent Inquiry, and the umbrella body Universities UK to set up its own working party.<sup>44</sup>

The *Prevent* review of June 2011 highlighted the importance of higher education, saying that ‘more than 30% of people convicted for Al-Qaeda-associated terrorist offences in the UK between 1999 and 2009 are known to have attended University or a higher education institution’.<sup>45</sup> However, such a proportion is fairly consistent with the number of British young people who now experience higher education. Universities UK suggest that this expansion towards a mass higher education system is not just about size, but has fundamentally altered the student experience, as many students now live at home, and some study part-time, so significantly reducing the distinction physically and culturally between ‘university’ and ‘society’. Jason Burke (2008) believes that the university link is overplayed, with only a proportion of violent extremists having experienced higher education and a number of those dropping out before completion.

Nevertheless, it is clear that further and higher education campuses have been important sites for Islamist radical activity and recruitment in Britain. Shiraz Maher, a former HUT leader, was recruited whilst a student at Leeds University and now regards HUT and similar Islamist groups as ‘gateway organisations’, which can provide the environment that encourages some individuals to move further towards violent extremism.<sup>46</sup> Certainly, a number of violent extremists, including the two young Muslims from Derby who carried out suicide attacks in Israel, and Mohammad Sidique Khan, were associated with Omar Bakhri’s Al-Mahajiroun organisation. Ed Husain, a former HUT

activist and now head of anti-extremism think tank the Quilliam Foundation, describes how such Islamist political organisations were easily able to operate and recruit on further and higher education campuses in London and across Britain during the 1990s, sometimes using Islamic Student Society or religious study group labels as a front. Arguably, such Islamists have still been operating with impunity at universities much more recently, with a BBC Radio documentary highlighting a meeting that took place at UCL in December 2009, chaired by key Islamist extremist Anjem Choudary, and conducting a speech via live video feed, by Omar Bakhri, who was then banned from the United Kingdom.<sup>47</sup> Such activity, often centring on visiting extremist speakers and preachers invited to universities by Islamic Students Societies, had prompted the 2005 report *When Students Turn to Terror: Terrorist and Extremist Activity on British Campuses*, published by the right-wing Social Affairs Unit and written by Professor Anthony Glees of the private Buckingham University. Glees alleged that terrorist recruitment and organisation, ‘subversion’ of the British state and society, was taking place on university campuses, with academic authorities turning a blind eye. Glees expanded on these allegations in evidence to the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Homeland Security in February 2010, saying that ‘some universities and colleges have become sites where extremist views and radicalisation can flourish beyond the sight of academic’<sup>48</sup> and suggesting that this was possible because the Security Services had lost interest in ‘subversion’ following the collapse of communism. Glees’ evidence for these allegations appears to be that some radical Islamist political groups, such as HUT, have carried out political activity at universities and that some individual terrorists have previously been university students but, as Chapter 1 highlighted, even being a member of a radical Islamist political group such as HUT is *not* predictive of later involvement in violent extremism. Rather than evidence of causal links, such perspectives can instead appear to be crude political generalisations, as shown by the perspective Glees offers on student Islamic activity: ‘I argue that particularly in the case of many student Islamic societies, they are actually mirrors, duplicates of existing student views, so Muslim students are encouraged to regard themselves as different’,<sup>49</sup> with the clear suggestion that this is the start of the ‘conveyor belt’ towards violent extremism.

Such concerns and allegations have shaped the debates, and arguably actions, around *Prevent* activity and further and higher education. Universities UK convened a working group in the wake of the ‘underpants’ bomber to examine these issues and their implications for the higher education sector. Their resulting report highlighted the fact that UCL’s own Inquiry had found no evidence of Abdulmutallab being radicalised whilst studying engineering at UCL. For Universities UK, it was clear that universities should take action against anyone advocating violent extremism, and should control any visiting speakers, but that ‘it is emphatically not their function to impede the exercise

of fundamental freedoms, in particular freedom of speech, through additional censorship, surveillance or invasion of privacy',<sup>50</sup> and radical views should be engaged and debated with, not banned. They accepted the need to identify vulnerable individuals, but stressed that radicalisation, by its very nature, takes place away from 'official' view. For the coalition government, this very highlighting of academic freedom was evidence of a lack of seriousness about the threat of violent extremism, with the government's security and terrorism watchdog Lord Carlile calling it 'weak' and detecting 'a total failure to deal with how to identify and handle individuals who might be suspected of radicalising or radicalised whilst within the university ... The universities have to get over their reluctance to be prepared to look at the issue of radicalisation'.<sup>51</sup> This perspective featured strongly in the *Prevent* review of June 2011, which criticised some universities for failing to engage in *Prevent*. As with much of the broader 'values-based' review of *Prevent*, this claim seemed to be unevidenced. Universities UK's own survey showed 'extensive engagement with *Prevent*: two thirds of universities indicated that their institution had engaged, and several expressed a wish to do more so'.<sup>52</sup> Just over half those universities surveyed had regular contact with *Prevent* police officers, around half with Special Branch, and a quarter were in regular contact with the Security Services. Even allowing for the very substantial growth in student numbers generally, and numbers of international students in particular, this represents a very significant engagement by universities with the policing side of *Prevent*.

This engagement was facilitated by guidance from the government to all further and higher educational institutions<sup>53</sup> and by funding to 40 universities to develop their *Prevent* work in conjunction with key partners such as the police and local authorities. These 40 universities were apparently selected not on the number of Muslim students they had, or on an 'intelligence/risk' basis, but on whether they were sited within local authorities selected for *Prevent* funding on a demographic basis. This meant that Durham University, for example, was not included, although it had an active HUT group over a number of years. Government claims in advance of the June 2011 *Prevent* review that '40 universities' were being complacent about *Prevent* seemed to simply refer to those that had received funding, but caused considerable alarm at those funded institutions over whether they were to be publicly 'named and shamed', even though they had engaged constructively in the *Prevent* agenda. That engagement for universities in one region of the north of England has included regular meetings across the whole region, and sub-regional meetings including the universities with substantial numbers of Muslim students. Such regional meetings have highlighted considerable variations in understanding over the nature and level of the threat of violent extremism, with universities that have a more 'traditional' student cohort of young, largely white, people living away from home less clear on how the *Prevent* agenda relates to them, so partially explaining government's frustration. For universities, the liaison with

CTU/police that *Prevent* requires is *not* a new requirement, as they already have close and largely positive working relationships with local and regional police, including over serious criminal issues that inevitably arise around large and complex student communities. For universities, ‘violent extremism’ can involve animal liberation violence, or far-right political activity, as much as Islamist extremism, and both university officials and Muslim student activists questioned at one northern university were very positive about efforts by the past Labour government to encourage and provide funding for community cohesion and ‘good campus relations’ initiatives.

Two specific issues in relation to *Prevent* and universities arguably show the political influence of Anthony Glee and other right-wing think tanks. One is the overt criticism by the government’s June 2011 *Prevent* review of FOSIS, the Federation of Student Islamic Societies, which acts as the umbrella body for the varied Muslim student societies at different British universities: ‘we judge that FOSIS has not always fully challenged terrorist and extremist ideology within the further and higher education sectors.’<sup>54</sup> Yet, just months before, in March 2011, FOSIS had held a national conference on campus extremism, attended by the Association of Chief Police Officers!<sup>55</sup> Whilst local experiences of an umbrella body such as FOSIS are inevitably mixed, there is evidence of local University Islamic Student Societies playing very positive and constructive roles, both in terms of organising Muslim students and in contributing to wider processes of democracy and cohesion. At one university in the north of England, the Islamic Student Society has played the role of both carefully ‘vetting’ any visiting preachers and speakers, and negotiating constructively with the university authorities over the appointment of a Muslim chaplain to the institution. Strong involvement in the wider Student’s Union led to members of the Society taking up sabbatical positions through electoral support from students of all backgrounds, and to involvement in national student affairs that entailed working with students from a variety of backgrounds and political positions.

Another problematic issue is the theory and reality of academic freedom in relation to *Prevent*. Higher education is clearly about academic investigation, sometimes of highly sensitive and contentious social and political issues, by both academic staff and students. The Universities UK report highlighted the issues this raises about researchers using the Internet to search material that may be viewed as connected to violent extremism for the purposes of academic study, and how this should be handled. Many universities now have protocols for such searches to ensure that if the Security Services follow up on a ‘flagged’ Internet search, there is a clear and justified audit trail of knowledge and agreement. The dangers of not having such agreed and understood procedures have been shown by an ongoing issue at the University of Nottingham. This followed the May 2008 arrests by counterterrorism police officers of Nottingham research student Rizwaan Sabir, and of Hicham Yezza, who worked as a staff member

at the University's School of Modern Languages. Sabir had downloaded an Al-Qaeda manual as part of research for a dissertation and had sought Yezza's help in drafting a PhD proposal because of his position as the editor of *Ceasefire*, a political magazine. Despite the fact that the manual was apparently available in the University library, and can certainly be purchased via Amazon, the University authorities alerted the police, and the two were arrested, only being released without charge after six days. Dr Rod Thornton, a senior lecturer at the University, remains suspended after criticising the University for its treatment of the two men, and University documents released under the Freedom of Information guidelines show that University of Nottingham staff were routinely logging and filming Middle East-related political activity on the campus. The University's response is that political activity of all types on campus is monitored that way.<sup>56</sup> What this does show is both the problematic interface of academic study and counterterrorism policing, and how it may well be encouraging staff within institutions to take on questionable roles and positions in relation to counterterrorism.

### Prisons and young offenders

Just as universities have undoubtedly been a site of Islamist radicalisation, so have prisons and YOIs, as Chapter 1 highlighted. For that reason, prisoners and young offenders at risk of incarceration have been a key target for *Prevent* activity, especially as 79 Islamist terrorists were in the British prison system as of June 2011, plus others convicted for non-terrorist-related offences. This was re-emphasised by the June 2011 *Prevent* review, which also highlighted the links between *Prevent* activity in prisons and the community by saying that 'over the next four years, 34 terrorism-related prisoners may reach their release dates'.<sup>57</sup> In line with the demographic and economic profiles of their communities, the number of Muslim prisoners has been growing steadily, but the government is aware of the danger of seeing all Muslim prisoners as potential radicals, meaning that 'careful judgments are therefore required to accurately assess the extent of radicalisation in prisons'.<sup>58</sup> A key part of *Prevent* activity in prisons has been the leadership of the National Offender Management Service (NOMS) on staff awareness training to spot and combat radicalisation, and the development of reporting and referral systems when there is potential radicalisation of a prisoner or young offender. This has been built around a risk and protection framework, involving risk assessment and early intervention when required, sometimes through the significantly developed network of Prison Visiting Imams. A particular concern here has been individuals converting to Islam, and immediately embracing radical versions of it, while in gaol, with overcrowding and lack of staff awareness enabling radicals to spread their influence: 'The Prison Officers Association

has repeatedly raised concerns over the radicalisation and recruitment of such young “vulnerable” Muslim prisoners.<sup>59</sup> However, assessing what conversions represent is complicated by wider dynamics of prison life, as Chapter 1 highlighted: ‘there has been something of a moral panic about individuals converting to Islam whilst incarcerated.’<sup>60</sup> In keeping with local authority-based work, there has been real concern among criminal justice practitioners within prisons as to whether they are suitably trained for any interventions around radicalisation.

Such concerns have been heightened by the suggestion that there should be ‘de-radicalisation’ programmes within prisons. The need for such work has been shown by research around violent Islamist extremists imprisoned in Spain and the United Kingdom, which suggests that such jihadis remain a real threat to society even after conviction: ‘violent jihadists are involved in a network which has demonstrated the capability for “organisational learning”.’<sup>61</sup> That research makes parallels with how terrorist prisoners from organisations like the IRA and ETA formed military structures and training programmes within prisons, and identifies distinct roles within personnel committed to violent extremism. Those roles include ‘strategists’, who see time in prison as a good chance to recruit, plan and train ‘team leaders’, who will then take on the leadership of specific terrorist ventures. Warnes and Hannah (2008) argue that Sidique Khan was a good example of such a ‘team leader’.

Programmes of de-radicalisation have had some success with radical Islamist extremist prisoners in other countries, notably Egypt and Saudi Arabia. In Egypt, processes of political rethinking and moving away from Islamist violent extremism among prisoners were led by ex-jihadi leaders who had renounced violence. This involved seminars and discussion, with the approach adapted by Saudi Arabia to encompass psychological profiling, Islamic teachings to highlight the un-Islamic nature of violence, and diversionary sports programmes. However, it is difficult to see how such programmes could easily transfer to the British environment. First, Britain only has relatively small numbers both of imprisoned jihadists and of imams trained and experienced enough to combat overt attempts at radicalisation. Second, the Islamists in Egypt who have been successfully de-radicalised were part of a conventional, hierarchically organised political movement with command structures making it much more akin to the IRA, than to small-cell-based ‘leaderless jihad’ of Western Islamist violent extremism – which figures of credibility and authority among Islamist extremists would lead such a process in Western countries? Nevertheless, NOMS has been developing a number of different educational programmes around radicalisation, one of which is ‘specifically targeted at beliefs and ideology related to Al-Qaeda. Following assessment, national implementation is planned in 2012’.<sup>62</sup>

How *Prevent* should approach young offenders in the community through the network of local YOTs has been even more problematic, given that few,

if any, young offenders are likely to be referred to YOTs for involvement in violent extremist activity, as numbers associated with such plots are small, and the offences involved so serious. The YJB secured £8.3 million from OSCT in 2007 for *Prevent* work with young offenders, with the following main aims:

- national training and support for youth justice staff to counter violent extremism;
- expansion of existing programmes for vulnerable young people in communities where extreme views are prevalent;
- undertaking initiatives in secure establishments for young people at risk of extremism;
- initiating new schemes to develop an evidence base of ‘what works’ in preventing violent extremism among young people.

The OSCT had identified 53 YOTs and YOIs as being at the highest risk of violent extremism, presumably on the same geographical location basis by which the 40 funded universities were identified. These YOTs were ‘invited’ to bid, but in practice had already been selected by OSCT, who exercised considerable oversight in relation to the design and content of local activity. As with *Prevent* funding for local authorities, this stream of funding emerged quickly, and many YOTs took a considerable length of time to start their funded *Prevent*-funded activity. The YJB commissioned the University of Huddersfield to evaluate its *Prevent* programme through a process of interview-based case studies and documentary analysis, and the initial findings of that research were highlighted by government in its review of *Prevent* published in June 2011, which commented, ‘The University of Huddersfield have noted that all of the projects found it difficult to measure impact ... Many of the problems identified by the University of Huddersfield could have been overcome with greater clarity from the outset.’<sup>63</sup> As a result of this emerging evaluation picture, the OSCT ceased funding for 33 YOTs and YOIs in October 2010, and asked the remaining 20 to focus more directly on de-radicalisation and counter-radicalisation activity, requiring them to refer more effectively to the Channel process, discussed further in Chapter 6, and advocating further training for front-line staff to help them do this.

It is clear from this emerging picture that *Prevent* work via YOTs had very similar problems to that funded via local authorities in relation to purpose, effectiveness and practitioner confidence: ‘there was a perceived lack of clarity of what was needed and a strong emphasis on cohesion or integration-type work.’<sup>64</sup> Some of this work seems to have been with young people in the community with no offending background at all or with young people of all ethnic/faith backgrounds around issues of racism, identity and violence – good generic youth work, but a significant distance from the supposed aims



of *Prevent*, as government noted itself: ‘In common with many other areas of work, we consider that OSCT should have provided greater clarity on what was required from the outset from the YJB interventions and exercised greater and more consistent levels of oversight and monitoring.’<sup>65</sup> Similar issues were identified in a more localised evaluation of the *Prevent* activity by the 10 YOTs in the Greater Manchester area conducted by the Greater Manchester Youth Justice Trust. It was clear that these Youth Offending Services (YOS) in the Greater Manchester area had used *Prevent* funding to develop a variety of positive activities and interventions with young people, and developed greater understanding of the issues around violent extremism, but the evaluation concluded that

Prevent is an uncomfortable companion to the YOT/YOS in Greater Manchester. Whilst it is accepted that involvement in criminal activity is one of many causes (or indeed a result) of certain vulnerabilities, it does not follow as neatly as suggested by this funding stream, that this will lead to extremism ... it is not possible to ascertain to any degree how many young people have been diverted from adoption of extreme attitudes or behaviour through the effects of the projects.<sup>66</sup>

The lack of distinction between community cohesion and what *Prevent* can be in practice was an issue for youth justice practitioners in Greater Manchester, as it has been for many local authority practitioners: ‘Respondents are unsure of the stated delineation between PVE and community cohesion as set out by the DCLG. Many see their work as a cohesive intervention that may have a preventative impact on violent extremism, should it be there. Projects have struggled to clearly identify a target group for PVE work for this reason.’<sup>67</sup>

### **Conclusion: Local complexity**

This chapter has drawn on a range of empirical data around the actual implementation and experience of *Prevent* activity on the ground to help make sense of what such activity looks and feels like in practice. The chapter started by advising caution over generalisations around the reality of any governmental policy programme, with both local variations, and the ability of local policy makers and practitioners to exploit ‘space’ within national agendas, both contributing to a more nuanced picture than some critics of *Prevent* would suggest. It is clear here, as should be expected with such a significant public spending commitment, that some positive things have been achieved, and the chapter has attempted to highlight some of those. For instance, there have been significant programmes of engagement with Muslim young people, some of them not previously engaging in positive work, offering both diversionary and educational activities, and personal development in the broader sense of

'citizenship education'. *Prevent* funding has also enabled stronger relationships between local authorities and other public sector organisations with Muslim communities, and support for stronger civil society activity within those Muslim communities, alongside greater awareness among practitioners of issues around violent extremism. However, there is significant evidence that local 'space' to shape and determine the content and style of *Prevent* delivery has been steadily squeezed from 2008 onwards, as national government monitoring through tools such as N1 35 and control through the very active involvement, and even leadership, of the Police and Security Services in local *Prevent* structures and decision-making has tightened. This was re-emphasised by the *Prevent* review of June 2011, which cut DCLG out of *Prevent* and made OSCT/Home Office directly responsible for the granting and monitoring of *all* local *Prevent* activity. This is in stark contrast to the anti-violent extremism policy approach adopted by the Netherlands, where local mayors have been given a great deal of control over how work against radicalisation and violent extremism is approached. That Dutch approach is supported by the international evidence available, which suggests that effective anti-radicalisation and anti-extremism initiatives have to be locally determined and managed to engage effectively with the specificities and dynamics of local communities.<sup>68</sup>

In addition, a consistent theme throughout this discussion of local authorities, universities, and the criminal justice field has been the lack of distinction, from the practitioner perspective, between any meaningful anti-violent extremism programme and community cohesion, and the consequent damage that *Prevent* is perceived to be doing to community cohesion through its insistence on monocultural work with Muslim communities that is kept firmly apart from community cohesion activity, something that the coalition government's new direction for *Prevent* is likely to actually exacerbate through its overt OSCT/Home Office direction from above. The other damaging impact of *Prevent* is the persistent allegation and feeling from practitioners, and the communities they work with, that *Prevent* is actually a Police/Security Service-led surveillance and intelligence-gathering programme above all, and it this issue which is explored in Chapter 6.

## 6

# Spooks?

### Introduction: Education or surveillance?

In outlining the origins and development of the *Prevent* strategy from its launch in October 2006 onwards, Chapter 3 also highlighted its most contentious aspects. The most enduring criticism, which has dogged *Prevent* throughout its short life, is the charge that this supposedly ‘hearts and minds’ approach is actually a front for large-scale state surveillance of, spying on, British Muslim communities. Such a charge is a very serious one, not only because it implies significant dishonesty by the state and its employees who are designing and implementing *Prevent* but also because it risks damaging the flow of ‘human intelligence’ from within Muslim communities that is most likely to defeat the threat of Islamist violent extremism. Indeed, international analysis of how positive counter-radicalisation programmes can be developed suggests that, at all costs, states must avoid ‘securitising’ their relationship with specific communities within their population, such an approach being fatal to the prospects of gaining meaningful intelligence.<sup>1</sup> The laying of that spying charge, particularly through the *Spooked* report by Arun Kundnani and the IRR, the media coverage of that charge, and its consideration by the House of Commons CLG Select Committee Inquiry were all highlighted in Chapter 3. However, the gravity of the charge and its potential impact on *Prevent*’s success means that it must be analysed in greater depth, and that is what this chapter attempts to do. First, it must be acknowledged that *Prevent* is just one of the four elements of the overall CONTEST counterterrorism strategy. Any reasonable person would expect the state to be engaged in surveillance and intelligence gathering designed to counter planned terrorist operations within that CONTEST strategy, and holding a rigid demarcation between the different CONTEST elements may not always be realistic or possible.

Indeed, Chapter 5 highlighted precisely those dilemmas within the *Prevent* strategy to date over how bodies such as local authorities, YOTs and universities, who have been implementing *Prevent*, should relate to the Police and Security Services. Sir David Omand, the architect of both the overall CONTEST strategy and the *Prevent* element within it, commented to the APPGHS in 2010 that ‘you can’t divide government in two, into those people that go around spying on the population, and there are another lot of people going round to the population and they just don’t talk to each other. It just simply doesn’t work like that’.<sup>2</sup> Omand was even blunter in an interview given to the *Financial Times* weeks before that,

when he suggested that it would be naïve of the state to not use any intelligence from community-based *Prevent* activities, in the face of a very serious terrorist threat.<sup>3</sup> The key issue here, though, is whether any such intelligence is gained in ways that encourages people within Muslim communities to offer information in the future. Here, it has to be acknowledged that even if the allegations of an underhand Pursue ‘creep’ into *Prevent*, as this chapter discusses below, are overblown, actions carried out as part of Pursue can have negative impacts on *Prevent* activity. An obvious example of such dangers came in 2005, when a large-scale, anti-terror raid on a family home in Forest Gate, East London led to the accidental shooting and wounding of one man, but no criminal charges: ‘left in the aftermath would be damaged lives, poisoned community relations, and hysteria over the extent of terrorism in the United Kingdom.’<sup>4</sup> Alongside that damaging episode came the government attempt to pass what became the Terrorism Act 2006 and its original proposal for 90 days pre-charge detention, a measure blatantly at odds with Britain’s legal traditions, and one which led to the biggest defeat in the House of Commons for a sitting government since 1978.

Despite the damaging public relations impacts of mishandled raids that have often yielded no charges, and proposed legislation that has only inflamed British Muslim public opinion, the importance of the Pursue arm of CONTEST cannot be downplayed. The coalition government’s review of *Prevent* published in June 2011 highlighted that, at the time of writing, 115 terrorism offenders were imprisoned in the United Kingdom, 79 of them were associated with Islamist violent extremism, and other Islamist radicals were imprisoned for other charges. This is despite the Glasgow Airport car bombing attack of June 2007 being the only Islamist attack carried out since 7/7, and that only injuring the perpetrators. Bleich (2010: 74) comments that ‘the British state has thus shown itself to be aggressive in surveillance, arrests, convictions and control of suspected Islamist extremist in a way that has undoubtedly saved lives and provided a significant deterrent to acts of violence’. This context needs to be borne in mind as allegations of spying within *Prevent* activity are considered. The chapter begins by detailing the role, and significant growth, of the Security Services and police in and around *Prevent*, including the role of the RICU and the controversial Metropolitan Police MCU. It then examines the allegations of ‘spying’ outlined in *Spooked* and their amplification by the media and the Select Committee Inquiry, alongside government’s response.

## CONTEST and the growth of the security state

Whilst Chapter 1 outlined the reality and scale of the Islamist terror threat facing Britain, Chapter 3 indicated that Britain’s Security and Police Services were underprepared to respond, both in terms of understanding and dedicated resources. Whilst the CONTEST strategy of 2003 marked the start of a response,

the extent to which the state was behind the game was illustrated on 6th July, the day before the 7/7 bombings, when the head of MI5, Dame Eliza Manningham-Buller, told a committee of senior Labour MPs that there was no imminent terror threat to Britain.<sup>5</sup> The Security Service (MI5) had started to respond to the threat of Islamist violent extremism only after the Madrid bombings of 2004 and was still scrambling to come to terms with new realities at the time of the London attacks. The revelation that 7/7 had been perpetrated by four young men from West Yorkshire led to MI5 changing direction: ‘admitting that counter-terrorism was too London-centric, the security service began an effort to establish regional offices around the country to work more closely with Police forces.’<sup>6</sup> MI5 has subsequently developed nine regional offices across the United Kingdom, with the eventual aim of 25 per cent of the agency’s staff being based outside of London.<sup>7</sup> Alongside this has come a significant growth and reconfiguration of counterterrorism policing, with an underlying drive for national integration and coordination. A new Counter-Terrorism Command (SO15) came into existence in October 2006, working closely with the multiagency JTAC established in 2003. The OSCT was established in 2007 at national government level, designed to overcome cross-departmental confusion, The Police Special Branch subsequently received more funding to establish eight regional ‘intelligence’ centres and four regional counter-intelligence ‘hubs’ in Birmingham, Leeds, Manchester and the Thames Valley in addition to the existing Metropolitan Police anti-terrorism unit. These CTUs bring MI5 staff together with dedicated counterterrorism police officers and involve liaison with individual police force staff including their identified *Prevent* officers. Gregory (2010) identifies how MI5 staff within the CTUs have directed Special Branch officers to engage more with local Muslim communities, something that has inevitably happened in and around the *Prevent* strategy: ‘this joint effort is known as the “Rich Picture” approach.’<sup>8</sup> A BBC News feature on the establishment of the Greater Manchester CTU ‘hub’ in April 2007 suggested that it would have as many as 350 police staff, working alongside MI5 and other security services, and including ‘vetted’ interpreters, as ‘officers admit that engagement is not currently strong enough and “hearts and minds” too must be won’.<sup>9</sup>

The scale of the challenge for MI5 and the police in trying to understand the threat of people within British Muslim communities attracted towards Islamist violent extremism is shown by the fact that for MI5 ‘only 6% of its members were drawn from ethnic minorities at the end of 2006’,<sup>10</sup> so making the traditional tactic of the infiltration of subversive groups much more difficult, whilst the Metropolitan Police only had 8 per cent of their officers from non-white ethnic minority backgrounds. This knowledge deficit explains the call made by the recently retired Manningham-Buller in July 2007 to recruit a network of ‘Muslim spies’ to generate much-needed human intelligence<sup>11</sup> but arguably also indicates why the authorities would be keen to take any opportunities that *Prevent* offers to gather information.

Since 2007, and additional to the developments outlined above, *Prevent* has led to the Home Office 'providing additional funding to establish over three hundred new police posts across the country dedicated to *Prevent*',<sup>12</sup> spread across 24 forces, with the aim of this fitting within the ongoing development nationally of neighbourhood policing teams. This has included 80 counterterrorism intelligence officers, although funding for them ceased in April 2011 in response to the 'spying' allegations, according to the 2011 *Prevent* review. For some critics, this very substantial growth in staffing numbers within both the police and security services is evidence of state agencies making the most of the 'terror threat' for their own agency purposes.<sup>13</sup> Individual police forces have received funding for *Prevent* coordinators, and 'this network has been supported by new *Prevent* engagement officers (PEOs) who connect counterterrorism policing, neighbourhood policing and communities'.<sup>14</sup> The implications of this large-scale police presence within *Prevent* are discussed below, but the fact that 30 per cent of these 321 *Prevent* officers nationally have been from black and minority ethnic backgrounds is relevant to the issue of Police/Security Service ignorance of Muslim communities highlighted above. The Metropolitan Police Service planned to have 93 officers in *Prevent* posts by the end of 2010/11, and Gregory notes that a 2008 report to the Metropolitan Police Authority, in the early stages of the *Prevent* funding, 'makes very little reference to countering radicalisation but does emphasis the intelligence gathering aspect alongside community engagement'.<sup>15</sup> The discussions in Chapter 5 of the tensions and confusions surrounding local implementation of *Prevent* highlighted the complicated relationship between local authorities and the police. Lowndes and Thorp (2010) found that the CTUs in their region of study were offering to 'screen' applications for *Prevent* funding from local Muslim community groups, and Gregory observes that 'within all these structures there is an inherent possibility for a conflict of interest or at least tension between the *Prevent* and Pursue elements of CONTEST'.<sup>16</sup>

Even allowing for the possibility that intelligence gathering or 'spying' is one of the key objectives for the police, it is questionable whether such a significant expansion in the number of dedicated *Prevent* police personnel, many of whom are highly visible and wearing police uniform whilst carrying out their roles, is the most effective use of resources supposedly dedicated to 'hearts and minds' terrorism prevention work. Measuring meaningful progress or success for such work is very difficult, and the commitment given by government in the June 2011 *Prevent* review to downsize the police role within *Prevent* can be seen as reflective of that. There have been examples of creative work that *Prevent* police personnel on the preventative and engagement sides, rather than the intelligence sides, of the activity can achieve. One initiative has been 'Operation Nicole' and the subsequent 'Act Now' tabletop simulation exercises originally devised by Lancashire Constabulary. These enable front-line professionals and Muslim community representatives to experience how the police have to react

to the rapidly developing facts and circumstances of a simulated terrorist plot, hopefully not only building greater civilian understanding of the police's role and responsibilities in such circumstances but also how radicalisation can lead certain individuals rapidly down the path towards acts of violent extremism. Another innovative example was the Metropolitan Police's MCU. This short-lived and controversial police unit was a key example of the pragmatic 'means-based' *Prevent* approaches outlined in Chapter 4 that aim to work with radical but non-violent Islamists within the community to expose Islamists preaching violent extremism and deny them positions of influence where they can manipulate and recruit impressionable others. To Spalek and Lambert (2010), the latter of whom served as a key officer within the MCU, 'radicalisation is often conflated with violent extremism, and so those Muslims are often marginalised and excluded from policy-making processes'.<sup>17</sup> Always a small-scale operation with between two and eight officers at any one time, the MCU focused on community engagement strategies of building dialogue and relationships of trust with non-violent Islamist groups and individuals in key areas. This centred particularly on Finsbury Park Mosque in north London and Brixton Mosque in south London, both dominated by advocates of violent extremism during the 1990s to the exclusion of other radicals opposed to any form of violence: 'at both of these sites, the partnership initiative was effective in securing its explicit purpose of countering the impact of al-Qaeda propaganda and recruitment activity within local Muslim communities.'<sup>18</sup> This involved actively working with Salafists in Brixton and Islamist radicals associated with the Muslim Brotherhood at Finsbury Park, both of whom are seen as 'beyond the pale' for government engagement by the increasingly dominant 'values-based' national approach to *Prevent*, as Chapter 4 discussed. For the police officers within the MCU, they were trying to learn the lessons painfully learnt from contact with the London Irish community in a different era of keeping lines of dialogue open and not counterproductively stigmatising whole communities, but this MCU approach faced hostility and negativity both from other parts of the Metropolitan Police and from influential sections of Muslim communities, and was disbanded. Whether the state as a whole has learnt the lessons from the mainland Irish community experience in the way how it currently relates to Muslim communities in relation to counterterrorism is highly contested.<sup>19</sup>

### **RICU: Massaging the message?**

Whilst the innovative, 'means-based' engagement approach of the MCU did not survive, government itself has been very careful, if not manipulative, over how it has actually communicated with the public in general and Muslim communities in particular. This has been best shown through the work of the

RICU, the introduction of which was highlighted in Chapter 3. A similar unit had previously been used by the British government to counter the propaganda of republicans in Northern Ireland. RICU has drawn on a staff of 35 from across a range of government departments, with some private sector expertise. The RICU's work has included weekly newsletters providing 'background to topical news stories and issues that resonate in communities', as well research into the attitudes and identity of young Muslims. For Charles Farr, director general of OSCT, 'a lot of the focus has been how you communicate the threat in and through Muslim communities in this country, what language is appropriate'.<sup>20</sup> These careful government calculations around language and its possible implications were shown in an early RICU briefing document from September 2007, *Counter-Terrorism Communications Guidance: Communicating Effectively with Community Audiences*. This highlighted that 'it is important to avoid implying that specific communities are to blame' and that 'terrorists operate in isolation from mainstream communities and are the enemies of all of us'.<sup>21</sup> The document went on to detail 'top line CT messages' and 'detailed messages' that explained those 'top line' approaches. They included, 'Terrorism is not the product of any one religion or community'.<sup>22</sup> In an appendix to the document, a 'Language Table' was provided which examined a number of possible government messages under the heading 'What Is Said', suggested how it might actually be understood by British Muslims under the heading 'What Is Heard', and suggested 'possible alternatives'. For instance, it suggested that a statement 'communities need to stand up to extremism/ weed out terrorist sympathisers' would actually be heard as 'communities are to blame for extremism and are responsible for hiding terrorists in their midst'. It therefore proposed the alternative of 'we all share responsibility for tackling violent extremism, and there are specific tasks that communities can help us with'.<sup>23</sup> This highly pragmatic (and sensible), means-based approach was in clear contradiction to some of the headline 'values-based' statements by government ministers as *Prevent* was launched in 2006. In practice, the Labour government, particularly after Gordon Brown became prime minister in 2007, worked hard to avoid formulations such as Bush's meaningless 'war on terror' or 'Islamic terrorism' and instead stick to 'terrorism' or 'international terrorism' even though, as Chapter 3 highlights, Islamist violent extremism was the clear focus of strategies: 'British policy-making has been quite contradictory and conflicted in the extent to which it acknowledges the Muslim element of extremism and terrorism confronting the state'.<sup>24</sup> However much RICU has carefully constructed and massaged the government's public messages around *Prevent* and violent extremism, it cannot 'sell' politically distrusted messages, as the Association of Police Authorities acknowledged in its evidence to the CLG Select Committee Inquiry. The coalition government accepted in its *Prevent* review of June 2011 that RICU's results had been mixed to date but the lesson learnt from this seemed to be the wrong one.



In line with its broader and arguably ill-advised lurch in the direction of 'values-based' judgements of wider religious and political attitudes within Muslim communities, the government stated that 'going forward, we will want to emphasise the connection between extremist and terrorist ideologies'.<sup>25</sup> That suggests that RICU will need to draw up a significantly different type of 'language table'.

### *Spooked: Allegations and responses*

The very significant growth and development of the police presence within *Prevent* between 2008 and 2011 has been highly controversial, in itself suggestive to many observers, as discussed more fully below, that this is overwhelmingly a surveillance and intelligence-gathering operation. However, if that was the intention, the coalition government seems unsure of its benefits: 'We believe that some *Prevent* police funding has also been spent on initiatives primarily intended to build resilience and promote cohesion.'<sup>26</sup> However, this revised *Prevent* strategy did go on to say that 'we believe the police understanding of Muslim communities has improved significantly as a result of *Prevent*' and that 'the police now talk regularly to mosques in a way that was very rare before 2005'.<sup>27</sup> Certainly, Gregory (2010) suggests that *Prevent* has emphasised community policing and dialogue, with a heavy focus on inter-agency contact in ways that have justifiably blurred traditional roles and demarcations but, exactly for that reason, has therefore given at least the appearance of being about intelligence gathering. Such blurring of roles is arguably inevitable within a counterterrorism strategy that attempts to include community development aspects as well as policing and security functions.<sup>28</sup>

For some, particularly those already critical of the past Labour government's apparently offhand approach to civil liberties, its 'values-based' criticism of Muslim communities and its highly contentious foreign policy, *Prevent*'s significant growth in the numbers and functions of Police and Security Service personnel has been cover for the development of surveillance of Muslim communities. Anti-racist campaigners and the IRR think tank claimed that 'there is evidence that the *Prevent* programme has been used to establish one of the most elaborate systems of surveillance ever seen in Britain'.<sup>29</sup> Whilst this has been strongly denied by the government, the growth in Police and Security Service numbers is real and so, arguably, is an associated blurring of roles between education and policing, between security apparatus and local democratic accountability, and between the *Prevent* and Pursue arms of CONTEST. For Husband and Alam (2011), who have researched the implementation of *Prevent* by the five West Yorkshire local authorities, *Prevent*, through its police engagement officers and interface between CTUs

and local authorities, has allowed ‘the intrusive and insidious penetration of the protective state’s security activities into the domain that was traditionally occupied by community work or youth work, now covered by community cohesion’.<sup>30</sup> The resulting allegations of covert surveillance and intelligence gathering are discussed below, and whilst the actual evidence of them is contentious, the impression of it has taken firm hold, fuelled by political campaigning and media coverage.<sup>31</sup>

Certainly, the reality of police *Prevent* officers playing prominent roles in local *Prevent* boards and Gold, Silver and Bronze multiagency coordination committees, getting involved in what appears to be education and community work, and liaising overtly with further and higher education institutions, all of which was highlighted in Chapter 5, ‘has raised questions of police interference in the political relationships between local authorities and Muslim communities’.<sup>32</sup> Indeed, some community-based organisations have felt that the police are actually in charge of this supposedly ‘hearts and minds’ *Prevent* programme at the local level:

The police are such key drivers at a local level together with your counterterrorism officers and the intelligence services; they become the funnel through which what is happening in the community is funnelled back to the government ... it is the police who are leading the agenda.<sup>33</sup>

This is confirmed by Birmingham City Council, the largest single local authority recipient of *Prevent* funding nationally between 2008 and 2011: ‘Our delivery plan utilises intelligence from West Midlands Police (e.g. Counter-Terrorism Local Profile) in order to target funding and provision as necessary.’<sup>34</sup>

It was in this context of a very significant Police and Security Service role within *Prevent*, and apparently within the local operation of it by local government and community groups, that allegations of ‘spying’ emerged. These were crystallised in the *Spooked: How Not to Prevent Violent Extremism* report written by Arun Kundnani, Director of the IRR, and which was published in October 2009. Whilst critics dismissed the report as propaganda from an undoubtedly left-wing think tank, *Spooked* was the product of a substantial and careful piece of field research that involved 32 face-to-face interviews with people involved in the local design and delivery of *Prevent* activity, a roundtable discussion held in Bradford, and the submission of a substantial number of freedom of information requests to local authorities. All of this was funded by the highly reputable Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust, suggesting that the evidence and conclusions of *Spooked* should not be dismissed lightly. In addition, the allegations by the IRR had not come out of the blue; in a BBC TV ‘Panorama’ programme broadcast on 16th February 2009, journalist Richard Watson claimed a source ‘at the heart of the government’s counterterrorism work’ believed that *Prevent* programmes were being used to gather intelligence and that intelligence analysts were in place. The OSCT completely

denied that allegation, as they did the allegations of Kundnani/IRR made later in 2009.<sup>35</sup>

The allegations by Kundnani of spying within *Prevent* activity came within a broader critique of the very assumptions and starting points of the *Prevent* programme, with the clear suggestion that *Prevent* was having negative, counterproductive effects through its approach to Muslim communities:

Their 'hearts and minds' are now the target of an elaborate structure of surveillance, mapping, engagement and propaganda. *Prevent* has become, in effect, the government's 'Islam policy'.<sup>36</sup>

For Kundnani, the well-meaning partnership basis of shared responsibility for confronting the ideology of violent extremism had not been lived up to by *Prevent* in practice. The suggestion here was that the interdepartmental battle and ongoing tensions identified in Chapter 5 over whether *Prevent* was mainly transparent community engagement led by DCLG or a much harder edged and only partially visible policing and intelligence-gathering programme run by the Home Office/OSCT had clearly been won by the latter, with the result being community-based activities that were not what they seemed. The broader critiques of *Spooked* echoed many of the points raised in Chapter 4, such as the contradiction to community cohesion, the fact that *Prevent* locally was often working through precisely the older and conservative 'gatekeeper' community leaders that government policy had long seen as problematic, and that Muslim community groups were, in practice, being funded for mainstream activities such as improvements in mosque schools by funding programmes specifically concerned with anti-terrorism.

Within that broader context, the concerns over surveillance activity in *Prevent* focused on the involvement of *Prevent* police officers throughout the funding, planning and even implementation of local, DCLG-funded *Prevent* work, and what exactly the balance between intelligence gathering and community engagement therefore was in the programme. This fear of surveillance has been heightened by the greater involvement of police officers in education-based *Prevent* activities that would be normally seen as the territory of youth and community workers:

A significant part of the prevent programme is the embedding of counter-terrorism police officers within the delivery of other local services. The implication of teachers and youth, community and cultural workers in information-sharing undercuts professional norms of confidentiality.<sup>37</sup>

For Kundnani, this suggested that there had been a counterproductive blurring of the line between *Prevent* and Pursue. *Spooked* found some blatant evidence of such a blurring: 'A West Midlands Police counter-terrorism officer has been permanently seconded to the equality and diversity division of Birmingham City Council to manage its *Prevent* work. He is supported by

two workers, a young person's development officer and a researcher/analyst, whose posts are directly funded by the OSCT.<sup>38</sup> Whilst such an arrangement may have been exceptional nationally, the more mundane 'embedding' of *Prevent* police officers raised serious issues, both of ethics and effectiveness, for Kundnani's respondents.

Many of these ethical issues were first identified in Chapter 5 and revolve around appropriate roles and responsibilities, and who shares what 'intelligence' with whom. Problematic features of *Prevent* activity in this regard have included the desire of the Police/Security Service side to 'security check' organisations and individuals involved in *Prevent* community-based delivery, even if those individuals already work for reputable organisations such as local authorities. Delivery agencies, such as local authority Youth Services, have been asked to sign Information Sharing Agreements that cover briefings given to their senior officers that they are then obliged to keep confidential from their own staff. The Channel initiative is discussed below, including how this inevitably led to requests that local agencies report the names of and concerns over individuals deemed to be vulnerable to radicalisation to local *Prevent* boards or so-called 'Silver Groups'. More broadly than that, many of the *Spooked* respondents who were engaged in youth and community work recounted being asked by *Prevent* police staff for the names, movements and attitudes of young people they worked with. For instance, one youth project manager from London commented that he was asked 'to give information about the general picture, right down to which street corners young people from different backgrounds are hanging around on, what mosques they go to, and so on'.<sup>39</sup> Such requests seem to have been part of the 'mapping' approach to the gathering of 'Rich Picture' intelligence outlined above, with the result being, in Kundnani's view, that community organisations and individual local authority youth and community work staff were increasingly wary of what was being asked of them. *Spooked* quotes a specific allegation of intimidation of five youth workers in Camden, north London by MI5 officers as part of efforts to recruit them as informers.<sup>40</sup> At the same time, local authorities have felt that information flows within *Prevent* are one way only, with them expected to pass intelligence on, but CTUs and police not willing to pass anything the other way, often claiming that local authority chief executives did not have the right 'clearance'.<sup>41</sup> Arguably, these concerns demonstrate a naivety about the way community interaction and security aspects of counterterrorism strategies will inevitably interact, as the Northern Ireland experience indicates.<sup>42</sup>

Kundnani acknowledges that, at ground level, positive community cohesion-based youth and community work has been developing over the past few years, and that some of this activity continued with *Prevent* funding, but 'under the radar', in the initial stages of the programme. However, as the Police and Security Service structures outlined above became established and 'embedded' within *Prevent*, such creativity and flexibility within community-based programmes

became increasingly difficult. For the respondents quoted in *Spooked*, this increasingly assertive Police/Security Service role in *Prevent* was not just ethically wrong but tactically misguided. One northern respondent commented of the police that ‘they don’t seem to understand that their engagement fails because they do not have legitimacy and trust within the community’.<sup>43</sup> This British *Prevent* approach to the role of the Police and Security Services in actual counter-radicalisation work is in contrast to the approach adopted in the Netherlands, where ‘the domestic intelligence service has played a very limited role in outreach and engagement and considers its principal task to be that of supporting interventions that deal with “very radicalised people”’,<sup>44</sup> in the Dutch version of the Channel programme. Whilst the British government might argue that the objective of such high-profile *Prevent* policing has been to build relationships of trust with Muslim communities and professionals, the evidence from *Spooked* is that this has been counterproductively heavy-handed. The argument here is *not* that the police do not have a legitimate counterterrorism role to play but whether that such an overt involvement in funding and monitoring *Prevent* activity, and increasingly even delivering it to young people and community groups, is effective or rather whether it is counterproductive through the unhelpful blurring of professional roles and their proper boundaries. Local authorities clearly feel that this police involvement has unhelpfully blurred the distinction between *Prevent* (education and community development-based activity) and Pursue (necessary surveillance and policing interventions) with this having a counterproductive effect: ‘there is a danger that the levels of suspicion and mistrust around Prevent could be used as a tool by those elements who seek to undermine cohesion.’<sup>45</sup>

Arguably, the future downsizing of the police role in *Prevent* announced by the coalition government in June 2011 implicitly accepts that point. That subsequent action is not surprising, given the Conservative Party reaction to the publication of *Spooked* in October 2009. Conservative shadow security minister Pauline Neville-Jones, writing in a newspaper article, saw such allegations as symptomatic of Labour’s approach to *Prevent*, an approach that confused intelligence and community engagement within one programme to the detriment of counterterrorism.<sup>46</sup>

With *The Guardian* newspaper prominently highlighting the *Spooked* allegations<sup>47</sup> and Labour backbench MPs questioning the government’s approach at the same time as this Conservative Party criticism, it truly felt that *Prevent* with its approach at the time was friendless. Charles Farr, director general of OSCT, acknowledged the damage done to involvement of communities in *Prevent* by these allegations despite the government’s rebuttal of them, when giving evidence to the CLG Select Committee Inquiry:

I find the reasons for their not wanting to engage are rooted in the misrepresentations which Prevent suffered from notably in the articles that

*The Guardian* ran, to some degree based on the IRR report by Kundnani ... When we talk to people who do not want anything to do with Prevent, I find that they do not want anything to do with a mythical construct of Prevent which does not exist and is not part of the strategy.<sup>48</sup>

Indeed, Farr's explicit position in his Select Committee evidence was that the reality of *Prevent*, especially since the advent of Counter-Terrorism Local Plans that provide detailed intelligence briefings to local authorities and their partners, was quite the opposite to that implied by the 'spying allegations: the direction of the information, intelligence if you will, regarding the *Prevent* programme is from the police and from the security agencies into local authorities'.<sup>49</sup> John Denham, the minister for CLG, was also forthright in his denial of the 'spying' allegations in an interview on BBC Radio 4's 'Today' programme on 8th December 2009:

Alan Johnston (the then Home Secretary) and I instructed there to be an investigation into every single one of those allegations that have been made ... not a single one of those allegations stood up ... I have got to say, up until now this is exactly the sort of thing I want to deal with today – the idea that this is happening up and down the country when actually there is no evidence that it is.

As Robert Lambert and Jonathan Githens-Mazer highlighted, a number of these 'untrue' allegations in *Spooked*, including the Camden youth workers issue detailed above, were already a matter of public record, and that it was entirely unclear how the government had quickly concluded that there was no substance in these very serious charges: 'Given that the nature of the allegations hinges on a lack of trust, assuring members of British Muslim communities that these allegations are all false without providing an authoritative account of their investigation is problematic: it ignores community perceptions of the problem and the situation – and does little to alleviate fears or concerns.'<sup>50</sup> Despite that assertion, the CLG Select Committee expressed considerable concern about the allegations raised by *Spooked* and by others, focusing heavily on issues of surveillance in their oral evidence sessions. Their resulting report concluded that

We believe that the misuse of terms like 'spying' and 'intelligence gathering' amongst Prevent partners has exacerbated the problem. We recommend that the Government take urgent steps to clarify how information required under *Prevent* does not constitute 'intelligence gathering' of the type undertaken by the police or security services. ... we cannot ignore the volume of evidence we have seen and heard which demonstrates a continuing lack of trust of the programme amongst those delivering and receiving services ... If the Government wants to improve confidence in the *Prevent* programme, it should commission an independent investigation into the allegations made.<sup>51</sup>

The government rejected that call for an Inquiry, and with the General Election campaign commencing shortly after the report's publication, official response did

not come until the 2011 revised *Prevent* strategy from the coalition government. That review stated, 'There have been allegations that previous *Prevent* programmes have been used to spy on communities. We can find no evidence to support these claims. *Prevent* must not be used as a means for covert spying on people or communities. Trust in *Prevent* must be improved.'<sup>52</sup> That went alongside the pledge that 'government will not securitise its integration strategy. This has been a mistake in the past'.<sup>53</sup> Obviously, the proof or otherwise of this will come as the new *Prevent* strategy is operationalised, but the retrenchment of *Prevent* into the Home Office/OSCT, so separating counterterrorism, even of the 'hearts and minds' variety, from cohesion and integration work of the DCLG, as the Select Committee Inquiry recommended, is a positive starting point. However, this still begs questions as to the basis and objective of future community-based *Prevent* activity in the 25 target areas, especially given the assertive, 'values-based' rhetoric that accompanied the launch of the revised *Prevent* strategy.

### Channel: A way forward?

Perhaps the most open and obvious *Prevent* interaction between CTU/police and local authorities has been through the so-called 'Channel' initiative, an approach of identification and early intervention with young people viewed as vulnerable to radicalisation and manipulation by violent extremism. Channel began in 2008, with *The Times* highlighting that 'eight areas of the country identified as potential breeding grounds for violent extremism are to start government-funded "intervention programmes" to prevent susceptible individuals from being radicalised'.<sup>54</sup> The article portrayed Channel as an acceptance by the police that hard-edged Pursue arrests alone could not address the threat of violent extremism. Two pilot projects, in Preston, Lancashire and Lambeth, south London had run from 2007, being then extended to further eight areas in 2008. Five of those new sites were in West Yorkshire, with a police *Prevent* officer interviewed in 2008 for the Kirklees *Prevent* evaluation commenting at the time that 'it's a project called Channel, it's run by the government but only in certain areas of the country ... to see how we can engage the community, build trust and confidence and prevent certain groups trying to promote extremism'. Ian Larder, the ACPO leader of the Channel initiative nationally, was quoted by *The Times* as saying, 'it may be theological discussion is needed, or they need mentoring. The project reflects the need to address the problems in our communities. We are asking the community to work with the police and statutory agencies to stop people that have been identified as displaying strange behaviour becoming violent extremists.'<sup>55</sup>

CONTEST 2, which was published in 2009, identified Channel operating in 11 areas, with a further 15 planned; by June 2011 the government highlighted

that ‘Channel now covers about 75 local authorities and 12 Police forces’.<sup>56</sup> Chapter 3 outlined the significant number of people who had already gone through Channel by then, 1,120 in total, the large majority of them young people. The local *Prevent* multiagency arrangements of ‘Gold’, ‘Silver’ and ‘Bronze’ liaison and coordination groups provide the mechanism for Channel to operate, with individual agencies identifying and ‘nominating’ young people viewed as being ‘at risk’ of radicalisation, with those young people then referred on via the ‘Bronze’ group arrangements to a variety of agencies, such as youth work, housing, social work or faith-based organisations, who offer packages of educational, diversionary or specifically de-radicalisation, activity.

Arguably, the analogies repeatedly made by government ministers between *Prevent* and policies of diversion from knife crime, or hard drug use, ‘crime prevention’ work as then minister John Denham put it in 2009, are most convincing in relation to Channel. This is because the Channel approach has used locally agreed assessment criteria to identify ‘at risk’ individuals and respond with intervention packages in a targeted way, unlike the large-scale and unfocused youth activities representing the vast majority to date of *Prevent* work funded via local authorities. In its evidence to the CLG Select Committee, ACPO highlighted the fact that 7/7 bomber Hasib Hussain had drawn graffiti in support of Bin-Laden and the 9/11 attacks on his exercise books whilst at high school in Leeds. Similarly, Germaine Lindsay attempted to access radical Islamist websites whilst at high school in Huddersfield, and in both cases ACPO suggests that referrals to a process such as Channel might have made a difference to their subsequent trajectories.

In its organisation and approach, Channel has drawn heavily on the experience of multiagency approaches to child protection or ‘safeguarding’, as modern governmental jargon describes it, involving what the CLG Select Committee saw as justifiable information sharing: ‘It should be acknowledged that the sharing of personal information in the interests of crime prevention, or to protect vulnerable people, is sometimes necessary.’<sup>57</sup> However, the Select Committee went on to say that during their Inquiry process, ‘it became clear that the Channel project epitomised many witnesses’ concerns of “spying” about the involvement of the police in the delivery of public services’.<sup>58</sup> Charles Farr, director general of the OSCT, had firmly rejected the allegations of spying and inappropriate police involvement in his oral evidence to the Committee, saying that a referral to Channel was actually a way of helping people avoid criminalising themselves. For Farr, Channel was a clear success, enabling government to create ‘support networks ... which can identify people who look as they are being drawn into the world of violent extremism and providing them with some sort of intervention’.<sup>59</sup> However, the fact is that local Channel coordinators who refer young people on to providers are overwhelmingly *Prevent* police officers. This does beg a number of important questions around civil liberties, though, particularly over whether any state



has the right to intervene over the political or religious views expressed by a young person, no matter how vulnerable, before any criminal action, or planning towards one, has actually taken place. An American report on how their counter-radicalisation work can become more coherent bluntly concluded that ‘aggressive, government-run intervention and de-radicalisation programs, such as the Channel project in the UK, would be rejected as too intrusive in the American context’.<sup>60</sup> This civil liberties dilemma for the local British agencies charged with actually implementing *Prevent* generally, and Channel in particular, was highlighted by a senior manager in Kirklees council in West Yorkshire, who suggested that Channel represented an acceptable compromise:

We had a massive debate politically around how far do you take this in terms of people’s rights to be extreme and rights to have quite extreme views, and that very, very productive kind of debate that you can have when people are being a little bit extreme ... But we did manage to get some political consensus about when people are vulnerable and how it can then be used to radicalise them to much more violent extremism if you like, and when it spills out then that will have an impact on cohesion and even on crime.<sup>61</sup>

The government justified and sharpened the focus of the intervention approach of Channel in June 2011 by stating that local tendencies to sometime steer ‘people towards Channel who may have been perceived as potentially vulnerable in some broader sense, rather than specifically at risk of being drawn into terrorism’ and that ‘these trends need to be corrected’.<sup>62</sup> It stretches credulity, however, to imagine that the 290 under-16-year-olds, and the 55 under-12-year-olds referred nationally to Channel between April 2009 and December 2010 really fit that apparently tight definition of suitability. The development of the ‘Channel’ initiative within *Prevent* has been seen as progress by many, both locally and nationally, because Channel works with much smaller numbers of ‘at risk’ young people in a more targeted and intelligence-led way. However, this may well simply be a smaller scale surveillance or ‘fishing expedition’ in that there is little hard academic evidence as to how those genuinely at risk of involvement in ‘violent extremism’ can be identified in advance, so adding to doubts over the whole role of, and significant resource allocation to, the police within *Prevent*. Despite very close government investigation of those Britons to date involved in Islamist terror plots, ‘the security services can identify neither a uniform pattern by which a process occurs nor a particular type that is susceptible’.<sup>63</sup> The danger here is that ‘fact-based’ profiles of susceptibility overestimate individual political views and underestimate the processes of mentor–disciple relationships and peer group operations that can tip individuals quite rapidly towards violence, and that predicting this in advance is very difficult, as Chapter 1 highlighted. Kundnani identifies such concerns over the actual targeting of Channel in *Spooked*, quoting one of his practitioner respondents as saying, ‘Badly behaved

young persons who happen to be Muslim or who have said something in anger then become known to the system as “at risk”.<sup>64</sup> This highlights real concerns over the skills and understandings of those involved in the Channel referral and ‘intervention’ work. This is also highlighted by Fahid Qurashi, who comments, ‘Through my own research, I have found that teachers have repeatedly and wrongly referred young Muslim students for a Channel intervention over such trivial issues as enquiring about halal food, and prayer facilities in schools. Yet the new strategy seems to be oblivious of this kind of fallout.’<sup>65</sup>

It is also clear that, in practice, Channel has worked with a significant number of people who are *not* at danger of extremist Islamist radicalisation but who are vulnerable to other sorts of political extremism, such as racism or even far-right racist political activity.<sup>66</sup> The *Prevent* review of June 2011 stated that ‘Channel needs to deal with all types of terrorism’,<sup>67</sup> so mirroring the reality of *Prevent* practice by YOTs analysed in Chapter 5. This might be seen as helpful flexibility but also as evidence that the long-standing government insistence that *Prevent* does not deal with other, non-Islamist forms of violent extremism because they are *not* international or organised in nature is more about rhetoric than reality. However, in keeping with the ‘values-based’ tone of the June 2011 *Prevent* review, the government stated that ‘*Prevent* will not fund interventions providers who promote extremist ideas or beliefs’.<sup>68</sup> As Chapter 4 highlighted, it may be precisely such radical Islamist groups with perspectives based on Salafism, or the ideology of the Muslim Brotherhood, who are best equipped to dissuade young Muslim radicals away from violent extremism, but the government will not now countenance their involvement. If such law-abiding Islamist groups are not allowed to play a role in *Prevent*’s de-radicalisation efforts via Channel, it is far from clear who *will* have the credibility and convincing theology-based arguments to persuade radicalised young Muslims in more constructive, law-abiding directions.

### Conclusion: Perception is everything?

Whether or not ‘spying’ in any meaningful sense, in a greater degree than is normal in existing community-based policing approaches, is really central to *Prevent*, this perception has taken hold to a very significant degree, as Charles Farr and the OSCT acknowledge, and it is arguably a case of shooting the messenger to blame *Spooked* and its resulting press coverage. The bungled terror raids and draconian attempts to limit civil liberties in the name of counterterrorism outlined above had already created a climate of distrust, especially in some Muslim communities experiencing negative wider relationships with the police and the state. It was always difficult, perhaps impossible, to maintain clear demarcation between the Pursue policing and *Prevent* ‘hearts and minds’

approaches to community engagement within the CONTEST strategy: ‘there is an inevitable tension in relation to the community-oriented multiagency “soft” policing engagement with Muslim communities, under *Prevent*, and the more “hard” policing requirement of intelligence gathering, under the lead of MI5, investigations and arrests under Pursue, with its focus on stopping terrorist attacks.’<sup>69</sup> In addition, the Labour government’s well-meaning approach to *Prevent* of trying to foster partnership and shared responsibility for the issues arguably has muddied the waters further, particularly around the role of the police, who have found themselves in their *Prevent* activities stuck between those ‘hard’ and ‘soft’ roles. In an article on *Prevent* written in the early stages of its implementation,<sup>70</sup> I suggested that *Prevent* was ‘between two stools’, and that has certainly been true of the policing aspect of the programme. Here, precisely through attempts to engage both with local communities and with the key statutory and voluntary sector agencies delivering *Prevent*, the police have been encouraged by politicians and the Security Services directing CONTEST and *Prevent* to stray unhelpfully well beyond their normal roles into functions, such as direct engagement with young people, involved for instance in youth provision. In itself, this was bound to raise issues of appropriacy and boundaries, and the fact that it has been done through an explicitly anti-terrorism programme made allegations of surveillance inevitable. As a recent American report on approaches to effective counter-radicalisation suggests, ‘none of the agencies that are mainly concerned with counter-terrorism should be seen to play a dominant role in counter-radicalisation’.<sup>71</sup> Of course, the police should build dialogue and stronger relationships of trust with British Muslim communities, but it shouldn’t need a counterterrorism programme to enable this.

Clearly, high levels of vigilance are needed against further Islamist terror plots, but the question here is whether a crude *Prevent* focus on Muslim communities as a whole, steered overtly by the police and security forces in an effort to ‘spot’ likely terrorists, will really be effective, or it may even be counterproductive because of the suspicions and distrust this approach engenders among ordinary Muslims. The term ‘hearts and minds’ originates in counter-insurgency campaigns and was based on isolating insurgents through winning the support and trust of the majority.<sup>72</sup> On that basis, the long-term success or otherwise of *Prevent* is unclear, as the appearance and partial reality of state surveillance that is central to its operationalisation has seriously damaged the prospect of community partnership. In contrast, moving towards community cohesion-based approaches of community engagement ‘would create the space and legitimacy for a more sophisticated, intelligence-led approach to tackling specific local threats as and when they occur’.<sup>73</sup> Such an approach would suggest a clear separation between policing and cohesion-based community development activities, as highlighted by the overwhelming majority of submissions to the Select Committee Inquiry and their subsequent recommendations.<sup>74</sup>

# Conclusion

## Failing to *Prevent*?

Writing this book some years after the 7/7 attacks of July 2005, the impact of those events remains powerful. For those who lost loved ones that day, or those who were injured, the impact will be permanent and very personal. For Britain as a whole, though, the impact is also likely to be long-lasting. Whilst the 9/11 attacks on New York led both to many more fatalities and to very significant foreign policy responses, American public opinion could at least reassure itself that the airliner attacks were perpetuated by foreigners who had come to the United States. For Britain, the shock was different, as the 7/7 attacks were carried out by four young Yorkshiremen, all raised and educated, and some born, in Britain – ‘ordinary’ young Britons with regional Yorkshire accents who had willingly killed themselves in order to also kill fellow Britons in the name of their understanding of Islam. That reality of domestic terrorism, sometimes based on suicide attacks, is something that the United States now also has to confront, and it is a threat that inevitably raises profound questions of identity, separation and commonality in society and around how states based on democracy and the rule of law should respond. Such questions have not lessened over the past few years despite the lack of any further such Islamist terrorist attacks – the number of foiled plots, some leading to convictions, and the sheer good luck of no injuries in the failed 21/7 attacks on London and the 2007 car bomb attempts on both central London and Glasgow Airport, means that few people are under any illusions about the scale of the threat that Britain faces from Islamist violent extremism.

### A home-grown threat?

Whilst commentators from different places on the political spectrum have been quick to offer ready-made explanations for such a domestic terror threat, whether that be neo-imperialist and Islamophobic British foreign policy or an Islamic culture committed to both separation and conflict, any reasonable reading of the academic evidence available cautions against simplistic understandings of causes and motivations. Chapter 1 outlined the different main understandings of what is driving Islamist violent extremism in Western countries and highlighted that all these explanations have both strengths and significant flaws and limitations.

Islamist terrorists and plotters, whether it be the 7/7 attackers in their ‘suicide videos’ or others captured in recent years, such as Roshonara Choudhry after her attempted murder of MP Stephen Timms, have stressed British foreign policy as their motivation, and it is clear that misguided foreign adventures have made Britain significantly less safe. However, the ideology that drives Islamist violent extremism was strengthening its influence on young British Muslims well before the Afghanistan and Iraq invasions, as shown by the number of terrorists plotting attacks on Britain and other Western countries before 2003, or even before 2001. That raises the question of the Islamist ‘single narrative’ and how and why some people who subscribe to it are attracted further towards violent extremism.

The ‘single narrative’ has its roots in the political reaction to the failure of secular, socialist-tinged nationalism in the Muslim and Arab worlds, and to the energetic propagation internationally of very literal and conservative, even reactionary, forms of Islam by oil-rich dictatorships keen to protect their privileged positions. However, why is this ‘single narrative’ attractive to some young British Muslims? The context of a heightened Islamic identity among young Muslim in Britain and other Western countries can be understood not as a reactionary look backwards but as a modernist phenomenon, a response to globalisation by second and third generations of Muslim settlers coming to terms with being a Muslim minority in increasingly secular but nominally ‘Christian’ countries. For many young Muslims, this prioritisation of Islamic faith identity, as confirmed by the empirical data presented here, is a positive and progressive development that allows them to negotiate their place both within their own communities and within wider society. For a small minority, however, it can be a vehicle for antagonism, or even hatred, towards non-Muslim ‘others’ and to Western society in general.

A number of explanations have been offered for the drift towards violent extremism of this small minority of British, and indeed, Western Muslims. Poverty is one such explanation, and indeed it is true that the Pakistani- and Bangladeshi-origin communities, who comprise the large majority of British Muslims, are the poorest and most disadvantaged ethnic groups in terms of employment, living conditions and educational achievement. However, that marginalised situation is improving rapidly and, more importantly, many of the young British Muslim terrorists have been well-educated and from comparatively comfortable backgrounds. Here, it is clear that any issue of disadvantage is about how violent extremists view ‘their’ people, rather than their personal situation. Similarly, the argument that the Islamist terrorism threat is a product of extreme mosques runs up against the fact that the majority of British Islamist terrorists have *not* been radicalised through mosques. Instead, they have often been comparatively ignorant of Islam, being ‘born-again’ or recent converts who move straight from ignorance to extreme interpretations of Islam through private study circles or speakers,

rather than community-based mosque involvement. That rapid process of radicalisation for many highlights the central importance of group dynamics, peer group operation and the role of charismatic leaders within them, as the vitally important research of social psychologist Scott Atran shows. Atran's investigation of the 9/11, Madrid and Bali Islamist bomb plots shows how group links, loyalties and dynamics are vital, with 'my people' for such terrorists often not even being the *ummah*, but their small and tight friendship group that has become their world. All the evidence suggests that such groups of British Islamist plotters have radicalised themselves and formulated outline terrorist plans before, or in tandem with, making any contact with 'Al-Qaeda central', with some, such as the Madrid bombers, having no contact at all. This Islamist threat is one of small, leaderless cells inspired by the 'single narrative' and not a traditional, hierarchical terrorist 'army' controlled until his death by Osama Bin-Laden.

### The relevance of community cohesion

This all cautions against simplistic understandings of the terrorist threat that Britain faces, but there are wider contextual issues that need to be considered. The most important, arguably, is the position of many British Muslim communities and the state of British 'race relations'. The 2001 riots involving young Muslims in the northern towns and cities of Oldham, Burnley and Bradford prompted a very significant government rethink and new priorities for policy approaches to 'race relations'. A new priority of 'community cohesion' was promoted, and this book has argued that community cohesion is vital, not only to respond effectively to the threat of Islamist violent extremism but also to understand how this threat can grow and harden within corners of British Muslim communities, in the same way as support for violent racist extremism can and does grow within some parts of white communities. Community cohesion clearly identifies the dangers of ethnic communities living separate lives, whether physically or culturally, and the extent to which this can harden distinct and mutually antagonistic 'identities'. Such ethnic segregation is clearly most stark in ex-industrial areas where communities of all ethnic backgrounds have highly restrained housing, employment and leisure options, and the fact that large portions of British Muslim communities live in such areas indicates how distinct, separate and inwards-looking identities might develop within parts of communities. Similarly, many of the white, working-class men attracted towards the far-right political organisations like the BNP and EDL over the past few years come from monocultural, 'segregated' white communities left marginalised and impoverished by de-industrialisation and neoliberalist policy responses to it. In both cases, segregated physical and cultural spaces

combined with inequality can lead to oppositional identifications and a racialised understanding of the social and economic conditions creating their community's marginalisation.

The community cohesion analysis also identifies the problematic impact of well-intentioned governmental 'political multiculturalism' or equal opportunities policies since 1981. Those policies have had many positive impacts, especially in significantly reducing many aspects of ethnic minority marginalisation and disadvantage in Britain, but have also had significant downsides. In particular, they have essentialised and reified ethnic identity, engaging and privileging separate and distinct 'ethnic' identities at the expense of both commonality and other forms of identity. Such a policy focus on ethnicity has arguably 'opened the door' for a growth in faith-based identity, which, in the case of Muslims, has interacted with real domestic and global political events to produce very strong Muslim identification within distinct and often segregated Muslim communities. The community cohesion analysis is that such strong and separate ethnic or faith identities, whether Muslim, or racialised whiteness, and policy acknowledgement and indulgence of them, is not viable in Britain's increasingly diverse society and that continued drives for 'equality' for distinct communities *must* be balanced by an approach of encouraging greater commonality and more de-centred and intersectional personal identities. This is particularly true in a political and indeed societal context where class and the reality of class-based inequality is increasingly denied. Community cohesion has become a major policy priority since 2001, and research by the author discussed in this book suggests that, rather than being the 'death of multiculturalism', cohesion represents a new and potentially productive phase of a multiculturalism re-balanced to focus more strongly on commonality as well as diversity. This community cohesion perspective argues very strongly that if there is a problem of antagonistic and oppositional 'identities' within specific communities, the answer is not more work with, and focus on, that specific identity but instead, quite the reverse – productive ways forward have to focus more on commonality, more cross-ethnic contact and dialogue, and on equal and genuine participation in society. It also argues for more intersectional, de-centred and 'cooler' forms of identity to be recognised and supported, rather than further reification of essentialised ethnic/religious 'hot' identities that will inevitably lead to conflict in an increasingly diverse society. This is the context in which we can and should discuss the effectiveness of any 'hearts and minds', anti-violent extremism programme such as *Prevent*.

### **Failing to *Prevent***

I have taken some time here to restate both the complexities of what causes and motivates Islamist violent extremists, and the key arguments of the

community cohesion analysis of ethnic relations and identity in modern British society, because this book has argued that *Prevent* to date, as designed and implemented by national government, has largely disregarded both, and that this goes a long way to explain why *Prevent* has been ineffective and so reviled. We do need an effective anti-violent extremism ‘hearts and minds’ programme, particularly one targeted at young people living in tense and marginalised areas, but *Prevent* so far has not been it.

Past and present British governments do deserve credit for including a ‘hearts and minds’ preventative element within the overall CONTEST counterterrorism strategy and for attempting to operationalise this through partnership activity with, and resourcing of, sections of Muslim communities. Such approaches demonstrate awareness of the lessons from other counterterrorism campaigns, namely that a securitised overreaction, a kicking in of doors and a crackdown on entire communities, is the worst and most counterproductive approach possible, and that partnership and dialogue is vital to secure the ‘human intelligence’ that will ultimately expose and defeat those committed to violent extremism. However, the manner in which *Prevent* has been designed, operationalised and managed means that it has largely failed in those terms, as it has left Muslim and non-Muslim communities alike feeling that it is actually about surveillance and control of one specific, entire community, rather than partnership, whilst also failing to effectively engage educationally with those at risk of attraction to violent extremism. This book has attempted to detail those significant flaws and drawbacks of *Prevent*, as it is currently conceived and constructed, in order to identify more productive policy approaches, and those flaws are briefly summarised here.

From the perspective of this book, the greatest failing of *Prevent* to date has been its flat contradiction to, and malign effect upon, the policy priority of community cohesion outlined above. The book has presented clear evidence that *Prevent* has not just failed to work in tandem with that drive for greater cohesion and integration but has also undermined it and squeezed the space into which community cohesion thinking and practice was growing at ground level. Contrary to the cohesion analysis of unhelpfully overdeveloped, specific ethnic identities, *Prevent* has focused only on the ‘Muslimness’ of British Muslim communities and individuals through its monocultural and broad-brush focus on Muslims only, and in its practical working through religious organisations and leaders. That has been exacerbated by *Prevent*’s clumsy and inappropriate ‘social engineering’ within Muslim communities, through attempts to encourage more varied and polyphonic forms of leadership, and by the overt promotion of particular types of Islamic religious thought and practice, something that is surely entirely inappropriate for a democratic Western government to engage with. Much of that ‘social engineering’ activity has been driven by the ‘values-based’ perspective on *Prevent*, which sees the danger of Islamist violent extremism as closely connected to ‘values’ and



outlooks in wider, mainstream sections of some British Muslim communities, something that must be tackled in order to disrupt the ‘conveyor belt’ towards violent extremism. The June 2011 *Prevent* review appeared to represent a triumph of that ‘values-based’ approach to the detriment of pragmatic, ‘means-based’ engagement with conservative Muslim communities who may hold arguably illiberal social ‘values’ but who have the ability to divert young Islamists away from the path towards violent extremism.

That monocultural focus on an entire community has further hardened a ‘defensive’ and essentialised Muslim identity that had already been encouraged over previous years by policies of political multiculturalism that privileged ethnic specificity and by Islamophobic political and media scrutiny. That Muslim defensiveness has been hardened also by *Prevent*’s complete lack of interest in the growing threat of far-right racist violent extremism. *Prevent* emerged as the BNP, a political party whose members have very significant criminal records for terrorist offences and serious acts of violence, was growing politically, but any threat of far-right violent extremism was being dismissed, fuelling the Muslim sense of an unbalanced political scrutiny. That disinterest was reiterated by the *Prevent* relaunch in June 2011, only for the Norway massacre weeks later to expose a substantial and growing far-right, pan-European network that looked and sounded a lot like extremist Islamist networks. This highlighted the fact that *Prevent* had misrepresented the nature of both Islamist and far-right violent extremism, overemphasising the organisation of the former and badly underestimating the latter.

As the community cohesion analysis of the lessons from the 2001 northern riots suggested, such a monocultural focus on one community has also had the predictable effect of promoting ‘envy’ in other ethnic and social communities, who are jealous and questioning of a substantial funding stream aimed at one community only whilst, wrongly, claiming that there is no ‘extremism’ in their communities. It is clear from the empirical evidence discussed in this book that community cohesion, with its focus on cross-community work, has significant support from policy makers and practitioners at the local level, and was making developmental progress prior to the appearance of *Prevent*. For that reason, practitioners on the ground struggled to see the distinction between cohesion and *Prevent*, and wanted to address the dangers of oppositional and separate identities, and attraction to violent extremism through further development of cohesion-based approaches and practice. Such cohesion-based, community-based *Prevent* interventions locally would play to the strengths and experience of the practitioners being asked to deliver it on the ground, but instead the UK approach to *Prevent* to date has meant there is clear evidence that such professionals have not felt comfortable trying to implement a programme aimed at Muslims only, and one supposedly overtly concerned with terrorism – they have felt themselves to be lacking

in the skills, educational clarity and political support from above, just as educational practitioners did in a different era when asked to implement overt anti-racist programmes with white young people often holding strong racist views.

The efforts of local authorities to take a cohesion-based approach to *Prevent* that would circumvent these problems, and potentially enable more productive and holistic practice approaches to *Prevent*, have been increasingly thwarted by national government through the control it exercises via reporting mechanisms such as NI 35, and by the very significant control exercised over local *Prevent* operations by the Police and Security Services, something hardened by the decision of the coalition government in June 2011 to give the Home Office total control over *Prevent*. In contrast, there was no immediate sign of the new cohesion and integration policy strategy promised by the coalition government from the early days of their election. In this long absence, policy focus on cohesion, and any national funding or political support for it, has progressively withered.

Nothing has poisoned *Prevent*'s chances of progress to date more than the clumsy and overblown roles for the Police and Security Services within local *Prevent* design and delivery. Whilst accepting that a total distinction between the Pursue and *Prevent* arms of CONTEST is impossible to always maintain, the police have got their role in *Prevent* badly wrong in their eagerness to build community engagement with Muslim communities, and the downsizing of the police's role in *Prevent* announced in the June 2011 *Prevent* review implicitly accepted this. No 'hearts and minds' programme that asks British Muslims to rethink certain assumptions and be prepared to pass on information is ever likely to succeed when led so overtly and inappropriately by the police and Security Services in ways that completely blur, or even break, important boundaries and demarcations around professional roles and responsibilities. In many local areas, police have not only led local *Prevent* arrangements but also played a strong role in the delivery of supposedly education-based engagement with young people and communities. That is simply not their job, those are not job roles they are trained or equipped to do, and this reality has badly damaged efforts to build coalitions of support against violent extremism. Whether this overblown police and security service role in *Prevent* has represented 'spying' in any organised sense is hard to say, but it has given the clear impression of being surveillance, and that charge has not gone away, leaving *Prevent* as a tainted 'brand'. The June 2011 review of the *Prevent* strategy has put funding and monitoring of local *Prevent* activity directly in the hands of the Home Office/OSCT, and the danger here is that the influence of Police and Security Services on what remains, in the 25 new target areas, community-based educational interventions aimed at young people will only grow further.

### *Prevent: A better way*

Work that fulfils the aims of *Prevent* will be needed for the foreseeable future, but it can and should be done differently to the present approach, and that different approach can also be a better and more effective one. We do need anti-extremism ‘hearts and minds’ work, but it needs to be congruent with community cohesion, and so aimed to young people and communities of *all* ethnic, faith and social backgrounds, partially in recognition of the fact that other forms of violent extremism also pose a threat. That is not just to ensure that *Prevent* supports wider efforts to develop and promote cohesion and integration work, but because overdeveloped, singular and oppositional ethnic or faith-based ‘identities’ are the starting point for the drift towards violent extremism for a minority, so anti-violent extremism approaches need to counter ‘hot’, singular identities through stress on commonality, complex personal identifications and plurality, not reinforce those singular identities.

That argues for a much stronger and better resourced cohesion and integration strategy than Britain has at present, one that actively encourages ‘meaningful direct contact’ between people of different ethnic, social and geographical backgrounds through a variety of means. Where does that leave *Prevent*? Would anti-violent extremism work be sidelined by a growth in generalised cohesion work? This book would argue for a *Prevent*-funded strand of cohesion activity that focuses directly on political debate and democratic participation of young people, but which does this through multiethnic, cohesion-based activity. The UK Youth Parliament/ACPO initiative ‘Project Safe Space’<sup>1</sup> has shown that such work is possible within a *Prevent* framework, enabling robust debate among young people of different backgrounds around issues of equality, politics and foreign policy. An expansion of such an approach, specifically targeted at areas where racial tension and extremism activity are viewed as problematic, would enable policy to address greater cohesion, the democratic participation of young people and tackling the attractions of violent extremism in tandem. Similarly, the Youth Parliament scheme itself nationally and locally has shown great success in encouraging young people of different ethnic and social backgrounds to engage in political debate and represent other young people. That is another forum where real political conflicts can be discussed in ways that teaches the skills of, and encourages involvement in, democratic political processes. Leading community development organisation, the Young Foundation, has been developing a youth leadership scheme, ‘Uprising’,<sup>2</sup> which has trained and supported young leaders from different ethnic and social backgrounds to develop work with young people, with the young leaders trained within an explicit cohesion and anti-discriminatory environment. All those initiatives show that we already have models of work with young people and communities that explicitly address issues of politics, identity and attractions of extremism, and do so within a framework of cohesion and

integration. Those examples go alongside the exciting community cohesion practice that is starting to develop locally, such as in Oldham, and which has been discussed in this book. Such an approach to both *Prevent* and cohesion would build on existing frameworks and structures, and would not need to start from scratch, as the coalition government's misjudged National Citizen Service seems determined to do. What such a cohesion-based approach to *Prevent* would require is much more support for practitioner training and experience-sharing than has taken place to date. A properly funded national programme of training and support for anti-extremism community-based practitioners, such as youth workers, teachers and community-based activists from a variety of backgrounds, would be a significant policy advance, whilst costing merely a proportion of the money wasted on the misguided *Prevent* programmes to date. Such an approach would need national politicians to focus on educational rather than surveillance-based approaches and show trust in those involved in local design and delivery.

In arguing for such a cohesion-based approach to future *Prevent* work, it must be acknowledged that there will sometimes be a need for monocultural work, for instance, with young Muslims who are questioning what Islam suggests about responses to current political realities or white young people expressing racialised resentment and attraction towards far-right groups. However, having such specific and targeted monocultural work within an overall cohesion-based framework is very different from the current top-down *Prevent* focus on Muslims as an entire community. Similarly, there will be a continuing need for Channel, or a similar programme, that engages with vulnerable individuals at risk of active radicalisation of various types, but approaching this both through a cohesion framework and a closer tie-in with existing youth offending and child protection structures will again make Channel appear less of surveillance-based 'fishing expedition' than it is at present.

Will any of the proposals outlined above ensure that any future acts of Islamist, or far-right, violent extremism will be avoided in Britain? No, because no 'hearts and minds'-type *Prevent* programme can ensure that. What a cohesion-based approach to *Prevent* activity *can* achieve is remove the current stigma around the tainted *Prevent* brand and instead build real resilience within individual communities and between communities. Such resilience would enable individuals to be more aware of violent extremism and how to avoid it, to better speak out against those promoting violent extremism within communities, and to articulate for commonality when extremists argue for separation, conflict and the necessity of killing fellow citizens setting out on their morning commute to work.

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# Notes

## Introduction: A new threat of violent extremism?

- 1 The only injuries sustained were by the two attackers, one of whom subsequently died.
- 2 See Atran 2010 for a detailed account of the Madrid attacks.
- 3 See, for instance, Cobain 2008.
- 4 See Burke 2008.
- 5 Dodd 2010b.
- 6 Thomas 2011.
- 7 Masood 2006.
- 8 Cantle 2001, 2005.
- 9 David Cameron's speech to the Munich Security Conference, 5th February 2011.
- 10 Neumann 2011: 9.
- 11 The CLG Select Committee Report was published in March 2010.
- 12 See Mycock and Tonge 2011.
- 13 See HMG 2011, Husan 2011 and Qurashi 2011 for early critical reactions to it.
- 14 DCLG 2007b: 7.
- 15 BBC Radio 4 2011a.
- 16 Home Office 2003, 2009.
- 17 Thomas 2011.
- 18 See Thomas 2006, 2007, 2011 and Thomas and Sanderson 2009.
- 19 See Hewstone *et al.* 2007.
- 20 McGhee 2006.
- 21 See House of Commons 2010.
- 22 Monro *et al.* 2010.
- 23 See CRE 1999 and Thomas 2002.
- 24 See Gunaratnam 2003.
- 25 For fuller discussion see, for instance, Roy 2004, Lewis 2007 and Githens-Mazer and Lambert 2011.

## Chapter 1 The threat of violent extremism

- 1 English 2009: 23.
- 2 Gupta 2008: xvii.
- 3 Clarke 2004.
- 4 Sederberg 2003.
- 5 Neumann 2011.
- 6 See Rai 2006 for a fuller account of the 7/7 attacks.
- 7 See Addley 2011a, 2011b.
- 8 Gardham 2008.

- 9 Taylor 2008.
- 10 See Burke 2007.
- 11 Roy 2004.
- 12 Husain 2007.
- 13 Roy 2004: 46.
- 14 Phillips 2008.
- 15 Atran 2010.
- 16 McGhee 2008.
- 17 Atran 2010: 5.
- 18 Roy 2004: 6.
- 19 See Stevens 2009.
- 20 Roy 2004: 200.
- 21 Cited in Rai 2006: 131.
- 22 McGhee 2008: 66.
- 23 Rai 2006: 15–16.
- 24 English 2009: 104.
- 25 Bux 2007: 273.
- 26 Malik 2007: 17.
- 27 See Burke 2008 for more on these plots.
- 28 Brighton 2007: 3.
- 29 Dodd 2010b.
- 30 Githens-Mazer 2010b.
- 31 Burke 2007.
- 32 Rai 2006.
- 33 Burke 2008: 23.
- 34 Gupta 2008: 91.
- 35 Atran 2010: 98.
- 36 Leiken 2005.
- 37 See Thomas 2011 for a fuller discussion of France’s approach to ethnic identity.
- 38 See Diamond 2011.
- 39 With truth replicating fiction at times – see John Updike’s prescient novel *The Terrorist*.
- 40 See Neumann 2011.
- 41 See Malik 2007.
- 42 Submission to CLG Select Committee Inquiry.
- 43 Cited in Rai 2006: 45.
- 44 Finney and Simpson 2009.
- 45 Burke 2008: 16.
- 46 Bux 2007: 269.
- 47 FCO/Home Office 2004: 12–13.
- 48 See Modood *et al.* 1997.
- 49 Atran 2010.
- 50 Addley 2011a.
- 51 Malik 2007.
- 52 Swinford 2011.

- 53 Phillips 2008.
- 54 Malik 2007: 10.
- 55 Roy 2004: 324.
- 56 A prime example of what Eatwell (2006) terms 'cumulative extremism'.
- 57 Burke 2008.
- 58 McGhee 2008.
- 59 See *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*.
- 60 See Warnes and Hannah 2008.
- 61 Burke 2008: 16.
- 62 Malik 2007: 2.
- 63 Atran 2010: 37.
- 64 Atran 2010: 162.
- 65 Atran 2010: 220.
- 66 Rai 2006: 33.
- 67 Gupta 2008.
- 68 FCO/Home Office 2004: 13.
- 69 Dodd 2010b.
- 70 Atran 2010: 276.
- 71 Addley 2011b.

## Chapter 2 Community cohesion: A changed policy context

- 1 Solomos 2003.
- 2 Masood 2006.
- 3 See Prins and Salisbury 2008.
- 4 Cantle 2001 and Denham 2001.
- 5 See Thomas 2011 for a more detailed account of these riots.
- 6 Malik 2007: 11.
- 7 Modood *et al.* 1997.
- 8 Leiken 2005: 129.
- 9 See Ritchie 2001 and Clarke 2001.
- 10 Ouseley 2001.
- 11 See the Commission for Multi-Ethnic Britain Report 2000.
- 12 Home Office 2005.
- 13 Monro *et al.* 2010.
- 14 See Burgess, Wilson and Lupton 2005.
- 15 See Thomas and Sanderson 2009.
- 16 For instance, Finney and Simpson 2009.
- 17 See Carling 2008 and Thomas 2011 for a fuller debate on this.
- 18 Dorling 2009.
- 19 See CRE 2001.
- 20 See Ritchie 2001.
- 21 Bryson and Fisher 2011.
- 22 For instance, by Trevor Phillips in 2005 and David Cameron in February 2011.
- 23 Law 1996.



- 24 See Kundnani 2007.
- 25 McGhee 2006.
- 26 See, for instance, Back *et al.* 2002, Amin 2003, Alexander 2004, Flint and Robinson 2008 and McGhee 2008.
- 27 See Thomas 2006, 2007, 2011.
- 28 Goodhart 2004.
- 29 Putnam 2000. Putnam's initial findings suggested that community cohesion declines in areas of significant ethnic diversity, but he suggests that this is an initial response to immigration and demographic change in an area, rather than as a permanent response to the presence of 'others'.
- 30 Amir 1998: 163.
- 31 See Brown 1995 and Hewstone *et al.* 2007.
- 32 Robinson 2005.
- 33 Amir 1998: 170.
- 34 Lewis 2007.
- 35 Thomas 2006, 2007, 2011.
- 36 Yuval-Davis 1997.
- 37 See Thomas 2011.
- 38 Monro *et al.* 2010.
- 39 Travis 2001.
- 40 Goodhart 2004.
- 41 Prins and Salisbury 2008.
- 42 Phillips 2005.
- 43 Cameron 2011.
- 44 Phillips 2008.
- 45 Mirza, Senthilkumaran and Ja'far 2007. See Mills, Griffin and Miller 2011 for a critical analysis of the role of right-of-centre think tanks in the political and media portrayal of British Muslims.
- 46 Mirza *et al.* 2007: 37.
- 47 Mirza *et al.* 2007: 62.
- 48 Mirza *et al.* 2007: 88.
- 49 Modood 2005.
- 50 See Malik 2009 for a detailed analysis of this episode.
- 51 Roy 2004: 133.
- 52 McRoy 2006.
- 53 Malik 2009.
- 54 Thomas and Sanderson 2009.
- 55 CRE/Ethnos 2005a, 2005b.
- 56 Fenton 2007.
- 57 Din 2006: 76.
- 58 DCLG 2007d: 26.
- 59 Bagguley and Hussain 2005.
- 60 Saeed, Blain and Forbes 1999.
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- 63 Roy 2004: 117.
- 64 Mirza *et al.* 2007: 87.
- 65 Lewis 2007: 22.
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- 67 Gilroy 2004.
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- 69 Lewis 2007: 51.
- 70 Sanghera and Thapar-Bjorkert 2007.
- 71 Roy 2004: 42.
- 72 Malik 2007: 18.
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- 79 Malik 2009: 25.

### Chapter 3 Preventing violent extremism

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- 4 Neumann 2011.
- 5 Home Office 2009: 15.
- 6 English 2009: 131.
- 7 Hewitt 2008.
- 8 Clarke 2004.
- 9 Phillips 2008: 55.
- 10 Home Office 2009: 80.
- 11 Husband and Alam 2011.
- 12 All-Party Parliamentary Group on Homeland Security (APPGHS) 2011: 103.
- 13 House of Commons 2010: Ev. 72.
- 14 Hewitt 2008: 69.
- 15 Hewitt 2008: 98.
- 16 FCO/Home Office 2004.
- 17 FCO/Home Office 2004.
- 18 Hewitt 2008.
- 19 DCLG 2007c.
- 20 SEU 2001.
- 21 Majid and Malik 2009: Ev. 214.
- 22 DCLG 2007a.
- 23 Phillips 2008: 265.
- 24 Kelly 2006.
- 25 DCLG 2007a, 2007b.

- 26 Hewitt 2008.
- 27 HAC 2009: Ev. 29.
- 28 Evidence to APPGHS 2011: 106.
- 29 McGhee 2010: 33.
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- 31 DCLG 2007b.
- 32 DCLG 2007a.
- 33 See RICU 2007.
- 34 Winnet and Leppard 2004.
- 35 Department of Innovation, Universities and Skills (DIUS) 2008.
- 36 Evidence Submission to CLG Select Committee Inquiry 2009.
- 37 LGA 2008.
- 38 House of Commons 2010.
- 39 DCLG 2008.
- 40 Thomas 2008.
- 41 DCLG 2009a.
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- 43 DCLG 2009d.
- 44 Husband and Alam 2011: 161.
- 45 TPA 2009.
- 46 TPA 2009.
- 47 Kundnani 2009: 6.
- 48 Dodd 2009.
- 49 House of Commons 2009, 2010.
- 50 Husband and Alam 2011: 74.
- 51 House of Commons 2010: 3.
- 52 House of Commons 2010: 33.
- 53 House of Commons 2010: 61.
- 54 House of Commons 2010: 3.
- 55 House of Commons 2010: 62.
- 56 Dodd 2010a.
- 57 Conservative Party 2009.
- 58 Neville-Jones 2009b.
- 59 Warsi 2009.
- 60 Cameron 2008.
- 61 Neville-Jones 2009b.
- 62 Neville-Jones 2009a.
- 63 Mycock and Tonge 2011: 62.
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- 67 Cameron 2011.
- 68 Husan 2011.
- 69 Godson 2008.
- 70 Doward 2011.
- 71 Husan 2011.

- 72 Fekete and Merz 2011.
- 73 BBC Radio 4 2011b.
- 74 HMG 2011: 40.
- 75 HMG 2011: 1.
- 76 HMG 2011: 30.
- 77 HMG 2011: 97.
- 78 HMG 2011: 98.
- 79 HMG 2011: 34.
- 80 HMG 2011: 63.
- 81 HMG 2011: 20.
- 82 HMG 2011: 34.
- 83 Travis 2011.
- 84 HMG 2011: 35.
- 85 HMG 2011: 84.
- 86 HMG 2011: 53.
- 87 HMG 2011: 75.
- 88 HMG 2011: 8.
- 89 HMG 2011: 13.
- 90 HMG 2011: 15.
- 91 HMG 2011: 15.
- 92 Fekete 2011.
- 93 HMG 2011: 15.
- 94 Milne 2011.
- 95 Watt, Dodd and Taylor 2011.
- 96 Gable 2011.
- 97 Personal correspondence with author.

#### Chapter 4 British Muslims: A suspect community?

- 1 See Hewitt 2005 for an incisive analysis of the ‘white backlash’ to anti-racist measures, and CRE 1999 and Thomas 2002 for discussion of how practitioners such as youth workers have struggled in the face of such a backlash.
- 2 See Modood *et al.* 1997 and Solomos 2003.
- 3 See Thomas 2006, 2007, 2011.
- 4 Knight 2010.
- 5 See DCLG 2007c.
- 6 DCLG 2007a: 9.
- 7 Cited in Knight 2010.
- 8 See Thomas and Sanderson 2009.
- 9 See Cantle 2001, Denham 2001 and Ritchie 2001.
- 10 See Husband and Alam 2011 for a fuller discussion of this.
- 11 Birt 2009.
- 12 House of Commons 2010: Ev. 19.
- 13 Byrne 1999.
- 14 See Copsey 2008.

- 15 DCLG 2009c.
- 16 DCLG 2009c: 50.
- 17 DCLG 2009c.
- 18 DCLG 2009c.
- 19 DCLG 2008 and Thomas 2008, 2009.
- 20 Thomas and Sanderson 2009.
- 21 Putnam 2000.
- 22 Denham 2001: 11.
- 23 Submission to CLG Select Committee 2009.
- 24 Flint and Robinson 2008.
- 25 Thomas 2006, 2007.
- 26 See Monro *et al.* 2010 and Husband and Alam 2011.
- 27 DCLG 2007b: 2.
- 28 DCLG 2007b: 2.
- 29 DCLG 2007b: 7.
- 30 Finney and Simpson 2009.
- 31 Kundnani 2009: 24.
- 32 DCLG 2009b.
- 33 APPHSG 2011: 106.
- 34 Birt 2009.
- 35 University of Central Lancashire 2009.
- 36 Neumann 2011: 21.
- 37 Birt 2009: 54.
- 38 Kundnani 2009.
- 39 DCLG 2007b, 2009b.
- 40 McRoy 2006.
- 41 Kundnani 2007.
- 42 House of Commons 2010: 37.
- 43 Gardham 2011a.
- 44 Personal correspondence with author.
- 45 Githens-Mazer 2010a.
- 46 Githens-Mazer 2010a: 50.
- 47 Maher and Frampton 2009.
- 48 Thomas 2008.
- 49 Peacemaker 2009.
- 50 House of Commons 2010: 21.
- 51 Neumann 2011: 41.
- 52 Kundnani 2009: 35.
- 53 Macdonald 1989.
- 54 See Hewitt 2005 for fuller discussion of this research.
- 55 Dadzie (1997) discusses the experiences of the Bede House anti-racist youth initiative in south London.
- 56 See CRE 1999 and Thomas 2002 for fuller discussion.
- 57 Thomas 2008.
- 58 Knight 2010.
- 59 Travis 2008.

- 60 See Husain 2007.
- 61 See <http://www.ukyouthparliament.org.uk> for more details.
- 62 See Leeds Muslim Youth Association/Hamara 2008.
- 63 See Lowndes and Thorp 2010.
- 64 Cited in Gable 2011.
- 65 Copsey 2008.
- 66 Gable 2005.
- 67 Wainwright 2007.
- 68 Denham in Gable 2011: 3.
- 69 Gable 2011.
- 70 Gable 2011.
- 71 Denham in Gable 2011: 5.
- 72 Fekete 2011: 1.
- 73 Fekete 2011.
- 74 Milne 2011.
- 75 Lowles and Creasy 2011.
- 76 Townsend 2011a.
- 77 Jackson 2011.
- 78 Copsey 2011.
- 79 Jackson 2011.
- 80 Duodo 2006.

## Chapter 5 Confusion on the ground? *Prevent* in operation

- 1 Husband and Alam 2011: 133.
- 2 Monroe *et al.* 2010: 33.
- 3 House of Commons 2010: 7.
- 4 Lowndes and Thorp 2010: 127.
- 5 Husband and Alam 2011: 73.
- 6 Butt 2010.
- 7 Birmingham City Council 2009.
- 8 Birt 2009: 54.
- 9 Monroe *et al.* 2010: 32.
- 10 Monroe *et al.* 2010: 32.
- 11 Kundnani 2009: 18.
- 12 Lowndes and Thorp 2010: 132.
- 13 Lowndes and Thorp 2010: 130.
- 14 Lowndes and Thorp 2010: 131.
- 15 Turley 2009: 6.
- 16 Husband and Alam 2011: 157.
- 17 Lowndes and Thorp 2010: 134.
- 18 Personal correspondence with author.
- 19 Husband and Alam 2011: 180.
- 20 Turley 2009: 12.
- 21 Monroe *et al.* 2010.
- 22 HMG 2011: 28.

- 23 HMG 2011: 30.
- 24 See Thomas 2009.
- 25 Monro *et al.* 2010: 39.
- 26 Husband and Alam 2011: 133.
- 27 Monro *et al.* 2010.
- 28 Monro *et al.* 2010: 5.
- 29 Husband and Alam 2011: 189.
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- 31 House of Commons 2010: 45.
- 32 Husband and Alam 2011: 169.
- 33 Thomas 2008 and DCLG 2008.
- 34 Birt 2009.
- 35 APA 2009.
- 36 LGA 2009.
- 37 English 2009.
- 38 LGA 2009 Submission to CLG Select Committee Inquiry.
- 39 DCLG 2009c.
- 40 Denham 2001.
- 41 Phillips 2008: 149.
- 42 Malik 2009: 25.
- 43 BBC Radio 4 2010.
- 44 See Universities UK 2011.
- 45 HMG 2011: 72.
- 46 See Malik 2007.
- 47 BBC Radio 4 2010.
- 48 APPGHS 2011: 35.
- 49 APPGHS 2011: 52.
- 50 Universities UK 2011: 3.
- 51 Stratton, Wintour and Vasagar 2011.
- 52 Universities UK 2011: 19.
- 53 For example, DIUS 2008.
- 54 HMG 2011: 74.
- 55 Husan 2011.
- 56 Townsend 2011b.
- 57 HMG 2011: 86.
- 58 HMG 2011: 87.
- 59 Warnes and Hannah 2008: 409.
- 60 Spalek, El-Awa and Lambert 2008: 45.
- 61 Warnes and Hannah 2008: 403.
- 62 HMG 2011: 88.
- 63 HMG 2011: 91.
- 64 HMG 2011: 91.
- 65 HMG 2011: 91.
- 66 Foster 2010: 39–40.
- 67 Foster 2010: 31.
- 68 See Neumann 2011.

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## Chapter 6 Spooks?

- 1 Neumann 2011.
- 2 APPGHS 2011: 107.
- 3 Knight 2010.
- 4 Hewitt 2008: 41.
- 5 Hewitt 2008: 41.
- 6 Hewitt 2008: 98.
- 7 Gregory 2010.
- 8 Gregory 2010: 94.
- 9 BBC News 2007.
- 10 Hewitt 2008: 109.
- 11 Rayment 2007.
- 12 DCLG 2009b: 25.
- 13 Husband and Alam 2011.
- 14 HMG 2011: 99.
- 15 Gregory 2010: 96.
- 16 Gregory 2010: 94.
- 17 Spalek and Lambert 2010: 110.
- 18 Spalek and Lambert 2010: 114.
- 19 See Hickman *et al.* 2010 and forthcoming associated publications.
- 20 HAC 2009: Ev. 21.
- 21 RICU 2007: 2 and 4.
- 22 RICU 2007: 4.
- 23 RICU 2007: 7.
- 24 Bleich 2010: 71.
- 25 HMG 2011: 53.
- 26 HMG 2011: 29.
- 27 HMG 2011: 48 and 81, respectively.
- 28 English 2009.
- 29 Kundnani 2009: 8.
- 30 Husband and Alam 2011: 152.
- 31 See House of Commons 2010 and Dodd 2009.
- 32 Birt 2009: 58.
- 33 Lachman 2009.
- 34 Birmingham City Council 2009.
- 35 See Charles Farr's evidence to the CLG Select Committee Inquiry.
- 36 Kundnani 2009: 8.
- 37 Kundnani 2009: 28.
- 38 Kundnani 2009: 32.
- 39 Kundnani 2009: 28–29.
- 40 Kundnani 2009: 24.
- 41 Turley 2009.
- 42 English 2009.
- 43 Kundnani 2009: 32.
- 44 Neumann 2011: 22.



- 45 Turley 2009: 12.
- 46 Neville-Jones 2009c.
- 47 Dodd 2009.
- 48 House of Commons 2010: Ev. 75.
- 49 House of Commons 2010: Ev. 76.
- 50 Lambert and Githens-Mazer 2009.
- 51 House of Commons 2010: 63, paragraphs 39 and 40, respectively.
- 52 HMG 2011: 6, 3.15.
- 53 HMG 2011: 6, 3.14.
- 54 Fresco 2008.
- 55 Fresco 2008.
- 56 HMG 2011: 57.
- 57 House of Commons 2010: 16.
- 58 House of Commons 2010: 55.
- 59 House of Commons 2010: Ev. 72/3.
- 60 Neumann 2011: 41.
- 61 Monro *et al.* 2010: 42.
- 62 HMG 2011: 60.
- 63 Bux 2007: 269.
- 64 Kundnani 2009: 34.
- 65 Qurashi 2011.
- 66 See Charles Farr's evidence to the CLG Select Committee Inquiry.
- 67 HMG 2011: 60.
- 68 HMG 2011: 61.
- 69 Gregory 2010: 88.
- 70 Thomas 2009.
- 71 Neumann 2011: 9.
- 72 English 2009.
- 73 Turley 2009: 22.
- 74 House of Commons 2009, 2010.

### **Conclusion: Failing to *Prevent*?**

- 1 See <http://www.ukyouthparliament.org.uk>.
- 2 See <http://uprising.org.uk/>.

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