Balancing tolerance, security and Muslim engagement in the United Kingdom: the impact of the 'Prevent' agenda

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SPECIAL SECTION: ASSESSING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF COUNTER-RADICALISATION POLICIES IN NORTH-WESTERN EUROPE

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In this article, we consider how engagement with Muslims by the state has been conducted under the UK government's counter-radicalisation 'Prevent' agenda. New Labour's 'hearts and minds' approach to Prevent emphasised, and innovated, engagement with Muslim 'communities'. This approach was widely criticised, however, particularly in the way it merged Prevent with 'Community Cohesion'. By contrast, the current Coalition government's new Prevent strategy operates with a much thinner conception of engagement and stipulates that in future, Prevent and cohesion work will be kept separate. This new strategy signals less community engagement and a hardened line on the types of Muslim groups that can be engaged with. However, local actors driven by operational or normative concerns are pursuing somewhat different objectives, often outside of central funding streams. Such unintentional localism may sustain more participatory and inclusive modes of engagement with Muslims.

Keywords: community engagement; Muslims; governance; counterterrorism

Introduction

The United Kingdom, along with some other European states such as Denmark and the Netherlands (van Dongen 2010), has adopted a community-focused de-radicalisation strand as a key part of its counterterrorism strategy. Alongside the Protect, Pursue and Prepare strands – covering security, surveillance and detection and civil preparedness – sits Prevent: an agenda focused on addressing the ideologies and values underpinning (support for) terrorism through engagement with Muslim communities. The Prevent strategy featured in the government's 'CONTEST' counterterrorism strategy that was launched in the United Kingdom in 2003 by the then New Labour government, but it had a somewhat minor role relative to other strands (House of Commons 2010). In the wake of the London attacks of 7 July 2005, Prevent became a much stronger element of CONTEST as the government sought to deal with the risk of 'home-grown' terrorism. Prevent was conceived as a 'hearts and minds' approach aimed at 'challenging the violent extremist ideology and supporting mainstream voices' (HM Government 2008, p. 6). This agenda saw partnering with Muslim communities as key to tackling radicalisation and the spread of violent extremism.

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In the years following its inception and implementation, Prevent came to be heavily criticised and, in the words of one commentator, widely regarded as 'failed and friendless' (Thomas 2010). In particular, Prevent was viewed with suspicion by those Muslim communities with whom the government sought to partner who tended to see it as a mechanism for the surveillance of Muslim populations (Birt 2009, Kundnani 2009), or, as one contributor to a House of Commons committee put it, as 'Pursue in sheep's clothing' (House of Commons 2010, p. 8). Additionally, many were critical of the ways in which the Prevent agenda merged with the government's Community Cohesion agenda. This merging, it was argued, had the effect of dissipating the goals and rationale of Prevent whilst securitising and undermining Community Cohesion (Thomas 2010, Husband and Alam 2011).

On coming to power in 2010, the Coalition government immediately announced a review of Prevent. After significant delay, the new strategy was eventually revealed in July 2011. In it, the government set out several new directions for Prevent. In particular, it stipulated that in future Prevent and cohesion will be kept separate, with the Home Office leading on Prevent and the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) focusing on cohesion and integration. It also signalled a hardening of the government's position on how the state engages with Muslim groups by emphasising that engagement must be limited to those groups that espouse a shared commitment to core British values.

In this article, we consider the impact of these changes on how engagement with Muslims by the state is conducted under the Prevent strategy, drawing on data from our research project on *Muslim Participation in Contemporary Governance*. Based on the analysis of national and local government policies since 1997, participant observations and over 100 qualitative interviews with political, administrative and Muslim civil society actors, this project analyses the ways in which UK governments at national level and locally – in three case study areas of Birmingham, Leicester and Tower Hamlets – have engaged with Muslim civil society organisations and actors since 1997.

We suggest that in many ways Prevent provides a revealing lens through which to analyse the dynamics of state–Muslim engagement more broadly. Engagement with Muslims, constituted as 'communities', was a key aspect of New Labour's approach to Prevent and this resonated with its wider approach to the governance of Muslims, communities and ethnic and cultural diversity. In so doing, New Labour included and recognised a diverse range of Muslim civil society organisations: within governance, legislatively and in policy. The offer of participation was often criticised as a limited one and encountered contestation and unintended consequences along the way. Its engagement with Muslims was sometimes ambivalent (for instance, with regard to working with 'Islamists') or inconsistent (e.g. its relationship with the Muslim Council of Britain), with different departments exhibiting different policy logics (and this was true of its approach to Prevent, as we discuss below) and marked by a certain amount of trial and error. Its stance on difference and diversity became increasingly founded on a 'civic turn' (see Meer and Modood 2009, Modood 2012), in which at times it seemed uncertain about how to respond to religious, and particularly Muslim, difference. Nevertheless, under New Labour, there was a quasi-institutionalisation of a wide range of Muslim organisations and actors within governance, including through Prevent, the weight of criticism levelled against it notwithstanding.

By contrast, the Coalition's approach to Prevent operates with a much thinner model of engagement. Its Prevent strategy says rather little about working with Muslim groups and more about working with personnel in key sectors such as in health, education or prisons. Its recent announcements on integration suggest a more strident and restrictive view of integration and national identity, underpinned, rhetorically at least, by a commitment to 'muscular liberalism' (Cameron 2011). That stance is reflected in its Prevent strategy in the stipulation that government must not engage with those Muslim groups who do not

subscribe to liberal values. The Coalition's recently published integration strategy (DCLG 2012) foregrounds the role of local authorities in driving integration, in line with its general stance on localism, but this strategy conveys little substantively about what integration consists of. In line with its general austerity measures, there is relatively little funding for either integration or Prevent initiatives. The Coalition seems, then, to espouse an assertive and restrictive, although thinner, stance on both integration and engagement with Muslims. Our data suggest, with specific regard to Prevent, that this approach is likely to generate some unintended consequences.

For instance, whilst certain reforms in the Coalition's new Prevent strategy are helpful in addressing some of the problematic logics of the previous strategy, there are difficulties facing its implementation, specifically in relation to the proposed separation between Prevent and cohesion. Our data suggest that this separation is facing resistance from actors charged with the delivery of Prevent. This arises partly as a consequence of the perceived operational difficulties in disentangling these strategies, but it is also based on normative objections to separating Prevent and cohesion. While many local actors see cohesion as essential to the successful delivery of Prevent, there are different understandings among these actors of what Community Cohesion means and what it entails for the implementation of Prevent.

We begin our analysis of these issues with a brief overview of the development of Prevent, reflecting on how Prevent and cohesion came to be interacting fields of policy, and the subsequent critique of this overlap. We then discuss how, and why, the Coalition set out to separate Prevent and cohesion. We evaluate the conceptualisation of the relationship between these policy areas in the new Prevent policy, before discussing our data on how the separation between Prevent and cohesion is viewed by actors at the local level. We conclude by reflecting on what the shifting relationship between Prevent and cohesion suggests about governance and the balance between engagement, tolerance and security.

A community-based 'hearts and minds' counterterrorism strategy

The Prevent strategy that was announced in 2007 (DCLG 2007b) was a much invigorated counter-radicalisation strategy that was developed in response to the London attacks in 2005, in which a 'hearts and minds' approach was thought necessary to counter a disturbing aspect of those attacks – which was that they had involved British-born Muslims rather than foreign operatives. It was also a strategy that was influenced by the then New Labour government's approach to community engagement across a range of policy fields, including urban regeneration, social exclusion, health and education, which emphasised stakeholder and user group involvement in decision-making and delivery of services (Imrie and Raco 2003). This was underpinned by a communitarian logic that saw communities as not just possessing the social capital and resources to achieve policy goals, but also attributed to them a responsibility to actively engage in governance, service delivery and addressing policy problems, such as antisocial behaviour or youth disaffection (Amin 2005). The mobilising of Muslim communities to partner with government to address radicalisation in many ways then resonated with this wider agenda. Significantly, engagement with faith-based organisations was an increasingly notable feature of the governance landscape under New Labour (Dinham and Lowndes 2008), with faith-based organisations regarded as possessing resources and mechanisms of representation and reach into communities that were of value to policymakers. Engagement with (faith) communities was a key feature of New Labour's governance in this period, and this was also shaped by its Community Cohesion agenda.

The Community Cohesion agenda was the government's response to the disturbances in Bradford, Burnley and Oldham in the summer of 2001, which were characterised by confrontations between, largely, young Muslims of Pakistani heritage and the police. The official report on the disturbances, the Cantle Report (2001), focused on what it saw as problems of ethnic segregation, captured in the assertion that ethnic groups in the affected areas were living 'parallel lives' and made recommendations for promoting 'Community Cohesion' in preference to what it saw as more separatist policies of multiculturalism. Following the events of 9/11, the discourses on separatism and the failures of multiculturalism shifted from ethnicity to religion and specifically to claims about Muslims' lack of integration, which intensified following the London attacks in 2005. The Home Office, in shifting emphasis towards Community Cohesion, defined a cohesive community as one where 'there is a common vision and sense of belonging for all communities' and where 'strong and positive relationships are being developed between people from different backgrounds in the workplace, in schools and within neighbourhoods' (LGA 2002, p. 6). To achieve such objectives, the Community Cohesion agenda placed particular emphasis on community engagement, arguing that 'real cohesion and real change' can only occur when different sections of the community are involved' (LGA 2002, p. 10). This gave rise to a raft of initiatives at local level to promote 'bridging social capital' across ethnic and religious groups.

Community Cohesion shaped the way in which Prevent was conceived and implemented and informed the development of a 'hearts and minds' counterterrorism strategy that attempted to utilise existing community engagement structures and mechanisms. The New Labour government viewed Community Cohesion as essential to realising the goals of Prevent:

> The Prevent strategy requires a specific response, but we must also make the most of the links with wider community work to reduce inequalities, tackle racism and other forms of extremism (e.g. extreme far right), build cohesion and empower communities [. . .] Likewise, it is recognised that the arguments of violent extremists, which rely on creating a 'them' and an 'us', are less likely to find traction in cohesive communities. (DCLG 2008, pp. 6–7)

The Prevent strategy when it was relaunched in 2007 identified four key objectives that reflected these concerns and this approach to governing diversity, specified as: 'promoting shared values, supporting local solutions, building civic capacity and leadership and strengthening the role of faith institutions and leaders' (DCLG 2007b, p. 5). As such, the 2007 strategy set out a strong focus on reforming attitudes and practices of British Muslims through a series of interventions and reforms in areas such as religious and civic organisation, political representation and youth and community work. These included capacity-building projects to reform mosque governance and sources of religious authority in the United Kingdom, with the creation of the Mosques and Imams National Advisory Board. It supported the development of theologically grounded counter-narratives to 'al-Qaeda'-inspired ideologies through projects such as the Radical Middle Way (Brighton 2007, Birt 2009). It also set out to diversify the structures of Muslim representation, and the bodies on which government relied for consultation, by creating the National Muslim Women's Advisory Group and the Young Muslims Advisory Group in 2008. In addition, there were numerous youth engagement, women's and counter-radicalisation projects at the local level, with funding for outreach projects such as Strategy to Reach Empower and Educate Teenagers, a Brixton-based group, which aimed to connect with young people deemed at risk of radicalisation, and for Quilliam, a 'counter-extremism' think tank

that received £2.7 million funding to engage in counter-radicalisation projects – making it the largest single recipient of Prevent funding. Through such interventions, the Labour government stated its desire to 'fundamentally rebalance our engagement' (DCLG 2007b, p. 9).

The implementation of Prevent began by targeting areas with Muslim populations of 5% or more (DCLG 2007a, p. 6), later replaced by a criterion of more than 5000 Muslims, for funding initiatives. This spatial focus problematically constituted Muslim presence itself as a security risk. Following this logic, over 90 local authorities were identified as eligible for Preventing Violent Extremism (PVE) funding, which in 2008–2009 entailed a budget of over £140 million (Birt 2009). Whether or not local authorities took advantage of the available funding, they were under a duty to monitor Prevent objectives through the use of the 'National Indicator' system that required local authorities to report to central government on how public services were being delivered across a range of indicators, with NI35 requiring local authorities to monitor progress towards 'building resistance to violent extremism'. The Prevent strategy was underscored by a values-led approach to tackling Muslim disaffection that focused on 'winning hearts and minds' by partnering with 'mainstream Muslim organisations to tackle violent extremism' (DCLG 2007b, p. 12).

Prevent and the strategy for Muslim engagement

This values-led approach had three problematic consequences. First, the strategy became implicitly (and sometimes explicitly) focused on reforming the values and attitudes of British Muslims as a whole – alienating many Muslims in the process who objected to the stigmatising effects of this focus. The PVE guidance itself demonstrated some tensions with regard to this: on the one hand, noting that there has 'always been a tiny minority who oppose tolerance and diversity' (DCLG 2007a, p. 1), whilst on the other hand, its strategic objectives were aimed at Muslims in general, in which it stated a 'key measure of success will be demonstrable changes in attitudes among Muslims' (DCLG 2007a, p. 7). This approach was identified by key Muslim actors in government as constituting Muslims as a problem. As a former senior equalities civil servant, Waqar Azmi, commented:

> I advised senior people in government at that time that the approach we were taking is wrong. That we shouldn't be saying that this is a Muslim problem. We shouldn't be saying that Islam is a problem. [. . .] if you were to do that then the very communities that we need in order to deal with this issue will not be with us.

Attesting to these implications of Prevent, Humera Khan, a prominent Muslim campaigner and co-founder of An-Nisa, a Muslim women's charity, argued: 'The Prevent policy has further demonised the Muslim community, as if we are all responsible for terrorism.'

Second, the focus of Prevent on reforming Muslim hearts and minds tended to neglect the range of sources of disaffection (such as UK foreign policy), and enduring material inequalities disproportionately experienced by Muslims, that undermine engagement initiatives and feed into radicalisation narratives (Kundnani 2009). Thus, the 2007 strategy's four objectives focused on activities such as the inclusion of citizenship education within madrassahs and Muslim supplementary schools; 'tackling violent extremism roadshows'; guidance for universities on dealing with radicalisers; or training and improving the English language skills of imams. There was little in this strategy on issues such as tackling educational and labour market disadvantages among Muslims. Furthermore, engagement

initiatives were attacked for not being open to critical discussion of UK foreign policy (Brighton 2007, Edwards and Gomis 2011).

Third, the community engagement-based approach to tackling extremism that was pursued within Prevent tended to offer a limited and securitised model of state–Muslim engagement, in which Muslim community organisations, mosques, women's and youth groups were engaged with, often on constrained terms with little opportunity to define the nature of the problem. One national advisor to the DCLG and Special Advisor to the House of Commons Prevent Enquiry, Alveena Malik, stated to us in an interview: 'Equality and diversity wasn't seen as an issue. It wasn't seen as certainly a solution. It was around how do we deradicalise?' And, for those who objected to this agenda, she recalled: 'there was this burden of responsibility and blame that we had to deal with, which I found really difficult, which I rejected [. . .] those of us who didn't toe the line, we were shunned and silenced'.

Such concerns about the lack of substantive consultation and security-led nature of engagement through Prevent were expressed at the local level too. For instance, in Birmingham, this arose in relation to the posting of a police officer, on secondment from the Counterterrorism Unit, as the prevent programme manager for Birmingham in the Equalities Directorate of Birmingham City Council (House of Commons 2010, p. 12). As one community activist in Birmingham, Jahan Mahmood, commented:

> Locally we've had a controversial issue with a police officer [. . .] who was seconded into the Council. I can remember clearly very early on, members of the youth inclusion project [. . .] said that it increased their own suspicions of why *he* was involved in it. [. . .] And the very first question they were posing to [him] was, 'This is security-led, intelligence-led. Otherwise you wouldn't be here'.

The relationship between Prevent and Community Cohesion

A further implication of the way that Prevent was approached was the overlap between Prevent and the government's Community Cohesion agenda, which many critics argued made these indistinguishable in practice – in the process undermining both. According to Thomas (2010), some of the agencies charged with implementing Prevent and Community Cohesion did not discern any difference between these agendas. For example, the Association of Police Authorities in 2009 apparently commented: 'many Police Authorities question whether, in practice, there is any real difference between Prevent and community cohesion' (cited Thomas 2010, p. 453). This view was echoed by many Muslim civil society organisations in our sample. For example, Muhammad Abdul Bari, Chair of the East London Mosque and former Secretary General of the MCB, told us: 'The Prevent Agenda, it's the Home Office one. CLG[1] is about Community Cohesion. And Community Cohesion shouldn't be conflated with security. But in our opinion CLG conflated these two issues.'

Such overlap was evident elsewhere in the Department for Children, Families and Schools with the creation of its 'Cohesion and Extremism Unit' in 2007 (Jayaweera and Choudhury 2008, p. 4). Cohesion was central to Tower Hamlets Borough Council's approach to Prevent. The Tavistock Institute's (Iacopini *et al*. 2011) evaluation of Tower Hamlets' Prevent programme characterised it as 'a bottom-up community cohesion centred programme', reflecting the embeddedness of cohesion in Tower Hamlets more broadly. This was reinforced by the fact that implementation of Prevent came under the remit of the 'One Tower Hamlets' team, which was (and still is) responsible for equalities, cohesion and third sector engagement. This overlap was reflected in programmes that had

simultaneously Prevent and cohesion objectives, such as the *No Place for Hate* programme, which aimed to exclude religious extremist speakers from local venues as well as empha-sise local unity in the face of threats to cohesion, such as from the English Defence League (EDL). As Frances Jones, who leads One Tower Hamlets, described it: 'it's totally a cohe-sion thing . . . [but] it's often moving into the territory of somebody coming and saying something that's extreme and potentially violent'.

The general blurring of these agendas was criticised by a House of Commons Committee Report on *Preventing Violent Extremism* (2010), which concluded:

> we question the appropriateness of the Department of Communities and Local Government – a Government department which has responsibility for promoting cohesive communities – tak-ing a leading role in counter-terrorism initiatives. We agree with the majority of our witnesses that Prevent risks undermining positive cross-cultural work on cohesion and capacity building to combat exclusion and alienation in many communities. (2010, p. 3)

Thomas (2010), one of the witnesses to that committee, argued: 'PVE in the way it has been designed and implemented is contradictory to other key governmental priorities such as community cohesion' (Thomas 2010, p. 443). In particular, he suggested there was clear tension between Prevent strategies that targeted Muslim groups for funding and Community Cohesion initiatives that aimed to end such community-specific initiatives and to mainstream public funding streams. The latter was, in fact, one of the recommendations of the Commission on Integration and Cohesion (2007), although it was seemingly not acted upon.

Similarly, according to Thomas, a previous Secretary of State for the DCLG, John Denham, had initiated a change to Prevent so that 'cross-community [i.e. inter-ethnic] activities could form a legitimate part of Prevent activities with the promise of money to support it' in order to address these tensions (Thomas 2010, p. 451), but this was not implemented, owing to inter-departmental tensions. These arose partly as a consequence of the complexity of funding streams since: 'Each department has contributed some of the overall budget, with the DCLG "owning" some of the PVE strategy objectives, while the OSCT [Office for Security and Counter-Terrorism]/Home Office "own" the others' (2010, p. 454). One implication of these complex financial arrangements was that they tended to produce tensions between departments over the scope and aims of Prevent. Citing anal-ysis from the Local Government Association concerning tension between the OSCT and DCLG on the focus and strategy of Prevent, Thomas argued: 'a "turf war", something far from new in the history of counter-terrorism policies [. . .], has been taking place, based on significantly different views of effective ways forward' (2010, p. 454). As a consequence, 'the problematic design of PVE has left progress hobbled by intragovernmental tensions at both national and local levels' (Thomas 2010, p. 443).

In our interviews with actors involved in the formulation and delivery of Prevent in this period, it was clear that departments had quite different perspectives on the significance of community engagement within Prevent. So, one Senior Advisor to the DCLG and Home Office at the time, Maqsood Ahmed, suggested that he saw his role to promote a more nuanced approach to Muslim community engagement within Prevent:

> I was involved in the Prevent and when I say Prevent, it was less to do with the counter-terrorism, more to do with how do we establish connection with the Muslim community; how do we capacity build in the community for the community leadership fund and how do we engage with young Muslims; how do we engage with the Muslim women [. . .]; and also, how

do we go beyond – this is my terminology – beyond the 'usual suspects' who are always on the Government table?

By contrast, a senior civil servant who had been involved in the implementation of Prevent within the OSCT suggested:

> In the early days, I had no idea that this job would involve community engagement. There were a few reasons for that: one, no-one had told me, and two, the organisation was new and we hadn't designed it into the principles. I suppose three, actually, the Department of Communities and Local Government, DCLG, regarded it as their job to have those contacts: to the point where they didn't particularly want us to have them. I think if truth be told, they were also slightly apprehensive that we would come in with size 12 security boots and sort of damage the contacts that they were creating.

The same senior civil servant suggested that whilst they had initially anticipated building on the existing infrastructure of community engagement initiatives that had been set up by the DCLG under the Community Cohesion agenda, Prevent had eventually come to displace these. His explanation for this was that the existing infrastructure set up by the DCLG was in reality underdeveloped:

> We made a fundamental mistake three years ago with Prevent. I thought that we would be able to place Prevent on top of a rich scene of dialogue with Muslim communities. My mistake was that that scene didn't exist and Prevent assumed disproportionate importance.

Furthermore, a former DCLG Minister, John Denham, revealed: 'I found in the CLG, after some very rigorous examinations with officials, that there was no understood model of how Prevent was meant to work.' The senior civil servant in the OSCT explained that Prevent ultimately displaced Community Cohesion because the OSCT had more resources and power than the DCLG:

> Because we arrived in a rather security-like way with a very determined delivery plan, occasionally people were just run off the court. They didn't have as much money. They didn't, frankly, have as much drive. They didn't quite know what they were doing. And it was hard. So what happened was Prevent took over Cohesion.

Prevent under New Labour exemplified a model of governance that emphasised engagement with Muslims, although with an often narrow and limited offer of participation. Despite this, under Prevent, an infrastructure of Muslim civil society organisations developed with new institutions, networks and structures of engagement with local authorities. The lack of a clear focus in the remit of Prevent, its entanglement with Community Cohesion and the decentralised and localised nature of Prevent delivery gave local authorities a fairly high level of autonomy in determining how Prevent was delivered, facilitating innovations in a wide variety of forms of engagement. In Tower Hamlets, for example, the local authority held an open community consultation process to set their priorities and solicit project bids to its Prevent funds. Of the 28 projects that received funding, only four had any direct connection with the 'hard edge' of extremism, whilst the others were aimed at community engagement, Community Cohesion or infrastructure or trust building projects with local organisations (e.g. offering the first *khutba* sermons in sign language to enable deaf Muslims to attend the East London Mosque or providing boxing classes at the Osmani Trust to foster discipline among Muslim young men). This decentralised approach meant that localities could rework Prevent to make it more palatable to local groups. It also

meant that the agenda could be perceived as simply offering 'Muslim money' to those community organisations that could master its language (Lowndes and Thorp 2010).

Although the decentralised nature of Prevent facilitated the profusion and growth of Muslim civil society organisations, many were critical of the short-term nature of this funding stream, as Humera Khan argued: 'there's never been lasting investment in the Muslim voluntary sector', and described Prevent monies as a 'bottomless pit' that did not establish anything sustainable. A similar point was made by Abdul-Rehman Malik of the Radical Middle Way who suggested: 'The problem, of course, with the whole model of the previous Prevent was that . . . the CLG was much more interested in what events and programmes have you done, rather than what long-term engagement you've had.' Nonetheless, he noted: 'Of course now, quietly, everyone realises that, with all the palaver we went through with Prevent, this is the largest single investment that the Muslim community will ever see.'

The new Prevent strategy

On coming to power in May 2010, the Coalition government called for an immediate review of Prevent. In calling this review, the Home Office (2010) argued that change was needed because of the incoherence of Prevent and its problematic logics of Muslim engagement:

> At the local level, Prevent resources have sometimes been used to fund other areas of work, including race equality, multiculturalism and cohesion. Activity in these areas, while often useful in itself, has not always addressed Prevent objectives and has led to accusations that the government's interest in Muslim communities is related only to the risk of terrorism. (Home Office 2010, no page)

The Coalition's announcement of a review of Prevent anticipated the review's findings by stating that in future these two agendas will be separated:

> We want to more clearly separate work on preventing violent extremism from work to promote integration. The former will be led by the Home Office and the latter by the Department for Communities and Local Government. (Home Office 2010, no page)

Following a period of intense internal debate between centrist and right-wing factions within the Coalition (Oborne 2011), and after a six month delay, the new strategy was announced by the Home Secretary, Theresa May, in July 2011. The new strategy marks several notable changes in the government's approach to Prevent: first, it stipulates, as expected, that in future Prevent and cohesion and integration work will be kept separate, with the Home Office leading on Prevent and the DCLG focusing on cohesion and integration. Second, it moves away from the problematic focus of the previous strategy on numbers of Muslims as a criterion for targeting government funding to using intelligence on al-Qaeda-related activity. Third, the Prevent agenda will 'address all forms of terrorism' (Home Office 2011, p. 6), including far-right, Irish republican and animal rights, and not just al-Qaeda-inspired terrorism. Fourth, funding for Prevent projects will be more tightly, and centrally, controlled. Fifth, the new strategy will extend its focus from tackling 'the ideological challenge of terrorism', and on working with individuals who might be drawn into terrorism, to working with 'sectors and institutions' – in effect placing responsibility on front-line staff in the education, health, faith, charities and criminal justice sectors to become actively involved in tackling radicalisation (Home Office 2011, pp. 7–8).

Finally, government will focus on tackling non-violent, as well as violent, extremism: 'intervening to stop people moving from extremist groups or from extremism into terrorist-related activity' (Home Office 2011, p. 6), suggesting government views espousing non-violent extremist ideas as a potential precursor to becoming involved in terrorism. This last stipulation echoes Cameron's earlier 'Munich speech' of February 2011, in which he advocated 'muscular liberalism' in place of 'state multiculturalism' and declared: 'instead of ignoring this extremist ideology, we – as governments and as societies – have got to confront it, in all its forms' (Cameron 2011). Thus, the new strategy states:

> we will not work with extremist organisations that oppose our values of universal human rights, equality before the law, democracy and full participation in our society. If organisations do not accept these fundamental values, we will not work with them and we will not fund them. (Home Office 2011, p. 1)

Separating Prevent and cohesion

Our fieldwork suggests some opposition among those charged with implementing the new Prevent strategy to the proposed separation between Prevent and cohesion. It should be noted that resistance towards implementing the Prevent agenda at the local level was evident under New Labour too, so that the initiatives and practices associated with Prevent varied considerably: with some local authorities refusing to implement Prevent, others implementing Prevent only in a highly modified form, and authorities using the vagueness within the policy to pursue fairly autonomous objectives – so that, and as noted above, a wide variety of community projects ended up being funded with Prevent monies. For instance, Leicester City Council took Prevent funding, but jettisoned the term 'Prevent', renaming its strategy 'Mainstreaming Moderation' to lessen its emphasis on Muslims and to focus on all forms of extremism – despite opposition from central government to focusing in this way. A Tavistock Institute evaluation (Iacopini *et al*. 2011) of the implementation of Prevent in Tower Hamlets found different agencies there operating with different understandings of the causes of radicalisation, with implications for the implementation of Prevent, with the equalities team focused on social causes of radicalisation, the police on profiling individuals and youth services on external causes – namely foreign policy.

Nonetheless, our data suggest widespread doubts about the new strategy's requirement that Prevent and cohesion/integration work should be separated. There are four main objections to separating Prevent and cohesion. The first is an operational objection, whilst the other three are more normative. We find different conceptions of Community Cohesion being deployed by local actors and different arguments about what is required for Prevent to be workable or successful.

Operational overlap

In relation to the first objection that Prevent and cohesion are operationally difficult to separate, we found actors nationally and locally expressing scepticism that Prevent and cohesion can be separated. Indeed, the former Minister for Security and Counter-Terrorism, Pauline Neville-Jones, in a speech on 1st April 2011, shortly before the strategy was announced, argued: 'the two tasks of fighting terrorism and creating a more integrated and cohesive society were inseparable' (2011). This topic was the subject of contention within the Coalition. As one senior civil servant in the OSCT remarked in the run up to the release of the new strategy: 'We are trying to draw a distinction between these programmes [Prevent

and cohesion] in the future. But that won't be easy.' Whilst the new strategy notes that Prevent and cohesion are linked and that 'Prevent depends on a successful cohesion and integration strategy', it goes on to stipulate that: 'as a general rule, the two strategies and programmes must not be merged together' (Home Office 2011, p. 30).

At the local level, this announcement received critical responses from local actors charged with implementing the policy, notably police and also local authority personnel, with many citing operational difficulties in separating the two. For example, following the announcement of the new strategy, a West Midlands Counter-Terrorism Police report of 14 July 2011 suggested:

> The separation of integration and Prevent has potential to cause some difficulties because within Local Authorities a significant amount of cohesion and Prevent work had merged, with an acknowledgement that Prevent delivery was difficult to achieve without effective cohesion/integration work complementing and enabling Prevent to be delivered. The separation has potential to lead to philosophical resistance and for this to result in reduced delivery. Similarly, if the separation is taken literally the ability of Prevent delivery to be effective will be undermined. (2011, p. 4)

The Home Office itself acknowledges that, in practice, these areas of work may be difficult to separate:

> We recognise that in some circumstances there will be exceptions to these general rules. Some projects whose purpose goes much wider than counter-terrorism will also have such a direct benefit to Prevent-related work that they justify Prevent funding. But these projects will be the exception not the norm. We also accept that many staff working on Prevent, notably in policing and local authorities, will continue to have cohesion-related functions, something that is more rather than less likely as local authorities look for opportunities to make efficiency savings. (Home Office 2011, p. 30)

On the ground, this cross-over in personnel working in Community Cohesion and Prevent is certainly a feature of how Prevent is being delivered. Indeed, for some this is regarded as beneficial to the delivery of Prevent. For example, one police officer suggested that in his local area:

> we have been fortunate in a sense because the lead for Prevent has come out of the Community Cohesion and Diversities unit, so there has been a natural link in there that we have held on to and we still operationalise. And it's virtually the same individuals who are involved in the cohesion bit that are predominantly involved in the Prevent.

In Tower Hamlets, the lead for One Tower Hamlets, Frances Jones, commented: 'Not that they're [Prevent and cohesion] the same but [. . .] whoever is working on it has to just be able to shift between the two constantly I think.' This cross-over is perhaps even more evident in Leicester, where the city's Prevent programme is now being delivered by a local interfaith institution – the St Philip's Centre – rather than from within Leicester City Council. St Philips' Centre's approach to Prevent locates it firmly within its concerns with integration and inter-faith work. As its announcement stated: 'St Philip's Centre was chosen to lead this work because of its excellent national reputation, particularly around integration and building good inter-faith relations' (St Philip's Centre 2012, p. 1). As the Faith Training Development Manager at St Philips Centre in Leicester, Riaz Ravat, explained:

we are going to be doing this from St Philips which is an organisation which has developed
its reputation on interfaith relationships. The Home Office knows that and is happy with that.
[. . .] we are an independent charity, we're working with Government, we're working with
the Council, with the Police. We are not downplaying our interfaith credentials or our role in
building interfaith relationships just because of Prevent or not because of Prevent. It's part of
the package. That's who we are, you either embrace it or you don't: and thankfully they've
embraced it.

In this case, then, the possibility of disentangling Prevent and cohesion seems unlikely.
As Ravat confirmed:

I think there's definitely an overlap between the two. [. . .] Whether you call it cohesion or inte-
gration, it's part of the same, so I think these are probably Whitehall debates and discussions
which they can carry on having, but we've got to get on with the job.

Turning to the sources of normative resistance to separating Prevent and cohesion, these are
of three types: the first position views Community Cohesion as a model for mainstreamed
engagement, rather than targeted engagement with Muslim communities. The second posi-
tion sees Community Cohesion as providing an integration strategy that is necessary for
the achievement of Prevent goals. The third position views Community Cohesion as a
participatory approach to working with communities.

Cohesion as a model of mainstreamed engagement

In relation to the first position, we found some actors advocating a Community Cohesion
approach to the implementation of Prevent in the view that this steers local authorities
away from Muslim targeted interventions towards a more mainstreamed approach that
avoids stigmatising Muslims or lending credibility to arguments that Muslims are unfairly
favoured by Prevent. As Riaz Ravat from the St Philips Centre explained: 'you just can't
have Prevent in isolation because what that then does is it gives the impression Prevent is
Pursue again'.

The Prevent manager at Birmingham City Council acknowledged that the previ-
ous strategy muddled cohesion and Prevent, suggesting that 'local authorities may have
responded to terrorism under the prism of Community Cohesion, because it was a safe
space, that's where engagement happened', but the downside to this was that it entailed
a lack of focus. Whilst he agreed with elements of the current strategy, he, like others
in Birmingham, took the view that Prevent needed to be mainstreamed into more general
community engagement forums rather than tackled solely within Prevent-focused engage-
ment initiatives, suggesting: 'it's better as we engage mainstream-wise that we speak to all
of our faith communities and [. . .] bring them together'.

Cohesion as integration and shared values

With regard to the second position, we found many actors arguing that Prevent's success
depends on the development of shared values and cohesion – understood here as an effec-
tive integration strategy – to counter arguments advanced by radicalisers that Muslims
cannot be integrated into British society. The Director of the St Philips Centre in Leicester,
John Hall, commented: 'if you are going to tackle issues of extremism you have actually
got to address issues of integration as well. The reality is they do belong together, how-
ever you choose to administer them'. Frances Jones in Tower Hamlets, in explaining the

rationale for No Place for Hate, stated: 'you've got to be able to deal with the extremism right now and here, but the cohesion stuff is the backdrop to that'. The sense that cohesion formed a necessary 'backdrop' to Prevent was frequently expressed by police officers. As one officer in Leicester commented:

> The thing I find is really confusing is Theresa May, she says social cohesion and Prevent shouldn't mix, but I think if you have a cohesive society, you have a peaceful society, then you don't get terrorism . . . . I can't understand how it can be separated . . . . To me, I'm not criticising Theresa May, we will continue with her policy but . . . if you have a cohesive society, extremists don't thrive, do they?

The Coalition government's understanding of the relationship between Prevent and cohesion and integration is itself rather unclear, both within the new policy and because, at a rhetorical level at least, the government espouses a strong conception of integration based on 'muscular liberalism' whilst providing rather weak guidance on integration to local authorities. This was a source of frustration for some, as one senior police officer suggested:

> I think it was an extraordinary *political* choice. [Prevent and integration] are interwoven [. . .]. So I think it's unhelpful. I think you, when you actually end up looking to say what is in the Pickles [DCLG Secretary of State's] integration strategy? And, it's not a strategy at all is it? It's a bit of an aspiration with no substance that underpins it. It just says localities get on with whatever you think is right [. . .] with less money or no money. So, I think that was a bit strange really, around that, and an unfortunate position [. . .] and I think by removing integration from there, if the mission is around stopping terrorism, then I think that there are disadvantages to that [. . .] it's not helpful to a terrorism agenda.

Cohesion as active community engagement and participatory governance

Finally, in relation to the third position, we found some actors who associated Community Cohesion with active community engagement and more participatory forms of engagement with Muslims. The new Prevent strategy, however, proceeds with a relatively thin notion of engagement with Muslim communities, in which de-radicalisation is pursued through targeted interventions with vulnerable individuals, or at the practices of institutions, such as universities or health authorities – in marked contrast with the previous government's emphasis on partnering and engaging with Muslims (albeit on constrained terms) to tackle violent extremism. As Riaz Ravat explained: 'we have to be realistic about this. We need something to offset Prevent, so we need some more pre-emptive stuff that needs to happen'. This perspective is echoed by West Midlands Police, which, in signalling its disquiet over the separation between Prevent and cohesion, argued: 'The approach taken in the West Midlands area is that without trust, confidence and involvement of and with communities, Prevent delivery cannot simply be imposed or effectively delivered' (2011, p. 4).

Local autonomy, unintended consequences: the future for Prevent?

These objections suggest that on the ground there is scepticism towards the proposed separation between Prevent and cohesion, with signs of actors working in quite different ways to that envisaged by the strategy – the St Philips Centre being a case in point. Dwyer and Uberoi note generally there are 'difficulties in articulating what exactly community cohesion means, or how it might be measured' (2009, p. 204). But, as Dwyer and Parutis

(2012) point out, this very vagueness has sometimes been used by local actors to pursue autonomous, sometimes contradictory, aims. For instance, they found faith schools creatively drawing on community cohesion discourses to argue that they exemplified, rather than undermined, Community Cohesion – as argued by critics of faith schools. Thus, some faith schools drew on the social capital orientations of Community Cohesion discourses to highlight the historic role of faith schools in integrating newly arrived migrants. In that light, the differing objectives pursued by local actors in relation to Prevent under the rubric of Community Cohesion is consonant with how this agenda has been implemented or drawn upon in other policy fields. With its likely continued association with Prevent, this suggests there will be considerable variation in the way that Prevent at the local level is implemented, in ways that may be at odds with the Home Office's objectives.

The role of funding may also contribute to greater local activism and differences in the implementation of Prevent. On the one hand, the current funding arrangements sharply limit the scope for local initiative, given there are now tighter, more centralised arrangements for distributing Prevent funding, with local authorities having to submit their project proposals directly to the Home Office for approval. One outcome of this is that it has enabled the Home Office to block initiatives that it views as cohesion oriented. For example, Tower Hamlets' initial proposal was rejected by the Home Office for being 'too cohesion' oriented, according to local Prevent Manager, Nojmul Hussain. Their resubmission involves three relatively small and modestly funded projects focused directly on radicalisation. This contrasts with the scale of the 28 community engagement projects that were conducted under the previous agenda.

On the other hand, this lack of funding opens up opportunities for local actors to pursue Prevent initiatives in more autonomous ways, since the contraction in Prevent funding has necessitated the development of alternative funding sources, or even unfunded initiatives, which are not tied to Home Office funding streams and requirements. Given that local authorities, police and voluntary sector organisations have different concerns and normative perspectives, the delivery of Prevent outside of Home Office funding streams has the potential to generate very different, and perhaps unintended, approaches to Prevent.

This resonates with the unintended consequences that are arising elsewhere, as a consequence of the Coalition's 'Big Society' approach, which aims to give localities and civil society organisations greater autonomy in local decision-making and a bigger, more direct, role in the provision of public goods and services. Here, as Modood (2012) points out, despite Conservative opposition to 'state multiculturalism' (Cameron 2011), its Big Society agenda may provide the conditions for the flourishing of group-based multiculturalism, albeit in an unintended way, because of the way that it allows faith and other groups to take over responsibilities currently undertaken by state agencies. One key example of this is the Big Society's flagship policy on 'free schools' which has entailed state funding for new community-based non-state schools – resulting in a significant number (over a quarter) of these new schools being established by faith groups (Modood 2012).

Conclusion

Muslim community engagement has featured prominently within the UK's counterterrorism and de-radicalisation strategies – in contrast with some other European states, such as France, Portugal, Poland or Spain (van Dongen 2010). The implementation of this strand has not been straightforward, and it has been a heavily criticised element of counterterrorism policy, particularly when it has overlapped with cohesion and integration

strategies. Disentangling these agendas has been a key objective of the present Coalition government. As we have seen, there is some opposition to this objective among many local actors, who see Community Cohesion as integral to a successful Prevent strategy and there are indications that these agendas will not be separated in practice – although local actors are often pursuing different objectives when they argue for a continued relationship between Prevent and cohesion. This is in part because of the somewhat vague or open-ended nature of 'Community Cohesion'. But, whether cohesion is envisaged as important to the delivery of Prevent because actors are prioritising mainstreamed rather than Muslim-focused policies, integration or community engagement, the Coalition's current position on these issues presents some obstacles to these local actors and the implementation of Prevent on the ground.

In particular, if an effective integration strategy is regarded as important to the success of Prevent, then the Coalition's current statement on integration offers little by way of substance or guidance to local actors. Its rhetorical stance on 'muscular liberalism', and stipulations regarding eschewing engagement with non-violent extremists (i.e. 'Islamists'), potentially narrows the terms of engagement with Muslims, limiting local authorities' engagement with a range of sometimes key organisations and partners. This has significant implications in Tower Hamlets, where 'Islamist' organisations such as the East London Mosque are so deeply embedded in local governance networks and forums and key to the delivery of local priorities that disembedding them would be not just difficult, but potentially counterproductive. With regard to community involvement, the new Prevent strategy offers a rather thin conception of community engagement whilst exerting centralised control over the nature of the projects that may be funded within Prevent – notwithstanding the Coalition's rhetoric on localism. Whilst the new Prevent strategy may signal less community engagement and a less tolerant attitude to non-liberal Muslim groups, local actors driven by operational or normative concerns are pursuing somewhat different objectives, often outside of central funding streams. Such unintentional localism may sustain more participatory modes of engagement with Muslims.

Acknowledgements

Note

1. Both 'CLG' and 'DCLG' are widely used to refer to the Department for Communities and Local Government.

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