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Britain's Prevent Programme: An End in Sight?

Paul Thomas

Introduction

Britain's Prevent programme, described as being an education and community engagement-based policy approach to terrorism prevention (DCLG, 2007a;HMG, 2011), has been highly contentious domestically but also influential on policy programmes developed in other western states similarly facing a significant threat of domestic Islamist terrorism (Neumann, 2011). Shaped in reaction to the shocking 7/7 London bombings of July 2005, the importance of this preventative policy has seemed self-evident, given the regular flow of foiled plots and convictions in the following years. The murder of soldier Lee Rigby In May 2013 by two British Islamist extremists represented the first civilian deaths in Britain through Islamist terrorism since 7/7, yet was this comparative 'success' in avoiding further such deaths through Islamist terror actions anything to do with the focus and content of the large-scale Prevent programme? The immediate response of the Coalition government to the Woolwich murder was that Prevent needed more investment and must do better (Travis, 2013). However, how can the effectiveness of this terrorism prevention, 'hearts and minds' educational programme be measured? How do we know whether Prevent has made the people of Britain any safer or, indeed, whether, it may have made them less safe? What actually have been the ambitions and consequences of Britain's Prevent programme to date, and is Prevent a temporary phenomenon soon to end or a

long-term policy response? In response, the chapter questions whether Prevent, as we have known it, needs to exist (O'Toole et al, 2012).

This chapter examines Britain's Prevent programme and its operationalization to explore these key questions. It argues that, whilst some positive results have inevitably come from such a large-scale programme, Prevent has been conceptually mis-guided and inherently flawed, so leading to counter-productive overlaps and contradictions with other key policy agendas, particularly 'Community Cohesion', the post-2001 British policy approach to multiculturalism and ethnic integration (Denham, 2001). Here it is suggested that Prevent has both significantly securitised the national and local state's relationships with British Muslim communities, so damaging the very 'human intelligence' (English, 2009) needed to counter a genuine threat of terrorism and ideologies that support it, and also essentialised and reified Muslim faith identity in direct contradiction to wider policy agendas recognising and even promoting more intersectional, nuanced and contingent forms of identity. These problematic features have been inherent to Prevent and although there have been significant 'turning points' in the life of Prevent, most notably the supposed watershed of the June 2011 Prevent Review, it is argued here that any changes have been superficial and limited. On that basis, the Chapter argues that Prevent, in its form and scale at time of writing, must come to an end, with the progressive, stated Prevent ambitions of partnership and education-based anti-extremism work developed in very different and more effective ways.

To develop this case, the chapter first provides a brief overview of Prevent's origins and factual development. It then discusses the stated and apparent

ambitions of Prevent and the real, largely negative, consequences that have flowed from the operationalization of those ambitions. It goes on to discuss the temporalities of Prevent, both the nature and meaning of key episodes in the short life of Prevent, and what this analysis suggests about the longevity of Prevent in a distinct and recognisable form.

The development of Prevent

The overtly critical analysis of Prevent's consequences and impacts developed below needs to acknowledge the essentially reactive nature of Prevent's development. Whilst Prevent was one of the key elements, one of the so-called 'Four Ps', of the original British CONTEST counter-International Terrorism policy (Home Office, 2003), it was entirely undeveloped until the 7/7 bombings. Here, whilst aware of domestic Islamist extremists in Britain, MI5 had not expected domestic terror attacks (Hewitt, 2008), as the 9/11 and the 2004 Madrid train bombings were interpreted as having both involved foreigners who had come to the countries with the specific goal of carrying out terrorist actions (a wrong interpretation of the Madrid attacks ; Atran, 2010). This, coupled with a continuing post-Good Friday Agreement concern with Northern Ireland meant that the Police and Security Services had neither good intelligence of, or a developed prevention plan in relation to, Britain's Muslim communities and minorities within them promoting extreme Islamist doctrines. From then on Britain was playing catch-up, as shown by key elements of Prevent. One example of this is the fact that the initial, 'Pathfinder' phase of Prevent funding that commenced in April 2007 was aimed at the 70 local authority areas in England and Wales with 5% or more of their population being Muslim, a clear indication of the lack of reliable intelligence

around Islamist extremist activity and its 'hotspots' (DCLG, 2007a; Thomas, 2012). In the later 2008-2011 iteration that saw a very significant expansion of Prevent, this was extended to all English local authorities with 2% or more of Muslims (a clumsy conflation of mainly Pakistani/Bangladeshi ethnic origins with faith identity; Thomas and Sanderson, 2011), but this still didn't cover Crawley in Sussex, home of Omar Khyam, the key ringleader of the 'Crevice' bomb plot.

This 2008 onwards expansion of Prevent demonstrated the complexity of the programme. Local Authority activity on Prevent was funded by the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) and saw very significant programmes of largely generalised and rather bland youth and community activity with groups of Muslim young people – the Government boasted of working with over 40,000 young Muslims in the first year alone (DCLG, 2008). Local Authorities were initially given very significant latitude over how to use this Prevent funding, with some using it to develop programmes in-house and others dispersing some or all the funding to local Muslim community groups (Lowndes and Thorp, 2010). A significant focus for many local authorities and partners was developments and improvements in local Muslim civil society organisations (Thomas, 2008), through initiatives such as committee training for Mosques and strengthening of educational processes at Madrassas (after-school Mosque classes for young people). Local Authorities were obliged to rapidly established local multi-agency co-ordination groups, known as Gold, Silver and Bronze groups to denote the seniority of the staff involved at each level, with these groups developing the local 'Channel' processes that were designed to work with individuals seen as in danger of 'radicalisation'. Local Authorities also had to report to Government on their Prevent work via 'National Indicator 35', the

Prevent-specific monitoring channel within national government's overall funding and performance monitoring regime. All local authorities were obliged to establish and operationalize all of these Prevent developments and community-focussed activity at very short notice, no matter what concerns or objections they had, as explored further below (Monro et al, 2010; Husband and Alam, 2011).

Alongside this was funding from the Home Office via the newly-established Office for Security and Counter-Terrorism (OSCT) for Prevent programmes in Prisons, the Youth Offending Sector and Further and Higher Educational Institutions. Whilst the work with young offenders and adult prisoners involved direct educational programmes, Prevent activity directed at Universities and Colleges did not contain any direct educational work. Instead, it was concerned with strengthening relationships between the educational institutions and local Police and Counter-Terrorism Units (CTUs), and of heightening scrutiny of student activity on and around campuses. At a national level, Home Office Prevent funding was utilised to develop more polyphonic Muslim representation with the establishment of Muslim Women's and Young People's Advisory Groups, and more 'moderate' forms of religious interpretation and leadership through bodies like the Sufi Muslim Council, the Quilliam Foundation and the Radical Middle Way road show series.

Central to this Prevent activity across all sectors was the Police, with over 300 new Prevent-dedicated Police posts established during 2008-2011. These were split between local-level 'Prevent Engagement Officers' and posts within the new regional CTUs that brought together the former Special Branch apparatus and the significantly expanded Security Service personnel. At the time of writing, the

national investment in Prevent, a purely preventative, 'hearts and minds' education and engagement programme, had reached over £200 million since its inception in 2006. The sheer scale of this programme, coupled with the very significant role for Police and Security Service personnel, which includes pivotal positions in the local multi-agency arrangements (Lamb, 2012), inevitably attracted controversy. By 2009, evidence started to emerge of an apparent blurring of boundaries between education and surveillance (Kundnani, 2009; Dodd, 2009), with this including pressure on community and youth workers to provide intelligence to the Police, and even CTU staff getting involved in direct community-based Prevent delivery (Knight, 2010). Media coverage of these issues prompted an Inquiry by the Communities and Local Government Select Committee that focussed on the relationship between DCLG and the Home Office and the associated tensions between the Prevent and Community Cohesion policy agendas. The resulting report, published just before the May 2010 general election (House of Commons, 2010), was highly critical of Prevent's organisation and called for DCLG to solely focus on Community Cohesion.

The incoming Conservative-Liberal Democrat Coalition government immediately suspended further Prevent funding to local authorities and instituted a review of Prevent. After a long pause, apparently due to disagreements within the Coalition over Prevent's emphasis, the 2011 Prevent Review (HMG, 2011) seemed to accept much of the CLG Select Committee's recommendations in that DCLG was removed from Prevent involvement. Alongside this, the number of local authorities funded for Prevent activity was reduced to 28, supposedly on an intelligence-led basis (although this list was very similar to the 28 local authorities having the largest Muslim populations; O'Toole et al, 2012), with much closer

scrutiny by OSCT and withdrawal of funding from Muslim community organisations seen as counter to western liberal norms, a stress on values in keeping with the policy direction identified in an earlier speech by Primer Minister Cameron (2011). These 2011 changes were apparently accepted by the Labour opposition and generally seen as having successfully removed Prevent from the political foreground until the May 2013 Woolwich murder of soldier Lee Rigby raised fresh concerns about both Prevent's effectiveness and the approach taken from 2011 onwards by the Coalition (Boffey and Doward, 2013).

Prevent's Ambitions

A number of explicit and implicit ambitions can be identified for the Prevent programme. Some of these can be seen as constructive and thoughtful in theory, but problematic in terms of how they could be effectively implemented, monitored and evaluated – to be blunt, what is a programme like Prevent meant to achieve, and what would 'success' or effectiveness look like? Some ambitions of Prevent can be seen as somewhat in tension with each other, particularly between local Muslim community 'responsibility' (McGhee, 2010) and the securitised state's desire for control over and knowledge of activities within those communities (Kundnani, 2009). Other ambitions of Prevent may have appeared logical in their own terms but blatantly in contradiction to wider and deeper state policy priorities, particularly those around 'Community Cohesion', multiculturalism and the re-evaluated conceptions of identity and citizenship underpinning them. Those blatant contradictions and their very significant and negative resulting impacts are discussed in the 'Consequences' section below.

Credit has to be given to the British government for investing significantly in a terrorism prevention programme from 2006 onwards, given the traditional political and media pressure to focus exclusively on repressive interrogation of the broader (Muslim) communities seen as harbouring and even producing terrorists responsible for events such as 7/7 (Gupta, 2008). The counter-productive effects of such clumsy crackdowns have been seen previously both historically in Northern Ireland, and within modern British Muslim communities (Hewitt, 2008). Arguably the new Prevent programme also gave the British state the opportunity to develop the more complex and developed channels of dialogue with Muslim communities that they wanted anyway (O'Toole et al, 2013).

However, the policy contradictions and lack of clarity about what Prevent was actually trying to achieve and who it was actually aimed at were apparent from the start. 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, that Britain was losing the battle for 'hearts and minds' within Muslim communities, and the perception within the Security Services that there was a wider group of people within Muslim communities who held very negative feelings about the British state and some of its key policies, so providing a pool for terrorists to swim in (Thomas, 2012). What was not clear here, however, was how big the state viewed this 'pool' as being. In much of the earlier Prevent policy documentation (DCLG, 2007 a and b), there was talk of a small minority of extremists and of the state working in partnership with mainstream Muslims, as highlighted in then-DCLG Minister Ruth Kelly's speech to launch the 'pathfinder' phase of Prevent: *'Violent extremism seeks to drive us*

apart. Together, we will overcome it.' (DCLG, 2007b:2). However, the accompanying guidance documentation for local authorities charged with launching Prevent spoke of the need for '*demonstrable changes in attitudes amongst Muslims*' (DCLG, 2007b:7). The sheer scale of the number of young Muslims engaged with by Prevent in that 'Pathfinder phase' (DCLG, 2008) and the subsequent 2008-11 expansion suggested both that the state perceived the 'pool' of potential terrorism supporters within Muslim communities to be really quite large and that the state had a very limited sense of who those people might be.

State partnership and dialogue with Muslim communities around counter-terrorism was certainly an aim of Prevent, and can be identified in a number of ways in the 2007-11 phase of the programme. The involvement of the DCLG in Prevent ensured that its national and local implementation was initially connected to broader engagement around cohesion, community regeneration and dialogue with faith communities. The initial latitude allowed local authorities to use Prevent money as they wanted, enabling some to hand over all or some of the money directly to Muslim community groups, and others to work collaboratively with them over the design of Prevent activity (Turley, 2009; Lowndes and Thorp, 2010; Iacopini et al, 2011). This did meet with a mixed response. Many local authorities were reluctant to develop a distinct Prevent programme, both because it clashed with the aims and practice of the Community Cohesion policy agenda, as discussed below, and because the sheer scale of Prevent seemed to target and inherently stigmatise entire Muslim communities (Husband and Alam, 2011). Forced to implement the programme anyway, many local authorities used opaque titles like 'Pathfinder' to avoid the Prevent label

(Thomas, 2008), whilst a significant number of Muslim community groups refused to accept Prevent funding, based on the same concerns of blanket stigmatisation.

Nevertheless, there is significant empirical evidence that Prevent funding in this phase strengthened dialogue and understanding between Muslim communities and their local authorities and Police forces, and also enabled a strengthening in Muslim civil society structures and organisations (Turley, 2009; O'Toole et al, 2013). On a national level considerable resources were provided for enhanced consultation structures with British Muslims and some success was achieved in developing more polyphonic community representation to government, albeit under an overtly counter-terrorism programme. This state approach has been characterised as: *forcing responsibility for countering extremism onto Muslim communities through a process of devolving responsibility downwards*' (McGhee, 2010:33) but can also be seen as a genuine attempt to develop partnership with 'responsible' Muslims, one consistent with the communitarianist, third-way approach of a Labour government that was pessimistic about its ability to solely produce social change (Levitas, 2005). Whether 'responsible' Muslims are the same thing as religiously or politically 'moderate' Muslims has been an inherent tension within Prevent and the 2011 Prevent Review seemed to represent a decisive step towards the state demanding 'moderation' from any potential partners, so arguably undermining the effectiveness of Prevent against stated goals.

What is clear from the above discussion is that Prevent has only been concerned with British Muslims, and has failed to develop any work around right-wing/racist

terrorism, or other forms of political extremism (Thomas, 2012). This approach has been based on the state's position that Islamist extremism is not only the most serious terrorism threat facing Britain, but is only the only one that is 'international' in scope, so falling under the 'CONTEST' banner. The international links exposed by the far-right 2011 massacre in Norway and the developing, trans-national far-right ideologies supporting Breivik's murders have not altered the view of the British state. This has left Britain's Prevent programme as focussed only, and on a very large scale, on Muslim communities. This has been greatly problematic in terms of the resulting reactions from both the Muslim communities targeted and the other ethnic/faith communities not covered by this very substantial state funding scheme, as discussed below. It also indicates that the state understands the Islamist terror threat purely in terms of Islamic identity and practice, despite the fact that there is no agreed profile of who is radicalised towards political violence and that the concept of 'radicalisation' itself is increasingly disputed (Kundnani, 2012). Here, it can be argued that, whilst this terrorist violence is planned and justified in the name of Islam, religion explains its motivations much less well than understandings of the rupturing experiences of trans-nationalism and globalisation, or even understandings of nihilistic and far-left political violence (Roy, 2004).

These problematic features inevitably lead onto questions of what Prevent is actually trying to achieve. The 'hearts and minds' formulation of Prevent, and its strong focus throughout on young people identifies it as an educational programme. However, analysis of the 2007-11 phases suggested that very little educational input or dialogue around terrorism, political violence or forms of

extremism was actually going on within Prevent programmes (Thomas, 2009, 2010). This is not surprising for a number of reasons. Firstly, any such educational work would involve overt discussion of difficult and contentious issues, such as foreign wars, racism, suicide bombing and religion, and it is far from clear that such genuine political education/dialogue with young people is what the state had in mind when establishing Prevent. Evidence shows previous policy attempts to operationalize overt 'anti-racist' educational programmes with White young people in schools and youth projects were undermined by avoidance and lack of confidence within the professional practitioners involved, who felt that they lacked the materials, clarity and organisational support to do such work (Thomas, 2011). Despite Prevent's scale, little focus has been put on educational resources or, more crucially, on training and orientation for professional practitioners. The UK Youth Parliament, one of the small minority of Prevent-funded organisations who did engage in such overt and constructive political education work with young people (of all ethnic and faith backgrounds, on a community cohesion basis) offered to develop a national Prevent training programme for youth and community professionals, but the British government refused to fund it (House of Commons, 2010). Here, the evidence up until 2011 is of engagement with Muslim young people, but only very limited educational focus on the actual political, social and religious issues potentially driving any support for violent extremism (Thomas, 2012). The more limited and possibly more focussed Prevent programmes in funded areas post-2011 **may** have developed more robust educational content (although we have no evidence for this, as far as I'm aware), but they have remained Muslim-only, raising fundamental questions about how mind-sets relating to 'other' communities and intolerant social norms in the wider

community can be influenced without having meaningful contact with those 'other' lifestyles, beliefs and value systems.

Certainly, Prevent, at least in its 2007-11 phase, involved overt attempts at social engineering over community leadership and social and religious practices within British Muslim communities. This can be seen in the national prioritisation of new consultation bodies representing Muslim women and young people, and the requirement that local authorities also prioritise such work locally. There was also the breaking off of contact with the Mosque based Muslim Council of Britain, and the establishment of and support for 'moderate' bodies like the Sufi Muslim Council and anti-extremist think-tank the Quilliam Foundation (Birt, 2009). More specifically, there was considerable focus on religious interpretation, and on the organisation and conduct of religious organisations and places of worship. These included the 'Radical Middle Way' road shows aimed at promoting 'moderate' interpretations of Islam and its place in western societies to young Muslims, and considerable focus on the organisation and content of Madrassas and of the training and linguistic skills of new Imams recruited by Mosques.

Other fundamental features of Prevent would suggest that it is actually a securitised engagement approach with Muslim communities, much more about intelligence-gathering, facilitation/encouragement of self-policing and possibly even surveillance, rather than 'education' in any meaningful sense (Kundnani, 2009; Husband and Alam, 2011). Certainly the very large number of new and dedicated Police/Security Service posts focussed on Prevent and the pivotal role of the Police and OSCT/regional CTUs in the programme's local and national co-

ordination would support this perspective. The specific and evidenced examples of surveillance and of Police/CTU pressure on educational practitioners to pass on intelligence provided in the *'Spooked'* (Kundnani, 2009) report were flatly contradicted by the then Labour government. However, more recent research on the role played by the West Midlands CTU in Prevent clearly identifies the Police as the main players in Prevent (Lamb, 2012).

Not only have the Police led and dominated decisions over Prevent funding and planning, they have even got involved in direct 'educational' delivery with Muslim young people and communities, a highly questionable blurring of professional boundaries (Knight, 2010). Following the 2011 Prevent Review, local autonomy over Prevent largely disappeared, with even the funded areas having to apply regularly to the Police and Security Service officers-led OSCT for funding against specific criteria. Anecdotal evidence suggests refusal of support for any bids involving non-Muslims or research, and personal Ministerial scrutiny of bids, even though the eventual delivery is largely by local authority or third sector youth and community workers. The large-scale, monocultural focus on British Muslim communities and the centrality of the Police and Security Services to all levels and aspects of Prevent make it very hard to avoid the conclusion that it is significantly an intelligence-gathering and surveillance system, operationalized overtly at least partially through 'engagement'. Indeed, Prevent's creator, Sir David Omand, doubted that engagement and intelligence-gathering could or even should be separated within practice (APPGHS, 2011) This can be seen most clearly around the Higher and Further Education sector, where Prevent activity has been entirely about Police/CTU liaison with educational institutions and state focus on how

those institutions monitor Muslim student activity on and around campuses, rather than any educational engagement with students themselves (Thomas, 2012).

The problematic stated and implicit ambitions of Prevent discussed above mean that it has been very hard for politicians to explain, or for the general public to understand, what Prevent is actually for. Indeed, when John Denham took over as DCLG Minister he identified that: *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.*

(O'Toole et al, 2013:57)

This, and the concurrent political scrutiny over the real purpose and content of Prevent (House of Commons, 2010), led Denham, a Minister with strong educational and community cohesion credentials (Denham, 2001), to offer the clarification to the national Prevent conference held in late 2009 that Prevent was a 'crime prevention programme' (Denham, 2009). This was a potentially helpful attempt to answer allegations that Prevent had much wider and more questionable ambitions around surveillance or around altering the leadership and practices of British Muslim communities. However, it was also highly problematic. Firstly, assuming the 'crime' to be prevented was terrorism, why has Prevent engaged with such large numbers of Muslim young people, yet focussed so little on political, social and individual/psychological factors likely to make at least some young Muslims be at risk of terrorist involvement, as discussed above? Secondly, British crime prevention-based youth activities, such as Youth Inclusion

Projects managed by local Youth Offending Teams, work with smaller numbers of carefully-targeted young people, often referred by relevant agencies. The 'Channel' programme, one small element of Prevent nationally, would seem to fit the 'crime prevention' understanding reasonably well, but the broader, large-scale Prevent activity to date outlined above simply doesn't fit any meaningful understanding of that concept. It is highly likely that this stated ambition and formulation was offered by a minister, and a whole government department, deeply unconvinced by Prevent and the role within it that they were being asked to play.

The Consequences of Prevent

The shape and content of Prevent outlined above, alongside the explicit and implicit ambitions analysed, have led to some clear, and largely negative, consequences flowing from this (over) ambitious counter-terrorism programme. In particular, three key consequences of Prevent can be identified. Firstly, there is the very significant contradiction to the broader policy agenda of Community Cohesion and ethnic integration and the damaging overlap with it in terms of 'space' for policy development and implementation. It is argued here and elsewhere (Thomas, 2012) that these contradictions and tensions between the two policy agendas have gravely damaged the development of community cohesion practice whilst also undermining the effectiveness of Prevent itself. Secondly, the monocultural and large-scale focus on essentialised Muslims and their reified faith identity by the British state through Prevent has hardened defensive and antagonistic identifications within Muslim communities whilst also promoting 'virulent envy' (Birt, 2009) over resource allocation from other ethnic,

faith and social class communities. Lastly, it has clearly securitised the British state's relationships with Muslim communities at both national and local levels (Kundnani, 2009), something that has grown significantly under the Coalition government and their 2011 Prevent Review. This has given at least the appearance of large-scale surveillance and has inevitably damaged the flow of much-needed human intelligence.

The Prevent/Community Cohesion tension

The relationship between Prevent and the pre-existing policy priority of community cohesion has been problematic from the start. The problem here is not just an organisational one of demarcation but a much more fundamental, conceptual one relating to Prevent's failure to reflect and work with the analysis and approach of community cohesion, so damaging the effectiveness of Prevent on its own stated terms. The British discursive policy shift from multiculturalism to community cohesion came in the wake of the 2001 northern riots involving young Muslims, but was a direction government wanted to go in anyway (Thomas, 2011). Its foregrounding of commonality and shared values, rather than discrete and separate ethnic and faith identifications reflects a growing concern that 'parallel lives' were developing for such separate communities, not just in terms of physical segregation but in terms of lack of shared contact, cultures and identifications (Cantle, 2001). Here, there was not only a focus on individual and community agency consistent with wider Labour social policy analysis and prescriptions, but also the perception that the previous phase of 'political multiculturalism' state policy had increasing downsides. These previous policies had of necessity deployed 'strategic essentialism' (Law, 1996) to tackle the gross

ethnic inequalities and blatant racial discrimination common to Britain of the 1980s and greatly contributed to the significant diminution of those ethnic inequalities and overt racism. However, in their focus on distinct ethnic identities, such policies both hardened and reified these distinct ethnic/faith identities whilst providing separate, defined spaces for these individual communities. The post-2001 riots analysis, highly relevant to the ambitions of Prevent, was that extreme and oppositional identities and ideologies can develop more easily in culturally segregated communities holding antagonistic attitudes to 'others', an analysis as true of White racism as of extreme strands within Muslim communities.

This analysis from the post-riots Cantle Report (2001) was accepted by government and adopted as a new policy priority (Denham, 2001). The resulting national government guidance and funding streams for local authorities focussed very much on cross-community contact and work programmes that emphasised common needs and interests. This emphasis on commonality, alongside some sections of the report and some associated political pronouncements that seemed to focus very partially on Muslim responsibility (Travis, 2001), was interpreted by some as a lurch back to the coercive assimilationist approach of the 1960s, a denial of difference and of multiculturalist progress itself (Kundnani, 2002; Alexander, 2004). However, empirical evidence on how community cohesion has been interpreted and implemented on the ground contradicts this (Thomas, 2011). Here, community cohesion practice involves acknowledgment and celebration of distinct ethnic and faith identities but also work that emphasises cross-community content and commonality, so seeking to augment distinct identities with stronger forms of shared identity. Such cross-community

contact is based upon 'contact-theory' (Hewstone et al, 2007), a social psychology-based approach to prejudice reduction carried out in depth and over considerable time. Such community cohesion-based approaches have strong support from local policy-makers and practitioners (Monro et al, 2010), meaning that when Prevent was announced local authorities in key areas like West Yorkshire fully understood the domestic terrorist threat but didn't see why a separate policy programme was needed – for them, the community cohesion programmes they were enthusiastically developing were exactly designed to address and counter prejudices and extremism of all kinds (Husband and Alam, 2011).

Moreover, Prevent's monocultural focus on Muslims, interested only in their 'Muslimness,' was understood as directly counter to the policy approach to identity in society inherent to community cohesion. Here more intersectional understandings of individual citizenship based around a human rights framework were being developed in tandem, with the need for more 'cooler' and contingent identifications seen as vital in an increasingly diverse and complex society (McGhee, 2006). The scale and width of Prevent's monocultural focus on Muslims as an undifferentiated community remains a flagrant contradiction to the community cohesion policy agenda and is viewed as highly problematic by the ground level policy-makers and practitioners asked to implement it (Husband and Alam, 2011).

Beyond this conceptual contradiction were practical and organisational problems for community cohesion flowing from Prevent's rapid and nationally-forced implementation. The demands for local authorities to quickly develop Prevent

programmes and the associated multi-agency liaison structures meant that focus on developing community cohesion programmes and structures waned (Monro et al, 2010) and its forward progress stalled – terrorism was simply seen as more urgent and important than community relations, emphasised by the ubiquitous presence of counter-terrorism police and Security Service staff. The relationship between the two policy agendas was identified as problematic by a range of submissions to the CLG Select Committee Inquiry into Prevent (House of Commons, 2010), and the eventual Prevent Review of 2011 seemed to accept the Inquiry's recommendations to separate DCLG and the Home Office, Community Cohesion and Prevent. However, by then the damage had been done. The Muslim Participation in Contemporary Governance project identifies a senior civil servant at the OSCT as acknowledging that, because of the sheer power of OSCT, *'so what happened was Prevent took over Cohesion'* (O'Toole et al, 2013:57), a national process that was replicated at local ground level. This was confirmed in the aftermath of the 2011 Prevent Review, as OSCT control of local Prevent activity became total, whilst the government's long-awaited 'Integration' (their new term for community cohesion) policy document (DCLG, 2012) was a grievous disappointment. It washed national government's hands of community cohesion/integration, saying that it was a matter for local government only. All national monitoring, guidance and funding for community cohesion was ended forthwith and the document didn't use the terms 'racism' or 'equalities' at all. Meanwhile, Prevent, focused only on Muslims, sailed onwards.

A Suspect Community?

Prevent's large-scale and monocultural focus on Muslim communities has not just been contradictory and damaging to community cohesion, but has done very real damage both to the state's relationship with Muslim communities and relationships between distinct communities. The term 'suspect community', resonant of Britain's previous attitude to those of Catholic Irish origin and living in Britain, has been deployed in relation to the state's approach to British Muslims (Hickman et al, 2010), but this only partially works around Prevent's impact. Some key figures and organisations within British Muslim communities have enthusiastically participated in Prevent (O'Toole et al, 2013), not just seeing it as helpful 'Muslim money' (Lowndes and Thorp, 2010), but also as a mechanism for acknowledging and confronting extremist activity and ideologies within their communities. However, the scale of the programme, and its securitised reality discussed below, has undoubtedly fuelled further defensive identifications and feelings amongst British Muslims who have suffered significant, hostile criticisms from both sections of the mainstream media and from overtly Islamophobic political groups like the English Defence League. Such pressure and constant questioning of their individual and collective 'loyalty' to Britain (Thomas and Sanderson, 2011) makes it easier, not harder for young Muslims to be attracted to the 'single narrative' of worldwide Muslim grievance and oppression propagated by extreme strands of political Islamism. The overt social engineering of Muslim representation by Prevent described above, the significant and worrying extent of the state's 'internal penetration' of Muslim communities as Stuart Hall (BBC Radio 4, 2011) has described it, merely adds to such feelings for some Muslims, exacerbated by Prevent's failure to engage with other forms of extremism,

particularly far-right racism and violence. Repeated political calls to ban non-violent Islamist groups like Hizb ut-Tahir without also banning the EDL also add to such perceptions.

Meanwhile Yaha Birt (2009) accurately predicted that the money and focus of Prevent would create 'virulent envy' amongst other ethnic, faith and social communities. The 2001 riots in Oldham, Burnley and Bradford were significantly provoked by the sense within some marginalised White communities that Muslim communities were favoured by government funding streams (Thomas and Sanderson, 2013). This was factually wrong but the 'strategic essentialism' (Law, 1996) and ethnicised targets of political multiculturalism policies made such racialised interpretations more possible. Such resentment was illustrated in the CLG Select Committee Inquiry process, when representatives of all the other major faiths queued up to give evidence and complain that Muslims were getting state funding for mundane development of faith facilities such as madrassas whilst simultaneously claiming that only Muslims had an 'extremism' problem! (House of Commons, 2010). The large, monocultural and unfocussed nature of Prevent between 2007 and 2011 made such grievances from other communities plausible at a time of significant cuts in other policy funding streams.

Policed Multiculturalism?

The allegations that Britain's Prevent programme has been little more than an elaborate surveillance scheme devised by the 'spooks' have been aired and argued over elsewhere (Kundnani, 2009; House of Commons, 2010). The broader point is that such allegations are possible to make, and seem as significantly credible as elements of them do, because of the pivotal role for the Police and

Security Service personnel in Prevent design and delivery, both locally via the Regional CTUs, and nationally via the controlling OSCT. It is inescapable that a policy programme apparently about education and community-based engagement has been controlled and sometimes directly delivered by these forces of overt state power – a clear securitisation of the state’s relationship with Muslim communities, given the scale and complexity of the Prevent programme. Earlier, the chapter discussed how the Prevent policy agenda has both contradicted and ultimately side-lined the community cohesion/integration agenda that actually offered valuable insights on both the causes of extremism and on how to develop an inclusive and non-stigmatising vehicle for addressing extremism and ideologies that support it. Within Prevent we have seen a growing securitisation and progressively increasing Police/CTU control over the programme, despite continual rhetoric of partnership and multi-agency dialogue (HMG, 2011). There is clear evidence that as the local and regional Prevent multi-agency co-ordination processes developed, the Police became more powerful and used that power to progressively limit local autonomy, so ending the minority of creative attempts to implement Prevent. This is highlighted in an empirical study of the role played by West Midlands CTU and its officers in Prevent:

The Police seem to have been given the responsibility of delivering Prevent because other local bodies did not possess the organisational capability to successfully implement, manage and adapt a programme... despite Prevent being proposed as a multi-organisational programme, the Police in the West Midlands are the central organisation and undertake the majority of the work relating to Prevent.

(Lamb, 2012:91)

This growing Police/CTU hegemony can be explained partly by their resource dominance – the Police had a great number of dedicated, Prevent funded posts, whilst local authority Prevent funding was overwhelmingly for activities, rather than posts, with the burden of Prevent liaison therefore falling on hard-pressed policy officers who also had responsibility for wider policy agendas such as community cohesion. However, it can also be explained in terms of ‘cultural capital’, with the Police/CTU having the monopoly on intelligence and knowledge about on-going plots and criminal investigation that could only be shared on a ‘need to know basis’ (Husband and Alam, 2011), so establishing a clear cultural dominance and pecking order within Prevent operations. The Prevent Review (HMG, 2011) extended this dominance significantly at the national level, cutting out the more partnership-orientated DCLG and making Prevent the sole property of the criminal justice-focussed Home Office. As outlined above, this Review also gave the OSCT and its staff total control of all funding to and activities by local authorities.

Other elements of Prevent support such an analysis of securitisation. The Prevent Review put renewed emphasis on ‘Channel’, mechanism by which individuals viewed as vulnerable to radicalisation and to even ‘grooming’ by violent extremists are identified and referred, through multi-agency processes, to individual counselling or appropriate group work programmes. Some of the approach of Channel answers earlier questions levelled at Prevent, in that it works with only small numbers – hundreds, not many thousands, and identifies those individuals on a stated basis of facts and evidence. Channel is also probably the best example of interventions by skilled and confident professional practitioners who feel equipped to engage with complex and sensitive issues

attached to 'radicalisation'. However, it involves identifying and intervening with young people, including a significant number aged 14 years old and under (HMG, 2011), who have not committed any crime or participated in any identifiable criminal conspiracy. A briefing document prepared for the US Congress on international terrorism prevention approaches (Neumann, 2011) admitted that a Channel-type approach would be viewed as completely unacceptable in the US due to civil liberty concerns. Similarly, Prevent's focus on Universities has been entirely about monitoring of student activity and behaviour on and around campuses, and liaison between CTU and educational institutions (Thomas, 2012). The Coalition government and influential think tanks have been fiercely critical of British universities for not doing enough to identify and counter violent extremism (House of Commons, 2012), yet what they propose seems to raise fundamental challenges to notions of academic freedom and the concept of Universities as institutions where difficult and important social, moral and political subjects can be both researched and debated openly and freely. The dangers of such a mind-set were demonstrated by the arrest and detention of two research students at the University of Nottingham on the grounds that they had downloaded Islamist extremist material that was both available in the University library and freely available on the Amazon website. Anti-Islamist think tanks such as the Henry Jackson Society /Centre for Social Cohesion have been significantly influential in fuelling this scrutiny of Universities, but the evidence base for actual terrorist recruitment or plots being developed on University campuses is very weak and unconvincing (House of Commons, 2012).

Prevent: Coming to an end?

Given the issues and tensions around Prevent that have been highlighted here, what is the prognosis for Prevent – is it a temporary phenomenon or a permanent reality? To date, Prevent’s development has been unpredictable and uncertain. It existed in name only until the visceral shock of the 7/7 bombings and the realisation that this was a domestic plot (Hewitt, 2008). Rapidly operationalized, often despite vehement opposition and concerns from local authorities and respected Muslim community organisations, Prevent was launched without a clear blueprint or developed sense of how its ambitions could be meaningfully operationalized. The chapter has highlighted the opposition and uncertainty about Prevent from local authorities and their parent government department, the DCLG. Here, even if Prevent was not deliberately intended as a Police-led surveillance scheme, the lack of a clear and achievable methodology and strategy, and the associated uncertainty of local government left the Police and Security Service in growing charge.

The inevitable charges of spying (Dodd, 2009) could have sunk Prevent, but the continuing reality of foiled plots and convictions has made it very hard for politicians of all parties to step away from a programme that visibly demonstrates to the general public that something (even if it’s not the right thing) is being done to stop this threat in the long-term. The 2011 Prevent Review did succeed in cooling off political and media concern about Prevent by down-sizing it significantly and ending ‘means-based’ funding for radical Islamist groups working with vulnerable young people. Many local authorities ceased to receive Prevent funding after 2011 but were still required to have action plans and multi-agency

liaison structures as part of their normal, on-going operations. This 'mainstreaming' approach – Prevent without dedicated Prevent funding - may be the long-term direction of travel, and it will continue to be controlled by the Police/CTU, rather than by those local authorities involved more organic and nuanced contact with Muslim communities and their varied representatives. However, the immediate response to the May 2013 Woolwich murder focussed on whether Prevent was doing enough things or doing them in the right way (Travis, 2013; Boffey and Doward, 2013), and highlighted the continued political and popular pressure to have a named and visible terrorism prevention programme whilst Britain continues to have an apparent Islamist terror threat. This is a worrying conclusion, as this chapter has argued that the confused ambitions and the monocultural focus of Prevent alongside its contradictory tension with community cohesion have had strongly negative consequences. These have been to undermine and side-line community cohesion work, to further alienate and separate Muslim communities through a reification of simplistic and essentialised faith identity and to overtly securitise the state's relationship with those Muslim communities on a very large scale. Rather than continue, in overt or 'mainstreamed' covert forms, Prevent needs to be ended. Any genuine attempts to create community-based anti-extremism programmes with young people need to draw on the analysis of, and work in harmony with, constructive and non-stigmatising community cohesion practice (Thomas, 2011) and the more intersectional and nuanced identities that it seeks to work with and encourage.

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