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Changing experiences of responsabilisation and contestation within Counter-Terrorism policies: The British Prevent experience

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Key words: Counter-terrorism; Muslims; Radicalisation; Islamophobia

Abstract

Preventative, 'soft' counter-terrorism policies have proved internationally controversial, as criticisms of Britain's Prevent strategy show. However, there is a danger that change, complexity and contestation within approaches like Prevent are overlooked. This article examines Prevent's changing focus of 'responsibilisation' and, in response, changing experiences of contestation by both the local state and by local Muslim communities, including mediation and 'enactment' by organisations and individual professionals. In discussing this, the article argues for a more nuanced analysis of Prevent, around both the 'state' and the situated use of agency and policy space. This supports the contention that Prevent is 'complexly flawed'.

Introduction: Prevent moves from 'tainted' to 'toxic'

The preventative dimensions of counter-terrorism policies adopted by many states internationally have proved to be the most controversial, particularly because of their apparent securitised targeting of racialised Muslim communities. Whilst undoubtedly problematic, critiques of such flawed, 'soft' counter-terrorism policies have often overlooked the significant shifts, developments and hence complexity within such policy approaches, as Britain's experience shows. In 2015, Britain's 'Prevent' Strategy (Her Majesty's Government (HMG), 2011) shifted gear significantly with the introduction of the 'Prevent duty' (HMG, 2015). This placed a legal responsibility on schools, colleges and other public bodies – and all the individual public servants

working within these institutions – to implement Prevent by showing, ‘*due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism*’ (HMG, 2015:2) and by identifying and reporting any individuals (even children) displaying signs of being ‘at risk’ from extremism. In the case of schools and further education colleges, this new duty merely confirmed obligations already enforced by the government educational inspectorate, OFSTED, following the so-called ‘Trojan Horse’ affair that involved allegations of ‘extremism’ within Birmingham schools (Miah, 2017).

This significant expansion of securitisation and associated ‘pre-crime’ approaches into educational and welfare spaces has attracted both scrutiny and criticism (e.g. Churchill, 2015; Dodd, 2015; Taylor, 2015, Open Society Foundation Justice Initiative (OSFJI), 2016), focusing on troubling examples of Muslim students being referred to the Channel anti-extremism mentoring scheme on questionable, and in some cases laughable, bases (although some specific cases are contested: BBC, 2016). Such examples and the very active foregrounding of them by anti-Prevent campaigners and trade unions (OSFJI, 2016), has highlighted how this contested policy approach of Prevent has steadily moved to being ‘toxic’ for many people. These concerns have been reflected and amplified both by mainstream media and by senior political figures. David Anderson QC, the government’s previous Independent Reviewer of Terrorism Legislation did NOT have responsibility for scrutiny of Prevent (that is apparently done by the ‘Prevent Oversight Board’, but government will neither publish its minutes nor even confirm its membership: Joint Committee on Human Rights (JCHR), 2016) but was so concerned by evidence presented to him that he called for an independent review of Prevent (OSFJI, 2016). This call was re-iterated by the report on ‘*Counter-Extremism*’ produced by

Parliament's Joint Committee on Human Rights (2016). In discussing the government's proposal to move forward with an ill-defined policy measure on 'countering extremism', the Joint Committee bluntly said:

The experience of the Prevent Strategy should inform any new legislation. There should be an independent review of the Prevent Strategy to provide evidence as to what works and what simply drives wedges between the authorities and communities (JCHR:2016, 5).

The JCHR report went on to note '*several stories of what appeared to be heavy-handed referrals under the Prevent Duty*' (ibid:16), so demonstrating the political concern over Prevent's impacts. There is a danger, however, that this increasingly wide, fierce and arguably well-justified criticism of Prevent's intent and concrete societal impacts is obscuring more complex understandings of this policy approach. Some of the criticism characterises Prevent's content and focus as being what it was when launched in 2007, rather than the significantly different current content. This doesn't imply that Prevent is now more positive but, as discussed below, rather that it is significantly different and that understanding both the nature and experiences of these changes matters.

More specifically, the criticism of Prevent risks both downplaying the complexity and contestation of Prevent within the broad 'state' and also implicitly characterising front-line education and welfare institutions as willing tools of state Islamophobia and surveillance. Such an approach fails to acknowledge engaged contestation by local authorities and front-line professionals as well as by Muslim community organisations throughout Prevent's history. Here, I identify the importance of the concept of 'policy enactment' (Braun et al, 2010), the ways in which ground-level state and community-led agencies and their individual 'street-level bureaucrats' (Lipsky,

2010) mediate and enact national policies, so often leading to policy operation at ground-level that looks significantly different from that described in elite-level political and media discourse. Within this article's general concern with Prevent's change and complexity, I particularly focus on its changing emphasis on 'responsibilisation' (McGhee, 2010) and on how this has provoked, and is still provoking, changing types of contestation by communities, local authorities and professional practitioners at ground level.

The article first briefly identifies the conceptual flaws that have shaped the negative reality and public perception of Prevent, and the changes in the content and focus of Prevent. It then goes on to identify and discuss the key theoretical concepts of 'responsibilisation' and 'enactment' that have shaped the changing nature of ground-level contestation within Prevent, before critically discussing the shifting focus of 'responsibilisation' and the response of changing modes of contestation within the Prevent Strategy. This includes consideration of emerging research data around changing forms of contestation in the wake of the 2015 Prevent legal duty.

Prevent's conceptual flaws

Britain's Prevent Strategy was arguably the first post 9/11 attempt to operationalise 'soft', preventative counter-terrorism policies and it has been since significantly studied and copied by other states (Ragazzi, 2014; Government of Canada, 2011). Arguably (see Thomas, 2012), the negative public framing and interpretation of Prevent highlighted above has been shaped by fundamental flaws in its original design and operationalisation. In some cases, subsequent modifications have attempted to ameliorate these flaws but the negative public understanding of Prevent is settled, based on the

original centrality of those flaws. These four key flaws are identified and briefly summarised here.

The first and undoubtedly most damaging flaw was Prevent's original, explicit focus on Muslims only (DCLG, 2007 a and b; Thomas, 2010) on a large scale, using crude demographic data, so clearly portraying British Muslims as an undifferentiated, 'suspect' community (Hickman et al, 2010). The government evaluation of the initial 'Pathfinder' year of 2007-8 proudly highlighted Prevent's engagement with almost 50,000 young Muslims (DCLG, 2008). This was re-enforced by overt attempts to engineer different types of community leadership through the establishment of national Muslim Women's and Youth 'Advisory Groups' and the policy prioritisation of similar approaches at the local level. Alongside this came the, frankly astonishing, state promotion of supposedly more 'moderate' Islamic theological interpretation through the 'Radical Middle Way' roadshows and the short-lived 'Sufi Muslim Council' (Thomas, 2012). Sociologist Stuart Hall (BBC, 2011) characterised this as an unprecedented level of policy 'penetration' within an ethnic community, and this large and high-profile programme had the dual impact of both re-enforcing wider societal suspicion of Muslims (Hussain and Bagguley, 2012) and of also re-enforcing feelings of stigmatisation and defensive identifications within Muslim communities (Thomas and Sanderson, 2011).

Secondly, this Prevent approach therefore represented a fundamental contradiction to the direction of the post-2001 community cohesion policies that represented a new phase for British state multiculturalism. The government reports following the 2001 riots in northern towns (largely involving Muslim youth of South Asian heritage) identified long-standing White majority perceptions of multiculturalism as being state funding favoritism for

ethnic minorities as a significant driver of the pre-riot tensions (Cantle, 2001; Denham, 2001). Here, the unintended consequence of pre-2001 policy approaches aimed at tackling ethnic inequalities had been a hardening of ethnic divides and separate identifications. The policy solution proposed had been 'community cohesion' an overt focus on commonality and cross-community dialogue. For some, this shift in language and priorities appeared to be a lurch back to assimilationism (Back et al, 2002). However, empirical research suggests (Thomas, 2011) community cohesion policies at ground level were both demonstrating progressive practice through 'contact-theory' based work (Hewstone et al, 2007) that both worked with existing identifications and strengthened commonality, and were strongly supported by ground-level practitioners (Jones, 2013). Prevent's policy determination to only work with Muslims and to therefore only fund Muslim communities had the predictable impact of creating 'resource-envy' in other communities (see evidence given to House of Commons, 2010). Whilst the Labour government's original approach was a 'twin-track' one whereby local community cohesion work was funded to the same extent as local Prevent work, the sheer weight of political prioritisation of Prevent first sidelined community cohesion nationally (O'Toole et al, 2013) and locally (Monro et al, 2010; Thomas, 2014) before national government officially washed its hands of a policy concern with cohesion and ethnic integration (DCLG, 2012).

Another key flaw within Prevent was its operationalisation of the problematic model of 'radicalisation' (Kundnani, 2012) with its belief that individual journeys towards violent extremism can be predicted, monitored and prevented. At first, this was not explicit because the 'Prevent 1' stage of local work seemed to promote a community development approach, albeit one funded by an overt counter-terrorism strategy. Here, at ground-level the

pragmatic, 'means-based' (Birt, 2009) approach was initially dominant but this long-term emphasis on building Muslim community capacity and partnership with local authorities soon came under pressure from the security-led demand to identify and intervene with those judged as being 'at risk' of radicalisation. Alongside the policy sidelining of community cohesion came an increasing Police dominance and leadership within the Prevent Strategy, as demonstrated by Bahadur-Lamb's study of the West Midlands (2012) and O'Toole et al's (2013) national study. The early effects of this were graphically shown by Kundnani's (2009) evidence around youth workers being pressured to reveal information about their clients. Whilst government rejected claims of spying (House of Commons, 2010), it was clear that Prevent was now focusing more specifically on spotting Muslim youth and young adults viewed as being both 'risky' and 'at risk' (Heath-Kelly, 2013), a trajectory underlined by establishment of 'Channel', a pre-crime approach of de-radicalisation counselling for those 'at risk' of radicalisation who hadn't yet actively planned a crime.

Lastly, this flaw of foregrounding of the concept of 'radicalisation' has meant that Prevent promoted the increasing securitisation of community relations by the overt involvement of the Police in day to day contact with Muslim communities through the lens of counter-terrorism, creating a reality of 'policed multiculturalism' (Ragazzi, 2014). This has been hardened and deepened by the subsequent rolling out of mundane practices of surveillance around the Channel scheme and the 'Prevent duty' discussed below.

This analysis supported arguments (Thomas, 2009, 2010) that Prevent, in its initial form, was counter-productive on its own stated terms of prevention and of winning the public co-operation and 'human intelligence' necessary to

defeat violent extremism. However, the reality of Prevent has been one of significant change, complexity and contestation and this is discussed below.

The changing reality of Prevent

Two distinct phases can be identified within Prevent's trajectory. 'Prevent 1', lasting from its 2007 introduction until the 2011 Prevent Review (HMG, 2011) was the product of the New Labour government and of their reaction to the reality of a domestic Islamist terror threat represented by the 7/7 attacks. It involved a significant local government programme encompassing funding for all local authorities with a certain number of Muslim residents (initially 5%, then 2%, then finally 2,000 or more), via the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG). A lot of this money was passed by local authorities onto Muslim community groups, alongside the significant national funding for the new forms of Muslim community representation discussed above. There was also a substantial (and continuing) Home Office programme involving over 300 dedicated Police posts. This involved both uniformed 'Prevent Police Engagement Officers' (PEOs) and dedicated senior, non-uniformed personnel attached to the newly-established regional Counter-Terrorism Units (CTUs).

The 'Prevent 2' phase has developed from the 2011 Review to date, and has involved the removal of the DCLG from Prevent, and a greatly reduced local authority programme (the number of funded 'priority' areas first shrunk considerably but is now quietly growing once again) whose resources are tightly controlled by the Home Office's Office for Security and Counter-Terrorism (OSCT). As illustration, even the funded areas must apply directly to the OSCT for any programme of activity and such (inevitably short and limited) programmes must faithfully implement one of the OSCT's 'products'. A key 'Prevent 2' development has been the 'Prevent duty' (HMG, 2015) and its

rolling out – this has involved compulsory training for many thousands of public servants on spotting signs of ‘radicalisation’ and the obligation to refer substantial concerns to Channel.

Such substantial revisions of a national government policy strategy might be seen as proof of it being a ‘learning policy’, a programme that has used evidence-based analysis and feedback loops to evaluate, modify and so develop but that, in my view, would be a fallacy. Instead, this article argues that the lurches in the focus and content of the Prevent Strategy since 2007 have instead been the product of profound tensions and disagreements within the ‘state’, between different national government departments, between and within governing political parties and, most substantially, between national and local government (Thomas, 2014). Here, key local authority areas never wanted Prevent but instead wanted to use community cohesion work as the vehicle for anti-extremism preventative work (Husband and Alam, 2011). Similarly, it is far from clear that the DCLG were ever happy with either Prevent per se or with its impacts on the community cohesion policies that they were committed to (O’Toole et al, 2013), whilst the Prevent Review itself was delayed by major splits within the Coalition government (and within the parties of that government; Thomas, 2012).

This lack of ‘state’ consensus in itself raises questions about the wisdom of retaining Prevent. Certainly, understanding these intra-state tensions helps to explain the significant shifts and changes over time in the focus and content of Prevent. Within these substantial developments in Prevent can be identified changing notions of ‘responsibilisation’ and, in response, changing modes of contestation and mediation at ground-level. The meaning and importance of

these concepts is discussed below, so allowing the article to then analyse how these concepts have been experienced in Prevent operationalisation.

‘Responsibilisation’ and ‘policy enactment’

‘Responsibilisation’ is clearly a concept inherent within communitarianist theoretical analysis and associated policy promotion of ‘active citizenship’ by states in recent decades. The communitarianist position of writers such as Etzioni is that an unintended consequence of the post-war welfare regimes in the USA and the UK has been a loss of the necessary balance between citizen rights and responsibilities:

Communities constantly need to be pulled toward the centre course where individual rights and social responsibilities are properly balanced.

(Etzioni, 1995: x)

This perspective sees a loss of individual and community responsibility for social change and for addressing social ills as directly flowing from the expansion of government’s services and reach, and so argues for policy approaches that re-responsibilise community and individuals. This position does, of course, assume that individual citizens can and should influence structural economic and social realities, such as ethnic segregation, or indeed the violent extremism of small numbers of their fellow citizens. This communitarianist conception of ‘responsibilisation’ can be seen as being inherent to the approaches to social policy under the British ‘New Labour’ governments of Tony Blair and Gordon Brown (1997-2010). Here, Labour drew on the ‘third way’ writings of Anthony Giddens (1998) that proposed approaches to government and to social policy implementation based on communitarianist thought. Giddens seemed to both accept Etzioni’s concern

that the big government of post-war welfarism had sapped personal and community responsibility, so squeezing the space for agency, and Beck's (1992) contention that we now faced a 'risk society'. Giddens argues that individuals must learn to confront risks and to accept both that our own lives will be less secure and that we must individually assume more responsibility and risk:

We have to make our lives in a more active way than was the true of previous generations, and we need more actively to accept responsibilities for the consequences of what we do and the lifestyle habits we adopt (Giddens, 1998:37).

Given the prominence of 'third way' and communitarian thought for policy-makers over the past two decades or so, there is clearly a revival of interest in theories of human agency within social policy (Greener, 2002), including around ethnic integration (Thomas, 2011) and preventing violent extremism. Bourdieu's key concept of 'habitus' is important here, with its focus on a set of dispositions that incline 'agents' to act and react in certain ways. For Bourdieu, 'habitus' orients behaviour without determining it, and the 'fields' within which habitus operates for individuals depends very much on the 'capital' to which they have access (Greener, 2002:691). Bourdieu discusses how the habitus of actors may enable reflexive behaviour, or agency, but that they may lack the right type of capital, or any capital at all, to make any impact. This clearly suggests the limits on individual agency outside of both economic and social structures, such as poverty, racism and ethnic inequalities, and elite-directed political realities, such as foreign policy and national state domestic policies, yet New Labour's social policies focused heavily on the development of agency and human capital (Levitas, 2005). It can be argued that Prevent, particularly in phase 1, was consistent with this approach.

This 'third way' perspective argues that government can no longer guarantee economic and social security in the same ways even if it wanted to because of the profound global economic and political shifts beyond the control of any one government. It so suggests that asking individuals and communities to accept more 'risk' and to take greater responsibility within social policy is not so much a denial of structural realities and an associated over-privileging of agency than as a pessimistic recognition of a more limited ability for the modern state to effectively control and determine social experiences and identifications. Here, involving communities in responsibility for preventing violent extremism is arguably partially about the weaknesses and limitations of the modern state, this prompting counter-terrorism policy's *'mobilisation of society and the 'civilianisation' of security in the UK'* (Sliwinski, 2012:290).

The concept of policy contestation through ground-level enactment and mediation is a well-established one, particularly in the world of educational research (Braun et al, 2010). Here, the day-to-day lived reality of educational experience can often look and feel significantly different from the picture painted in elite-level policy discourse, thanks to the ways that ground-level institutions like schools interpret and 'enact' these top-down policy strictures. Such mediation can even be at the level of the individual professional practitioner, as Lipsky's work on *'street level bureaucrats'* showed (2010). This perspective cautions against judging policy regimes simply from analysis of elite-level discourse. It can be argued that British multiculturalist policies should significantly be understood from the perspective of ground-level enactment. In fact, a number of substantial multiculturalist measures, such as the ethnic monitoring processes around employment and use of public services that drive national data on ethnic inequalities, was pioneered at local government level, then taken up by the national state, not the other way

around (Solomos, 2003). National-level multiculturalist initiatives have often looked quite different at the ground-level. The post-2001 policies of community cohesion, a re-named and 're-balanced' (Meer and Modood, 2009) multiculturalism, are an example of this, with progressive and inclusive ground-level cohesion practice contrasted with problematic elite-level discourse (Back et al, 2002). Here, community cohesion policies were being understood and enacted by front-line agencies and their staff, in this case youth workers, in ways that respected and worked with specific ethnic and faith identifications but which also promoted stronger forms of commonality and dialogue through 'two-stage', contact-theory based youth activities (Thomas, 2011). This perspective suggests that we cannot fully understand a highly-contested national policy regime such as Prevent without drawing on ground-level empirical evidence about the ways in which it has actually been understood, practiced and contested.

Responsibilisation and contestation in 'Prevent 1'

The previous discussions highlight that responsibilisation was clearly a central and consistent part of wider New Labour social policy (Levitas, 2005). However, Basia Spalek (2013) identifies that utilising such approaches of 'responsibilisation' that funded and trusted communities to participate in preventative activities through the Prevent Strategy was a new departure for counter-terrorism policies:

'The focus on resilience, and in particular, community resilience, illustrates how important it is considered for individuals within communities to be responsible and active citizens, to be moral agents and help prevent terrorism' (Spalek, 2013:79).

Here, Spalek draws on Durodie (2005) to highlight a new focus on 'cultural resilience' within communities, rather than the traditional state focus on 'technical resilience' being projected on to communities. In 'Prevent 1', Muslim communities were responsabilised through the monocultural focus, funding and priorities of national and local Prevent work outlined above and Muslims were arguably cast as moral agents of terrorism prevention (Choudhury and Fenwick, 2011). This approach and its sheer scale, could be cited as proof of the inherently Islamophobic nature of Prevent but it can also be understood as a 'third-way' inspired approach to partnership that both acknowledged the need to avoid the stigmatisation of Prevent being 'done' to British Muslims and which also acknowledged both the state's lack of understanding of the complex dynamics of Islamist violent extremism and its own limited ability to make progress in preventing it.

It was indeed *'the responsibility of Muslims and Muslim communities to perform their duty of being "frontline" vigilant watchers' in their Mosques, neighbourhoods and families'* (McGhee, 2010:33) that Prevent seemed to be foregrounding, but McGhee argues that this approach was adopted to *'counter the othering of Muslim communities and their position as a 'suspect community'* (ibid). Here, placing responsibility on to Muslim communities was seen as less stigmatising and problematic than **not** giving them responsibility. However, Abbas (2016:10) understands this approach as being one of a deeper 'responsibilisation', with Prevent being about the creation of a culture and approaches of *'internal surveillance practices of spying and informing state authorities'*, and with parents and other family members being responsabilised to spot and report moves by their loved ones towards violent extremism. Here, Abbas (2016) explicitly portrays this early Prevent approach as being one that sought to engender cultures of spying and informing within Muslim

communities, an echo of state approaches in the Northern Ireland conflict:

The internal suspect body is produced within Muslim households where family members fear that their children are demonstrating signs of extremism, leading to parents checking up on their activities and imposing restrictions on how they perform their religious identities.

(Abbas, 2016:3)

This role of Muslim parents monitoring their children was certainly central to the government support for the '*Families Matter*' campaign launched in 2014 to deter travel to Syria. Whilst there are clearly different interpretations of Prevent policy intent here, it suggests that this responsabilisation of British Muslim communities was arguably as much *horizontal*, involving communities taking responsibility for the dispositions and conduct of fellow Muslims, as it was *vertical*, where Muslims were seen as responsible to the state for the conduct of their co-religionists.

Some Muslim communities contested this 'Prevent 1' approach through refusal to engage or accept funds (Kundnani, 2009; Husband and Alam, 2011) but others **did** engage, shaping the funding's impact on Muslim civil society and community/local state relations. Lowndes and Thorp (2010) in their study of Prevent implementation in one region of England identify how Prevent funds were used to strengthen Muslim youth involvement in local authority youth services in one area, whilst Muslim community consultation structures with the local authority were significantly developed in another. Iacopini et al (2011) highlight how Muslim faith organisations in the Tower Hamlets area of east London were enabled to come into the mainstream of local authority-

funded provision through Prevent, whilst a study of initial Prevent work in Kirklees, West Yorkshire (Thomas, 2008) highlighted the development of more professional and regulated local Madrassa/Mosque schools (attended on an after-schools basis by many young Muslims). All this was done, highly-problematically, with counter-terrorism money but some Muslim communities engaged with Prevent both at the local governance and operational level, leading O'Toole et al (2016) to draw on the evidence from their previous, large-scale 'Muslim Governance Project' (O'Toole et al, 2013) to suggest that Prevent 1 should be seen as 'contested practice' at ground level.

This perspective of contestation and engagement significantly challenges characterisations of Prevent as simply overt state surveillance and disciplinary power being projected onto rather passive Muslim communities. It certainly doesn't negate important critiques of Prevent's various malign impacts, such as its 'chilling effect' (Husband and Alam, 2011) on ground-level Muslim professionals, the stigmatising impact on Muslim communities (Kundnani, 2009; House of Commons, 2010) or the lack of actual preventative educational content within this overt targeting of Muslim youth (Thomas, 2009) but it does suggest a complexity of experience around Prevent at ground level.

Similarly, local authorities were responsabilised through national state Prevent funding/monitoring mechanisms, such as the 'National Indicator 35' reporting mechanism (Thomas, 2012) that gave them some initial latitude on how to deliver 'Prevent 1' activity providing they accepted that doing Prevent was non-negotiable. Despite this very considerable national state pressure, some local authorities, such as Bradford, initially resisted (Husband and Alam, 2011) before being forced to accept funding. Here, Bradford and the other West Yorkshire local authorities fully understood the domestic terror threat,

following the 7/7 attacks carried out by local residents, but didn't see Prevent as a helpful development. They wanted to use community cohesion as the vehicle for anti-extremism work, accurately predicting the divisive and stigmatising impacts Prevent would have. Other local authorities initially attempted to mediate and alter Prevent. An example here is Rochdale in Greater Manchester, which initially refused the stricture to work with Muslim youth only. Instead, Rochdale worked with academic partners to devise a programme of youth work-based action research around issues of identifications, community cohesion and local ethnic divisions involving young people of **all** ethnic backgrounds (Thomas and Sanderson, 2011). Eventually, Police and national state control over what local authorities could and could not do in the name of Prevent tightened and squeezed the space for local variation (Kundnani, 2009; Bahadur Lamb, 2012). However, some outliers remained, with Leicester City Council insisting on Prevent being delivered via a community cohesion-focussed third sector organisation, rather than the local authority, an exceptional arrangement that remains in place to date (O'Toole et al, 2013).

Changing experiences of responsabilisation and contestation within 'Prevent 2'

'Prevent 1', its particular approach to responsabilisation and its particular opportunities for local contestation came to an end for a number of reasons. Some of these reasons were exposed by the House of Commons Communities and Local Government Select Committee Inquiry (2010), which arguably (Thomas, 2010) showed Prevent to be '*failed and friendless*'. Despite the limited but real space for contestation and variation allowed to Muslim communities and local authorities by Prevent 1's approach, any perceived

benefits of such funding (at a time of growing austerity) were heavily outweighed by the fundamental flaws outlined above and the resulting reputational damage to all participating. Evidence from community groups detailed the securitisation and stigmatisation inherent in Prevent, whilst local government evidence suggested that Prevent was damaging community cohesion, a claim subsequently shown to be well-founded (Thomas, 2014). The Police (APA, 2009), meanwhile, were dissatisfied with Prevent for very different reasons – their view was that in ‘responsibilising’ community groups and local authorities to take community development approaches, Prevent was failing to do ‘real’ preventative counter-terrorism work (although they were, and arguably remain, far from clear as to what that would involve and look like).

Alongside this, the Prevent Review (HMG, 2011) marked the elite-level political triumph of the ‘values-based’ (Birt, 2009) approach to Prevent. This perspective sees the threat of Islamist terrorism as directly linked to attitudes and cultural norms within mainstream Muslim communities per se, so foregrounding the ‘conveyor belt’ theory at the heart of the concept of ‘radicalisation’ (Kundnani, 2012). This perspective is succinctly summarised in an earlier book by one of the key government proponents of the ‘values-based’ approach, then-Education Secretary Michael Gove (2006). The triumph of this approach and its enforcement within policy through opportunistic use of events such as the Syria crisis (HMG, 2013) and the so-called ‘Trojan Horse’ affair involving Birmingham schools (arguably exploited by Gove: Miah, 2017) means that responsabilisation of Muslim communities and funding to enable it has largely been ended under ‘Prevent 2’. Here, as outlined above, the Prevent Review (HMG, 2011) greatly reduced the local authority funding programme and ended both the involvement of the DCLG and its associated national

programme of developing new forms of Muslim leadership. The only possible conclusion to draw from this development was that dominant figures within the Coalition (and subsequent Conservative) government simply didn't trust Muslim communities to play a meaningful role in countering violent extremism. They are not allocated any meaningful resources and so cannot exercise any leadership within Prevent.

Similarly, local authorities have also largely been side-lined. The number of funded local authorities has been reduced and funding largely limited to Prevent co-coordinator salaries. The small amount of money available for funded authorities to do programme work, and the content of that work, is tightly controlled by OSCT, an approach of micro-management demonstrating a fundamental lack of trust in local democracy and its front-line professional practitioners. This means that Prevent is now factually securitised with the majority of its budget dedicated to Policing.

Responsibilisation in 'Prevent 2' is now very much focused on front-line public sector staff and their institutions through the 'Prevent duty'. Training around this is compulsory across large sections of the education and health sectors of Britain's welfare state through the so-called 'WRAP training' (Workshop to Raise Awareness of Prevent), which employs contested notions of individual psychological vulnerability to extremism (Blackwood et al, 2012). This both highlights signs of vulnerability and possible pathways towards violent extremism (with a variety of types of extremism addressed in recognition of the broadening of focus in Prevent 2: HMG, 2011), alongside detail of how individuals identified as being 'at risk' should be referred to the Channel multi-agency anti-extremism counselling/mentoring scheme.

This training is 'cascaded' to staff by senior managers within organisations such as schools, colleges and social services and it is individual professional practitioners who are responsible for reporting concerns to managers and so externally to Channel. Here, it is now such front-line practitioners (and their institutions) who are responsabilised for terrorism prevention by Prevent. This pressure is not only enforced through the 'Prevent duty' but through professional inspection frameworks, such as the OFSTED inspection of state schools and colleges. Here, the coveted 'Outstanding' rating cannot be gained unless all staff have received Prevent training and Prevent processes are visibly in operation (OSFTED, 2016).

This is, though, arguably not centrally-directed surveillance in a simplistic, top-down sense because it is hard to show how government and its national Prevent operatives of the OSCT have demanded the sort of ill-advised, micro-level decisions by individual teachers and schools to inappropriately refer Muslim pupils to Channel detailed in the article's Introduction. Rather, 'Prevent 2' can be better understood as neo-liberal governmentality, a policy approach by which front-line practitioners are 'responsibilised' for spotting radicalisation. For McKee (2009:486):

'Governmentality does not restrict its analysis to the institutions of political power of the state. Rather, it defines the 'art of governing' more broadly as the 'conduct of conduct'.

Here, within a climate of (Islamophobic-driven: Hussain and Bagguley, 2012) 'unease' (Huysmans, 2009) over the risk of terrorism (which in policy terms itself conflates domestic violent extremism with attempted travel to conflict zones such as Syria as one), front-line professional practitioners such as teachers and social workers (in Universities, the responsibility rests much more

with 'back of house' staff, such as counsellors) are charged individually with monitoring the conduct of Muslim pupils, under pressure from OFSTED and legal duty. What this leads to is a situation where individual professionals (whose initial professional training in Britain is often increasingly technocratic and has limited overt focus on issues of equality and social justice) may find themselves culpable in enacting approaches at ground level that stigmatise and mark Muslim young people as dangerous 'others'. Such fears may well appear to be borne out by the examples foregrounded in the media and highlighted earlier.

Developing forms of contestation in 'Prevent 2'?

Despite the greatly restricted potential for local authorities and Muslim communities to mediate Prevent work outlined above and the overt nature of Prevent 2's responsabilisation of front-line professionals, it is still, however, possible to identify emerging forms of ground-level mediation and contestation.

Firstly, research around how schools and colleges in two key regions of England are enacting the Prevent legal duty (Busher et al, 2017) suggests that front-line educational respondents do **not** find the 'safeguarding' element of the Prevent duty, how Prevent relates to broader school/college 'safeguarding' systems and approaches in response to varied risks and vulnerabilities faced by students, problematic in theory – it is an approach that they see as realistic in relation to broad understandings of 'vulnerability' for this age group. Data also suggests that practitioners and their institutions demonstrate awareness of concerns around Prevent's stigmatising focus and display a professional

determination to ensure that this is not replicated within their **own** individual and institutional implementation through, for instance, a strengthening of citizenship education that addresses all forms of extremism and intolerance. Alongside this, there is evidence of contestation through a, largely self-generated, curriculum response in schools and colleges that foregrounds issues of equality, anti-racism and citizenship studies in recognition of the need for positive, preventative measures that address all students. Criticisms of Prevent from such respondents focus on the lack of Prevent policy support for, or concern with, such meaningful educational processes, a view which echoes broader academic critiques (Thomas, 2016). This research evidence offers a significantly different understanding of Prevent's implementation in education to those dominant in political discourse presently (OSFJI, 2016), largely because of evidence around policy contestation and enactment by, and the agency of, front-line educators and their institutions.

Similarly, there is some evidence of local authorities and Muslim community groups contesting the 'Prevent 2' agenda. One example is Kirklees local authority in West Yorkshire. Kirklees is a funded 'priority area' but this only brings very limited funds as highlighted above. They, like other local authorities though, have the 'Prevent duty' and the concurrent reality of local residents having been involved in terrorist plots or having travelled to Syria. Their response was to step outside of OSCT control by establishing a 'Prevent young people's engagement team', a team of youth and community workers seconded from other departments and so paid for by the authority's own budget at a time of very real cuts forced by national austerity policies (Thomas et al, 2017). This team did preventative educational activities with young people from diverse ethnic, faith and geographic communities through schools and community groups and also worked with individuals referred to

Channel, rather than leaving the Police to lead such an intervention. This local initiative contained an implicit critique of Prevent's lack of concern with actual educational processes (and the practitioner skills and approaches that go with them: Thomas, 2016) by taking the initiative themselves, rather than waiting for a change in national policy. This amplifies the national fact that some of the most interesting anti-extremism preventative educational work to date has been done outside of any Prevent funding, such as the Welsh-based 'Think' project (Cantle and Thomas, 2014).

Muslim community groups also continue to actively contest Prevent in a number of ways. One is through overt political activity to debate, monitor and campaign against Prevent by Muslim civil society campaigning groups such as MEND (www.mend.org.uk/together-against-prevent/) and CAGE. Another is the community-based work to engage with young Muslims at risk of radicalisation (Shabi, 2016) through processes of youth work that are entirely funded by the community themselves – such groups do not seek and would not accept Prevent funding from the state, even if it was still available, but they do such work nevertheless. A similar Muslim community-directed approach that shuns state counter-terrorism funding can be detected in countries such as Australia (Safi, 2015).

Conclusion

This article has argued that counter-terrorism policy-makers, both in Britain and internationally, have much to learn by more fully understanding the British ground-level experience of Prevent policy contestation and enactment. They arguably also need to accept that national government efforts to rigidly dictate and micro-manage the operation of preventative counter-terrorism policies at ground level are both unrealistic and counter-productive.

The very significant public concern with the impacts of the 'Prevent duty' imposed by the 2015 Counter Terrorism Act on British state education, health and welfare professionals and their institutions is understandable in light of the worrying individual cases of securitised stigmatisation (OSFJI,2016). These cases seem to confirm the deepening of the conceptual flaws of Prevent previously identified. However, much of this debate has both overlooked the significant modifications that the focus and content of Prevent has undergone since 2007, and implied that these malign individual examples represent the uniform experience of ground-level Prevent implementation. In contrast, this article has argued for a more complex and nuanced understanding of Prevent's flaws and problems, including recognition that much ground-level implementation of Prevent may look significantly different from that portrayed.

Central here is the concept of 'policy enactment' – how ground level state institutions such as schools, and even their individual 'street-level bureaucrats', modify problematic national policy strictures as they enact them, leading to a reality of policy implementation on the ground that often looks significantly different from that portrayed (and expected) in elite-level political discourse. The article has argued that the British Prevent strategy can only be understood by examining the experiences and impacts of this ground-level policy enactment and its inherent contestation during the substantial policy modifications Prevent has undergone. Indeed, those modifications can be very significantly explained through understanding of this local policy contestation and its direct links to national contestation.

The article has suggested that these modifications can helpfully be understood as a shift in the focus of 'responsibilisation' within Prevent. Consistent with the

wider, communitarianist, focus of New Labour social policy, 'Prevent 1' responsabilised British Muslims to counter Islamist extremism. This was undoubtedly done through a crude, counter-productive and stigmatising approach to entire communities but it was arguably an attempt by the state to work in partnership and a recognition that the state could not solve this problem alone. Some Muslim groups understandably contested Prevent by refusing engagement but others and their local authorities contested through engagement where they tried to modify Prevent through processes of enactment. This 'means-based' policy approach did, in practice, trust Muslim communities and utilised community development-based approaches that, I would argue, are the only sustainable way of developing successful anti-extremism work, both in Britain and the other western states facing similar challenges.

The shift to 'Prevent 2' represented the triumph of a political and ideological perspective that didn't trust either Muslim communities or, indeed, local government to lead Prevent work. Here, Muslim communities are not now trusted with funding at all (and many would not take it anyway because of the way 'Prevent 1' was framed), whilst local authorities receive some funding but are largely not trusted to decide what to do with it. Instead, it is now front-line state professionals who are 'responsibilised' to enact Prevent through the internationally-unprecedented 'Prevent duty'. This indeed heightens the securitised surveillance element of Prevent but does it through processes of neo-liberal governmentality, in that the malign examples are understood as the failings of individual professionals, not as a systematic result of the policy 'climate of unease' created by Prevent's approach of responsabilisation. There is, though, increasing evidence of how this new approach of responsabilisation has led to changing forms of enactment and contestation. Within schools,

colleges and other state institutions, professionals (who significantly accept the 'safeguarding' dimension of Prevent work) show awareness of Prevent's potential for racialised stigmatisation and are endeavouring to avoid this, partly by foregrounding education around equality, democracy and tolerance. Similarly, local authorities try to utilise 'policy space' to develop more productive local versions of Prevent, whilst Muslim community groups contest in a number of creative and productive ways, including doing (on an unfunded basis) the sort of community-led youth engagement work that 'Prevent 1' was trying to develop.

Failure to recognise and critically analyse this shifting complexity and shifting experiences of responsabilisation and contestation means that we risk only partially understanding the lived experiences of Britain's problematic Prevent Strategy.

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