FROM SUSPECTS TO CITIZENS: PREVENTING VIOLENT EXTREMISM IN A BIG SOCIETY

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Coalition Government has the opportunity to initiate a new era of counter terrorism policy. It has started well by signalling its commitment to 'restore the rights of individuals in the face of encroaching state power', including the introduction of a 'Freedom Bill', and a review of counter-terrorism legislation.[1] This paper considers one aspect of that review, 'home-grown' terrorism, and the future of one specific type of response, prevention. It argues for an approach to prevention work that is consistent with the Coalition's goal of creating a Big Society of active citizens and protecting civil liberties.

That there has been no successful terrorist plot in the UK since 7/7 owes much to the skills of our policing and security services, as well as a sustained effort from Muslim communities to fight terrorism. But the threat of al-Qaeda inspired terrorism remains, as does a sense of alienation and frustration among many British Muslims.

Preventing terrorism before it takes place is a vital part of the counter-terrorism effort, particularly given the home-grown threat we face. This is known as 'Prevent', which is the second 'P' in the UK's CONTEST II strategy (Pursue, Prevent, Protect and Prepare). However, the five years since 7/7 have demonstrated how complicated prevention work is. Stopping a problem before it arises always poses ethical and practical questions; in counter-terrorism, it involves sensitive issues of theology, integration, and identity. And because the paths that people take into terrorism are varied, complicated, and unpredictable, it is difficult to know where and when 'prevention' should take place.

A number of recent reports have been critical of the UK's current prevention efforts, culminating in the House of Commons Select Committee Report into Preventing Violent Extremism, released in March 2010. It is widely believed that Prevent has alienated Muslim communities, increased intercommunity tensions, and threatens to undo a number of good initiatives that contribute to community cohesion because of the link to counter terrorism. It is also extremely difficult to assess its effectiveness as the relationship between these programmes and countering terrorism is weak. Thus,

in a time of tightening public sector budgets, the question of value for money is impossible to determine.[2] Some of these criticisms have been based on misconceptions about what prevention is about but it is difficult to know how to overcome them.

Some form of terrorism prevention work must remain. This paper sets out a new vision for how it could be reformed under a new government. It proposes replacing the current broad approach to prevention, which targets all Muslims, with a more precise focus on individuals that have the intent to commit criminal acts. Broader plans for cohesion are important, but should not be pursued directly or through the prism of security. Instead, Big Society initiatives can indirectly create a more cohesive society and address some of the root causes of terrorism.

But a Big Society will mean disagreement, dissent, and extremism. Deciding the limits of free expression will be a defining question. Rather than vague notions of tackling extremism, we propose a liberal republican solution. This means that intolerance must be allowed a platform, but the onus falls on us to demolish it in argument. It also means intervening when certain types of extremism stop others leading a life of their own choosing.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Prevention work should be limited to people believed to have the intention to commit or directly facilitate violence, or those targeted by recruiters.

Prevention is vital where there are signs of recruiters operating, or individuals with the intent to commit terrorist acts. It should be police led with support from local authorities and specialist organisations like the Active Change Foundation. This will send out a powerful message that the government is primarily concerned with stopping terrorism, not extremism or dissent. Clarity of vision and leadership will also improve effectiveness.

Dismantle the 'Preventing Violent Extremism' programme.
'Preventing Violent Extremism' (PVE) is one aspect of Prevent that is delivered by Communities and Local Government (CLG) and focuses on cohesion, community resilience and underlying grievances. While many of its current projects aim at valuable social objectives, it is questionable how far they prevent terrorism. Programmes like Preventing Violent Extremism have blurred the boundaries between social cohesion and counter-terrorism, which often alienated the very people it was trying to bring onside.

Fight extreme and radical views that are non-violent through openness and argument rather than bans or legislation.
Non-violent forms of extremism – however odious or intolerant – are part of living in a free society. They should be heard, to better defeat them through argument. Openness will expose them as vacuous. However, there are clearly some very specific types of non-violent extremism, which are more problematic and may justify government intervention. This should be limited to groups and individuals who are preventing others from exercising their democratic rights.

A Big Society of active, powerful citizens will be an effective way to indirectly improve cohesion and address the root causes of violent extremism.
The vision behind the Big Society is one of active citizenship, with people from different communities coming together independent of government to solve local problems. If realised, it will have a powerful benefit of making communities more cohesive and resilient to violent ideologies through increased meaningful interactions. However, it must not be co-opted into a counter-terrorism strategy because this could discredit it.

OUTCOMES

This approach would have a number of benefits.

First, it would re-set the relationship between Muslim communities and the government. Targeting prevention work only against those who have the intention to commit crimes removes the idea that Muslims are a community under suspicion. It is important that young British Muslims are free to be radical and dissenting, without fear of being seen as on the path to terrorism. Continually dealing with these groups through the prisms of Islam and terrorism is counter-productive because it forces many-layered identities to be reduced simplistically.

Second, it would send out a powerful signal to both our friends and enemies that the UK is committed to the principle of freedom of expression. That commitment is not only important because of its inherent ethical value, but also because it allows society to progress. Being radical or extreme is allowed in the UK, but turning to violence or trying to hinder the democratic rights of others is not.

Third, and most importantly, it would not make the UK any less safe. Extremist and terrorist ideology is contradictory and vacuous. Exposing them as such will be more effective than banning them and providing undeserved publicity and feeding the 'taboo' appeal. Targeted prevention work would continue, led by programmes with proven success such as Channel. Encouraging more active citizenship and shared purpose can create a sense of belonging, 'a moral bind with the community whose fate is at stake'.

THE CASE FOR CHANGE

Al-Qaeda inspired terrorism remains the most pressing security concern to the UK. In 2007, MI5 estimated that there were approximately 2,000 individuals inspired by or connected to al-Qaeda, actively plotting attacks within the UK. In the summer of 2009, the UK threat level was reduced from 'severe' to 'substantial' for the first time since 9/11, although in January 2010 it was increased back to 'severe'.

The first phase of legislation following the attacks of 9/11 was mainly about disruption and detection. Governments adopted similar measures, including expanded powers for police and security services, increased sentences for crimes with a political or ideological motivation, criminalisation of conspiracy, facilitation and recruitment to terrorism, and the proscription of a number of groups that were deemed to share terrorist aims.

Counter-terrorism strategy increasingly includes policies that aim to reduce the number of potential terrorists by confronting those who spread a violent extremist ideology and supporting those who are vulnerable to its arguments. It does this by aiming to empower Muslim communities to fight radicalisation, and drain the swamp of potential recruits by tackling the 'root causes'.[3] Although it is difficult to define precisely because it covers so many different policy areas, Charles Farr, head of the UK's Office of Security and Counter Terrorism, sums up prevention strategies as targeting 'that much larger group who feel a degree of negativity, if not hostility towards the state, the country, the community, and who are, as it were, the pool in which the terrorists can swim'.[4]

This is officially known as 'Prevent'. Prevent is the second 'P' in the UK's counter-terrorism strategy, CONTEST II (Pursue, Prevent, Protect and Prepare). It ranges from targeted intervention work, often delivered by law enforcement agencies or specialist de-radicalisation organisations, to more universal resilience work involving a broader cross section of the Muslim community. The latter type is associated with a sub-section of Prevent known as

'Preventing Violent Extremism'. In the UK, prevention work has received considerable political and financial backing: £45 million was committed for the 'Preventing Violent Extremism' strategy through the Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG) between 2008 and 2011. Across all departments, including the Home Office, Foreign Office, and the Department for Children, Schools and Families, the figure for prevention-related work was as high as £140 million in 2008/09.[5]

Compared with other countries' counter-terrorism strategies, Prevent is unique in its extensiveness and level of ambition. This reflects the general consensus that the UK faces a more sustained and serious threat than other Western countries: both from al-Qaeda internationally and from British citizens who might be inspired by al-Qaeda's message, what Marc Sageman calls the 'leaderless Jihad'.[6] Furthermore, after 7/7 a number of polls seemed to suggest that a significant number of British Muslims supported terrorist activity, causing concern about the possible pool of recruits.[7]

In the circumstances, it is difficult to disagree with the rationale of Prevent. The original animating idea, that communities not laws defeat terrorism in the long term, was the right one. But Prevent has been plagued by a number of difficulties and challenges. Many of these have been set out in the recent House of Commons Select Committee Report on Preventing Violent Extremism, ranging from targeting the wrong people to stigmatising Muslim communities by treating them all as potential terrorists. It is now widely agreed that Prevent needs to be reformed.

The terrorism pyramid

The root of the problem is the underlying assumption on which Prevent is based. It conceives of the process of radicalisation to violence as a pyramid.

At the top sit a small number of individuals and groups actively plotting and seeking to commit acts of terrorism. Below them is a larger group of political/religious extremists who, though not committing violence, may cajole and inspire others to violence.

This group serves as a pool of potential recruits and provides tacit ideological and moral support. Shamit Saggar recently dubbed this 'moral oxygen', which provides the men and women of violence with the cover to act.[8] Below them are individuals considered to be potentially vulnerable to extremist or violent ideologies. In this model, radicalisation is the process of moving up the pyramid. To prevent people reaching the top, it is claimed, interventions are needed lower down.

However, radicalisation into terrorism is far more unpredictable and complicated. Linear models of the journey into terrorism have been widely criticised by several leading experts. Marc Sageman argues that radicalisation into violence is not a linear progressive process at all, but rather emerges once several factors are present. McCauley and Moskalenko point out at least ten different social-psychological processes that might be at play during radicalisation.[9]

Moreover, although some engagement in religious extremist ideology, however fleeting, is a common factor across terrorists, there are well documented examples of non-violent extremists stopping terrorism.[10] MI5 research leaked to the *Guardian* newspaper last year showed that a strong religious identity was an effective bulwark against terrorism. Likewise, research by Demos suggests that, for at least some home-grown terrorists, the move from extremism to terrorism is extremely quick, and is partly driven by excitement about the idea of violent activity as much as being a natural evolution from an extreme group.[11]

The unpredictability of radicalization into violence makes it hard to decide when and where to focus prevention efforts. As a result, the current spectrum of Prevent-related work has become incredibly far-reaching: English language teaching and lectures, boxing clubs, mentoring, women's empowerment and DVDs to celebrate diversity to name a few.[12] Projects such as these clearly address important social or community problems. But their relationship to preventing terrorism is tangential or non-existent.

Prevent inevitably includes some security-related work – such as targeted police intervention –and this has led to a number of

accusations that intelligence agencies are using the softer cohesion aspects of Prevent to spy and illicitly collect intelligence, which has dramatically harmed the programme as a whole. This is a problem because research has consistently shown that successful counter-terrorism policing depends on a positive relationship between the police and the community it is trying to work with.[13]

It is also difficult to assess the effectiveness of prevention work because the relationship between these programmes and countering terrorism is weak. Thus, in a time of tightening public sector budgets, the question of value for money is impossible to determine.[14] The official review of the Preventing Violent Extremism pathfinder for 2007/8 found that in nearly two thirds of local authorities' Prevent projects, only 20 per cent worked with individuals considered at risk, and only 3 per cent with those glorifying of justifying acts of terrorism.[15]

The House of Commons Select Committee on Preventing Violent Extremism also found that Prevent risks undermining positive cohesion work by blurring the boundaries between security and social policy and stigmatising British Muslims.[16] Indeed, labelling projects that traditionally would have been considered social programmes as part of a new securitised prevention agenda has led to a number of organisations in the UK boycotting the programme entirely. For some it has become divisive: 'those who take the money are seen as complicit with the government agenda and are sell-outs. Those who don't are seen as borderline extremists.'[17]

This is symptomatic of the way Prevent inadvertently constructs the relationship between Muslims and the government. Using Prevent to address social problems within Muslim communities has led to the perception these problems are only a concern because they contribute to terrorism. This was made worse by the fact that Prevent funding was directly linked to the size of the Muslim population in a local authority, not on the basis of known risk. Continually dealing with these groups through the prisms of Islam and terrorism is counter-productive because it forces their many-layered identities to be reduced simplistically.

A NEW VISION

Instead of the current broad approach to prevention, which targets all Muslims, a more precise focus on individuals with the intent to commit criminal acts should be introduced. Government must – like other types of crime prevention –stop crime from happening where there is good evidence of a high risk. National security is the first duty of the state. Yet, this can be done without dealing with Muslims as a separate or special group. Some British Muslims face economic and social difficulties, poor life chances, poor education and professional attainment, and challenges relating to integration and social cohesion. There is little evidence that these factors directly contribute to radicalisation to violence. Islamicising and securitising what are essentially social or economic issues is divisive and unhelpful.

Broader plans for cohesion are important. Some common ground does need to hold us together, but attempts to encourage 'Britishness' have been difficult. There does appear to be a slow shift towards a renewal of values, as multiculturalism is being sidelined for a more secular, mono-cultural position. Indeed, there has been considerable criticism of the 'multicultural' position from both those who say it went too far, and others not far enough.[18] It is now broadly considered that multiculturalism places too much emphasis on our differences, and that we should instead focus on goals of a 'shared future'. That we should seek to create a level playing-field, where the political realm and spending decisions are not 'colonised by religion in a world of religious diversity and difference'.[19] The government should work and invest in creating cohesive and integrated societies, but should recognise that the best way of doing this is largely through indirect means by addressing economic inequality and social mobility. It's also about embedding meaningful interactions between different communities in the everyday, and in pursuit of common goals. In other words, the Big Society, if properly realised, can be the vehicle to create a more cohesive society and even address some of the root causes of violent extremism.

But a Big Society will mean disagreement, dissent, and intolerance. Where the Coalition decides the limits of toleration should lie will be difficult. Rather than vague notions of tackling extremism, we propose a liberal republican position. The government must be confident that free speech is a potent weapon against extremism, not a hindrance. This does not mean that societies will not, or should not, have moral codes, nor does it entail that the government is not able to vigorously protect or defend those values. Rather it means that these codes should not be given the force of law other than to prevent people physically harming others. Intolerance must be allowed a platform, but the onus falls on us to demolish it in argument. Similarly the government can and should intervene, but only when non-violent extremists stop others from leading a life of their own choosing. A government that is determined to create a freer, more liberal society and powerful, active citizens should focus on combating extremism that prevents others from having the opportunity to exercise their democratic rights.

A NEW MODEL OF COUNTER-RADICALISATION

Focused prevention work

At present, there are two broad strands of Prevent work. The first is the security aspect: targeted intervention work that is usually led by, or carried out in close conjunction with, policing agencies. The second is universal resilience/cohesion work, which is delivered under the Preventing Violent Extremism programme. Both strands fall under the remit of the local authority, and are coordinated at the national level by the Office of Security and Counter-Terrorism (OSCT) in the Home Office and CLG.

Prevention of terrorism is a vital part of counter-terrorism work. Indeed, police and security agencies have always been involved in prevention of criminal activity of all types. Constabularies have Crime Prevention Panels, which are locally organised groups who work in partnership with the police to identify local crime problems, and to initiate prevention measures to deal with them. There is a

long tradition of public involvement in crime prevention, such as Crime Stoppers.

Regarding terrorism, there is a tendency to try to prevent all the root causes because of the consequences of failure. But this is an impossible task. There are a number of positive examples of partnerships between the police and other agencies working with people considered at very high risk of being recruited and acting on violent ideologies.

This type of prevention work – a police and community partnership focused on stopping criminal activity – must be retained as the core function of Prevent. This has two main elements: prevention and de-radicalisation.

A well-known example of this type of targeted work is called 'Channel'. Channel is a multi-agency collaboration that identifies those at high risk of violent extremism, assesses the nature of that risk and develops and delivers packages of support or interventions. Channel works primarily with al-Qaeda inspired extremism but also with other groups that appear to be at risk of different types of violent extremism. It operates across 75 local authorities and 12 police forces in England and Wales and consists of a Channel coordinator (usually sourced from the police) and a multi-agency panel that is responsible for the development of appropriate interventions.

Referrals tend to come from a range of frontline workers including children's services, youth offending services, local authorities, schools and colleges. Guidance published by the Home Office earlier this year also lays out the 'indicators' that frontline workers should be looking for. These range from expressed opinions to behaviour change and possession of suspicious material. The guidance describes how referrals are screened and assessed – a robust process with checks in place to ensure that it is only looking at people that truly are at risk.

Reactions to Channel have been mixed: some local authorities consider it a success while others argue that it comprises spying and

surveillance due to involvement of the police. This negative reaction can be attributed to a misunderstanding and lack of knowledge about the referral process. An independent evaluation led by the Royal United Services Institute also found that there was a need for better communication about Channel to community stakeholders.[20]

Channel is police led, but seeks to work closely with Muslim – and other – groups. The terrorist threat comes from a tiny minority, but is usually integrated within the community.[21] The idea, ultimately, is that communities and police work in partnership. This is a return to the vision of the founder of the modern UK police force, Robert Peel, who thought policing should 'give reality to the historic tradition that the police are the public, and that the public are the police'.[22]

This partnership between police and community depends on a strong flow of information between police and communities to effectively spot trouble and work together to prevent it. Therefore, the success of policing partnerships depends on a trusting relationship between the police and intelligence agencies and minority communities. A breakdown of relations between them can make effective policing far more difficult to achieve. A community leader is more likely to impart sensitive information to police when he has established a significant level of trust and if they feel they have the trust and support of police officers who will treat them openly and honestly.[23]

Targeted de-radicalisation

De-radicalisation, though similar to prevention work, is slightly different. It is aimed at individuals that have already taken on violent extremist views but may have not acted on them.[24] This is sometimes called disengagement, but the difference is that disengagement means the end of terrorist activity, while de-radicalisation means rejecting the ideological basis of terrorism. The process of each is different. In John Horgan's landmark work on the subject, most 'reformed' terrorists had disengaged, but could not be said to have 'de-radicalised'.[25] Renewed interest on how and why terrorism ends has emerged in parallel with increased visibility of some new and innovative approaches to counter-terrorism.

However, it is important to stress that, despite their popularity, data surrounding even the most basic of facts about these programs remains limited.[26]

One organisation that has been at the forefront of targeted work is the Active Change Foundation which is led by individuals who themselves have personal experience of radicalisation and work with people who have already accepted violent ideas. Their team, working with the police, use their personal experience and religious knowledge to help people reconsider their position and either disengage or de-radicalise. There have been a number of documented successes of the organization stopping people from becoming involved in terrorist activity.

Targeted work of this type is important in locations which have been identified as prime locations of recruitment. Prisons, for example, are a site of vulnerability.[27] British prisons currently hold around 100 individuals convicted or detained for terrorism-related causes, including influential recruiters like Abu Hamza. One forthcoming report argues that prison services should be more ambitious in promoting positive influences inside prison, and develop more innovative approaches to facilitate prisoners' transition back into mainstream society.[28]

Both types of work are by their nature discreet. Both entail working with people who have real traction among young people within a community: those who can access others considering violence, and so sometimes those often described as extremist or fundamentalist. For instance, some individuals who are considering that violent jihad is a religious obligation might respond well to the religious guidance of a respected Salafist scholar. In London, Brixton Salafis' strict allegiance to Salafist scholars (and disdain for Sufi scholars) gave them credibility when tackling violent Islamists in the 1990s.[29] Indeed, psychological research has demonstrated that different messengers can yield different results: people are more influenced by an argument made by a fellow group member than the same argument made by an out-group member.[30] This kind of work should become the core of Prevent.

FIGHTING EXTREMISM

All terrorists are by definition extremists. But not all extremists are terrorists.[31] Extremists express significant dissent without necessarily being violent. Being extreme is perfectly legitimate, and sometimes even positive. In an open society, holding extreme views is recognized as a human right and protected in law, under Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and under Article 10 and 11 of the European Convention on Human Rights, which have been incorporated into UK law.

However, terrorists often draw on extremist ideology, and there is some movement of people between the categories. The relationship between these groups is one of the most complex questions in counter-terrorism. The difficulty for government is to recognise which types of extremism are merely uncomfortable, and what types are more dangerous.

A CONSERVATIVE-LIBERAL POSITION TO FIGHTING EXTREMISM

One of the most difficult decisions the Coalition will face is how to deal with non-violent extremism. Freedoms are not absolute: they are always balanced against other freedoms. For a liberal, Mill's harm principle is usually the jumping off point: 'the only purpose for which power can be rightfully exercised over any member of a civilized community against his will is to prevent harm to others'. This results in a difficult grey area where indirect incitement is concerned. There are a number of suitable legal measures to ensure that speech is not used as a direct means to cause physical harm to others. For example, intolerant preaching that encourages violence and solicits murder.[32] The UK currently provides four offences for speech that threatens or incites violence or hatred, and this legislation has been used in the successful prosecution of a number of individuals.[33] On balance, we believe this constitutes harm.

But the broader dilemma facing all liberal societies is how pluralism and the acceptance of different value systems relates to defending the pluralistic system as a whole? The essence of liberalism is often

to mitigate against an excessive defence of itself. This is particularly acute for the Coalition, given it has pledged to promote British values of tolerance, equality, and human rights while rolling back the state and creating a freer, more liberal, society.

Faced with this dilemma, a useful starting point for this debate is a liberal republican position. A liberal republican would argue that extreme ideas must be given an airing where they can be vigorously and aggressively denounced in open debate. In a liberal society, people are able to pursue goals they have reason to value, but there will always be disagreement over the most important values. In short, people's idea of 'the good' will always differ.[34] For the liberal republican, the harm principle applies, but is more than just physical harm. It also covers things which prevent others from living the lives they choose.

EFFECTIVE LIBERALISM

The core value of a liberal approach is that freedom of expression is the best way to disarm and destroy arguments. It leads us to the truth through John Stuart Mill's famous 'collision of truth with error':

The peculiar evil of silencing the expression of an opinion is that of robbing the human race … it robs those who dissent from the opinion still more than those who hold it. If the opinion is right, they are deprived of the opportunity of exchanging error for truth. If wrong, they lose, what is almost as great a benefit, the clearer perception and livelier impression of truth, produced by the collision with error.

In respect of extremism related to al-Qaeda, this approach not only has the value of being consistent with a free, open society, but will also work. Many terrorists – and even extremists – are drawn to radical ideas because they are exciting, counter-cultural, and anti-establishment. Some young Muslims, like any other young people, will be drawn to radical ideas, radical books and radical thinkers. They will argue about them and discuss them. Banning merely adds to the appeal and does not prevent their circulation due to the

proliferation of information on the internet. Indeed, at least some of the appeal of terrorist activity is the notoriety, glamour, and status that it brings. Openness can remove some of that appeal.

Silencing extremist views vindicates their message. For at least a small number of individuals it can also have the effect of legitimising the message, because clashing with the authorities is often viewed in terrorist or extremist circles as testament to truth.[35] Moreover, extremist groups exhibit 'sinister attribution error', where everything is understood as purposeful plots calculated to harm the group.[36] This radicalises groups further, and is often used by recruiters or extremists to 'prove' that the community is under attack. Social psychology research has noted how the creation of 'in-group – out-group' distinctions, and dehumanizing potential targets is an important step to terrorism.[37]

Finally, it is important to remember that coming into contact with extremist or violent ideas does not necessarily turn someone into an extremist or terrorist. What distinguishes terrorists is not their lack of contact with radical ideas, people, or writing, but their inability to critique or reject it. It is a positive thing for people to come into contact with extreme ideas because debating and arguing over such issues allows greater understanding. Indeed, people often leave extremist groups because they become disillusioned when the rhetoric is not matched by the reality. It is important to expose that.

THE LIMITS OF EXTREMISM

Although Mill's dictum holds as a general guide to action, there are always debates about what constitutes 'harm'. Therefore it is useful to use the liberal republican definition: harm is when a person's actions reduce another's chance of leading the life they wish, free from interference.[38] This is compatible with the Coalition's vision of free and active citizens. For choice to be real, people need to have a range of options free from interference. Where there is evidence of this type of harm taking place, there is a strong case for intervention.

Extremism that threatens to hinder other people's free exercise of their democratic rights and freedoms can be considered harm under this definition, as groups that undermine the functioning of the democratic order reduce the scope for others to live a life of their own choosing. Likewise, to reject the right of others to engage in what the German philosopher Jurgen Habermas calls the public sphere, such as refusing the rights of certain groups to take part in open debate, causes harm.[39] Some even use quasi-coercive tactics in their neighbourhoods such as intimidation, forced loyalty, and disruption of other moderate movements.[40] This type of moral coercion undermines the right to freedom of expression and conscience, which is a cornerstone of liberal democratic society for Muslims and non-Muslims alike.[41]

This leads to a second, more difficult, question: what types of intervention should government apply in such instances? Generally speaking, governments have judicial (that is legal or coercive) and non-judicial (that is non-coercive) powers at their disposal.

The precise use of these powers will depend on the groups or individuals in question and the extent of the threat. Commensurate with the values set out above, any government intervention should aim to moderate and weaken extremist ideas, while minimizing the infringements on individuals' freedom of expression and any damage to wider social cohesion. As such, non-judicial means are usually preferred as they deliver fewer negative side effects. Non-judicial measures themselves can be split into positive incentives for 'good' behaviour, and negative incentives to combat 'bad' behaviour. The former are relatively easy to justify, because individuals do not have an automatic right to government funding in the same way they do have inviolable rights to freedom of expression, and association. One example is the withholding of central and local government funding to groups considered extreme as defined above, which can encourage an internal dynamic within communities to self-police in order to access funds and act as useful leverage.[42]

Negative incentives need to be applied with great care. Following the Netherlands' example in dealing with radical Da'wa Salafi

groups, the UK government can employ a number of measures to hinder the growth of such groups or individuals. Imams can be spoken with openly and warned, sermons tested against the law, and sources of funding examined. In short, freedom of expression is granted, but closely monitored. This can force groups to take a moderate stance and become more willing to bar possible recruiters.[43] The effectiveness of these measures depends on them being used sparingly, as their overuse can engender feelings of injustice.[44] Where possible, they should be targeted at the leaders of extremist organisations rather than congregations as a whole, and deployed locally as circumstances require rather than as a blanket national policy.

A LIBERAL APPROACH TO THE STRUCTURAL REFORM PLAN

Examine proscription of non-violent extremist groups, including for glorification

Under the 2000 Terrorism Act, the government has the power to proscribe organisations which have engaged directly in terrorist acts, or were involved through planning or fundraising for attacks. The 2006 Terrorism Act added incitement and encouragement of terrorism to the basis of proscription, including the 'glorification of terrorism' which includes 'any form of praise or celebration.'[45] The glorification basis has been used to proscribe three groups, each of which was affiliated with the group al-Muhajiroun. The government should review glorification as a basis for proscription. As the United Nations has argued, indirect intent is too broad and vague, and can stifle genuine debate.[46]

Moreover, it should review how far it can or should proscribe other non-violent groups. There are some grounds for proscription of non-violent groups where they represent a threat to the democratic order. For example, a 2003 European directive upheld a ban on Refah Partisi in Turkey on the basis that its aims (installing Sharia Law) were not compatible with the European Convention of Human

Rights. However, it is not clear that this would be sufficient for extreme groups in the UK, as the Court also stressed the threat must be 'acute', in the sense that the organization or group must have the means to affect it. In the UK, groups that have been considered for proscription have very low membership (Islam4UK, for example, was estimated to have between 40 and 60 members).

The use of exclusion orders for those who foster hate

Since 2005, over one hundred people have been prevented from entering the UK because their presence was deemed not conducive to the public good, usually on the grounds of fostering hatred, encouraging extremism, that they might lead others to commit criminal acts, terrorism, or could lead to inter-community violence. While recruitment or connection to terrorism clearly justifies such a measure, preaching extremism does not. Denial of entry of individuals with unpalatable views subverts the great tradition of debate and free speech.

Allow a platform for extreme or radical views

No-platform policies are one way in which government (but more commonly universities) prevent certain ideas from being heard and promoted. The National Union of Students currently enforces a no-platform policy on a number of groups on the grounds that certain views are intolerant and designed to provoke anger and hatred. Because these policies are not enacted by the government they do not constitute a material infringement of the rights of free expression. However, it is important that extreme and intolerant ideas are given a hearing, so that they can be critiqued and dissected. A number of universities have voted against the NUS's no-platform policy. Students in particular ought to be given enough credit to make their own minds up independently. Freedom is not the same as agreement: we don't honour the dishonourable when we open the public forum to their voices.[47]

Review rules about radical literature

The 2006 Terrorism Act prohibits the dissemination of a publication which is either likely to be understood as directly or indirectly encouraging terrorism, or includes information which is likely to be understood as being useful in the commission or

preparation of an act of terrorism. Material which is designed to facilitate the practical act of terrorism is problematic and should remain illegal. However, the more general idea of literature likely to be understood as encouraging terrorism is different. Indeed, the first conviction under the new act was of a British woman, Samina Malik, for "possessing records likely to be useful in terrorism" – which included a poem she had written praising Osama Bin Laden.[48]   The government should clarify the basis for banning literature that "directly or indirectly encourages terrorism".

REPLACING PREVENTING VIOLENT EXTREMISM – BIG SOCIETY COUNTER-TERRORISM

Home Secretary Theresa May has now signalled a review of counter-terrorism powers, including Prevent. If, as we propose, such work is dramatically scaled back, what should replace it? There is still a need for some of the valuable work that currently sits under Prevent, a lot of which had positive results in respect of cohesion, integration, and social mobility. The Coalition has stated that its vision is to create a more cohesive, integrated society, which is related to a general shift away from a multicultural model emphasising difference to one emphasising shared characteristics.

Although there is much confusion among the terms used – cohesion, integration, social capital, shared values – the Coalition has signalled that its main priorities will be integration and cohesion. While the two terms are closely related they are not the same.[49] Integration refers to the process of newly arriving migrants adapting to life in their new country. 'Community cohesion' is something separate, which applies to all communities and their responsibility to make an effort to live with different types of people. Part of it is mutual civility and neighbourliness, but it includes 'removing the barriers that divide people in our country today' which go beyond race or religion. It is about encouraging and inspiring people to become active citizens and to make an effort to imagine and accept a shared future with different types of people.[50]

Creating more cohesive societies has a number of social benefits, and can also increase resilience to violent and extremist ideologies although the relationship between the two concepts is not necessarily linear.

Avoid big bang

The obvious temptation will be to replace prevention work with a similarly high profile strategy focused on cohesion and integration. There are two key dangers of doing this.

First, there is a risk that repackaging prevention work by focusing on integration and cohesion might fail to adequately disassociate them from counter-terrorism. As a number of reports have argued, it is vital to distinguish clearly between counter-terrorism and work targeting community cohesion. The conflation of terrorism with cohesion is related to events over the past ten years: the term 'community cohesion' descending from the Oldham and Bradford riots of 2001; media portrayals of fringe radical Muslims as being representative; the attacks of 7/7 being conducted by British Muslims; and finally, the inclusion of community cohesion initiatives within the Prevent strand of CONTEST under Preventing Violent Extremism. Such associations will not disappear easily.

Second, emphasising 'integration' and 'cohesion' at a national level risks creating the perception that the problem is solely the responsibility of immigrant, or Muslim communities that are failing to integrate into British society. This can lead to interminable and controversial debates about defining what Britishness means. While there are clearly problems relating to social cohesion in some areas, research shows that British Muslims strongly identify with being British, even more so than the general public. According to the 2010 Gallup Coexist Index, 77% of British Muslims identify with the UK, as opposed to 50% of the general public.[51]

Cohesion and integration are things best achieved through indirect means. The most effective cohesion initiatives are not those that identify single identity groups (e.g. 'British Muslims' or 'British white') and bring them together for the explicit purpose of 'establishing an intercommunity dialogue' but rather increasing the possibility of interactions between communities in everyday contexts: in school, at work, and in public spaces. Indeed, the Labour Government's strategy *Improving Opportunities, Strengthening Society*, recognised that tackling underlying inequalities and encouraging greater civic participation would be a means to a more cohesive society.[52]

Big Society approach

One alternative is for the government to focus on specific, smaller goals which themselves will allow a more cohesive society to emerge. We suggest the Big Society might be the means by which this could take place.

Although it is not yet clear precisely what the Big Society will entail in practical terms, the vision is plain. It expects citizens to come together to define a shared vision for their local communities, to work together to solve local problems and to be civil and mutually respectful of different people. It also means citizens have a more active role in local and national affairs. It is a redistribution of power and responsibility to people. In these respects, it embodies the core recommendations of the Commission on Integration and Cohesion presented in *Our Shared Future*.[53]

By empowering individuals and communities, the Big Society can potentially serve to reduce the sense of victimhood that is rampant within many communities, which plays a key a role in extremist type narratives and replace it with a feeling of agency and control.[54] Indeed, much of the work that fell under Preventing Violent Extremism contributes to this vision, through increased access to English Language classes, development of young Muslim leaders who work across communities, and by creating opportunities for inter-faith dialogue and interaction.[55] The positive impact of these activities on communities' desire and capacity to become more active in their wider local area has been demonstrated through local evaluations.[56]

We suggest that the Big Society can help create cohesive communities that are more resilient to violent and extremist ideologies by:

1   Increasing meaningful interactions in pursuit of a 'shared future' and common goals.

2   Encouraging social activism and political protest.

3   Inspiring civic duty and empowerment.

However, for some local areas where problems are more entrenched and extremism is beginning to take root, local authorities should develop a more targeted approach based on the model of the 'Connecting Communities' programme.

Meaningful interactions

It is difficult to force or teach people to cohere. The most effective types of cohesion programmes are those where different communities come to gather to achieve a common community goal – for example, in the provision of a community centre or park.[57] According to research conducted by Ipsos Mori, developing a sense of commonality is vital to supporting trust and respect: 'approaches that focus on tangible and real life issues seem to work best. Neighbourhood forums and local groups focusing on improving the local area and services are found to be especially effective for building a sense of shared concerns (if they are genuinely involving people from across the community).[58] This was particularly important among young people. Similarly, local decision-making assemblies are effective at increasing interactions and building trust between different types of communities.[59]

Creating the opportunities for broader interactions in this way must be a central part of the Big Society. This will also bring other benefits. The absence of a broader and more diverse network of contacts outside the immediate neighbourhood can mean that young people lack access to valuable sources of inspiration, information and opportunity, particularly in ethnic minority groups.[60] Indeed, recent research has found that middle class Muslim parents have broader social networks which are cross-class and cross-ethnic, in contrast to working class Muslim parents, whose networks are co-ethnic.[61]

An important element of facilitating meaningful interaction is ensuring that newly arrived – and settled – migrants can speak English. Research has consistently shown that speaking English allows people to take control over their own lives, is necessary for educational achievement and finding employment, builds cohesion by enabling people to communicate with one another and assists intergenerational social mobility by ensuring parents can contribute

to their children's education and development.[62] A study by the Royal Economic Society in 2003 showed that fluency in English improved probability of employment in the UK by 22 per cent, and increased earnings by 18-20 per cent.[63] English provision for speakers of other languages (ESOL) should be the core component of the government's integration strategy.

Encouraging social activism

The Big Society can offer motivation for people to get involved in social and political activism, which is an important channel for energy and frustration. Too often people feel disconnected from the institutions that make decisions and influence our everyday lives, and consequently feel powerless. The goal of the Big Society is to reverse this trend, making citizens feel big, powerful and able to have an effect through legitimate channels.

New research is starting to suggest that this could be an important outlet for individuals considering violence. Demos research found that violent extremists were less likely to have taken part in civic engagement and political protest than peaceful extremists.[64] The research also found some young Muslims being diverted from violent activity when provided with peaceful, meaningful alternatives. Unpublished research by the Change Institute shows that membership of one radical Islamist group in the UK went into decline from 2002 as young Muslims joined the anti-war movement in large numbers and found an outlet for their frustration. New research from the US is finding the same thing – that political and social protest and activism acts as a safety valve.[65]

However, it is important that this has some degree of effectiveness. Forthcoming research by terrorism expert Marc Sageman suggests that moral outrage at what is considered a major moral violation combined with frustration with the lack of effectiveness of conventional protest activity can serve as a trigger to consider the use of violence.[66] The challenge for the new government is thus to create exciting opportunities for activism whilst demonstrating that greater social activism can have a tangible effect on decision-making.

Civic duty and empowerment

One of the core aspects of the government's plans for a Big Society is the new National Citizens Service targeted at young people. The government must ensure that young people from segregated or disadvantaged communities have the chance to take part in this important programme.

There are numerable well documented personal and social benefits of national service and civic education, including on social cohesion.[67] Several studies have found that 'service learning' (i.e. educational strategy that combines learning with community service) is associated with improved social and behavioural skills, such as agency, motivation, being able to relate to others, and critical thinking.[68] The development of critical thinking is an important skill in respect of extreme and terrorist ideologies. Demos research found that terrorists are distinct from non-violent extremists in that the latter were more likely to stress the importance of continual learning, rather than believing they had immediate access to an unquestionable truth. Terrorists were much more prone to shallow, simplistic and 'black and white' reasoning. Thus, encouraging activities and programmes that help young people develop critical thinking skills can help build resilience to violent and extremist ideologies.

Countering extremism in areas of particular concern

Ultimately, the Big Society in action plays out on a local level. The precise nature of its programmes and activities will be driven by communities themselves. There will likely be a great amount of diversity. This is entirely normal: cohesion, too, is a local subject. Some areas score highly in terms of cohesion, while other local areas are de facto segregated with high tensions.

Thus, there may be a need for additional, locally specific, streams of work to support communities where problems are more entrenched. It is essential that they are driven by communities themselves. One example of this type of approach is the government's Connecting Communities work aimed at local areas hit particularly hard by the recession. Targeting over 160 neighbourhoods and estates, this programme has invested £12

million to help local authorities improve these areas by focusing on three strands: training community leaders to address local challenges, giving people a voice by increasing opportunities for influence and contact with local leaders, and raising awareness of economic opportunities in the area.

A significant part of this work is also about countering myths and misperceptions (e.g. that immigrants are unfairly placed at the front of housing queues) and building trust between the community and local institutions. Connecting Communities is a useful model for more targeted resilience building work at the level of neighbourhoods and estates if necessary.[69] It could target a range of social problems, from far-right political extremism, to al-Qaeda inspired extremism and even areas prone to gang crime.

MAKING THIS HAPPEN

The most common criticism aimed at the Big Society idea is that it is a euphemism for vast cuts in public spending. To counter this perception, and to ensure that the vision of a society of big, passionate and active citizens is realised, the government must focus on building community capacity to organise and tackle local problems. The government's role must shift from that of a policy provider, to an enabler and facilitator that helps to build capacity and then steps back.

Building community capacity is a core part of Preventing Violent Extremism. A rapid evidence assessment of Preventing Violent Extremism activities undertaken by DeMontfort University found that the most successful interventions were those that focused on building capacity of community individuals, grass-roots organisations and institutions like mosques.[70] This means ensuring that Imams can speak English, are properly trained, but also helping to make mosque governance more open and sensitive to the needs and interests of young people. Each of these programmes should be removed from Prevent and streamlined under the Big Society agenda.

If we can realise the core idea encapsulated in the expression Big Society: a society of active and engaged citizens, cooperating to solve problems and meet their needs, a by-product will be a society more resilient to the nihilism of violent and extremist ideologies. If it succeeds, it can develop what the philosopher Michael Sandel calls 'a sense of belonging, a concern for the whole, a moral bind with the community whose fate is at stake.'

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NOTES

[1] The Coalition: Our Programme for Government www.programmeforgovernment.hmg.gov.uk (accessed July 2010), p.11.

[2] For example, see 2010 House of Commons Select Committee report on Preventing Violent Extremism, and Kundnani, A, 'Spooked! How not to prevent extremism' Institute of Race Relations, (2009).

[3] The main objectives of Prevent are: to challenge the ideology behind violent extremism and support mainstream voices; to disrupt those who promote violent extremism and support people living in the communities where they operate; to support individuals who are vulnerable to recruitment, or have been recruited by violent extremists; to increase the resilience of communities to violent extremism; to address the grievances which ideologues are exploiting.

[4] Cited in Kundnani, 'Spooked'.

[5] HM Gov (2009) Pursue, Prevent, Protect, Prepare, London: TSO, p.16.

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[7] Slack, J 'Almost a quarter of Muslims believe 7/7 was justified', Daily Mail, 7 August 2006.

[8] Saggar, S, 'Boomerangs and Slingshots: Radical Islam and counter terrorism strategy' Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies 35, 3 (2009).

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[10] Lambert, R, The London Partnerships: An insider's analysis of legitimacy and effectiveness, draft PhD thesis 2009.

[11] Bartlett, J and Birdwell, J, The Edge of Violence: A radical approach to extremism (London: Demos, 2010).

[12] Kundnani, Spooked!

[13] Innes M et al, *Hearts and Minds and Eyes and Ears: Reducing radicalisation risks through reassurance orientated policing* (London: Association of Chief Police Officers, 2007).

[14] For example, see 2010 *House of Commons Select Committee report on Preventing Violent Extremism*, and Kundnani, *Spooked!*

[15] Briggs, R, 'Community Engagement for Counter Terrorism', *International Affairs,* 86, 4 (2010*)*

[16] House of Commons (2010) *Preventing Violent Extremism. Sixth Report of Session*.

[17] Cited in Kundani, *Spooked!*

[18] See Modood, T, 'Remaking multiculturalism after 7/7', openDemocracy, 28 September 2005, available at: http://www.opendemocracy.net/conflict-terrorism/multiculturalism_2879.jsp and the debate surrounding it.

[19] Kelly, P, 'Multiculturalism and 7/7: neither problem nor solution', openDemocracy, 19 October 2005, available at: http://www.opendemocracy.net/conflict-terrorism/problem_solution_2946.jsp

[20] 2010 *House of Commons Select Committee report on Preventing Violent Extremism*, and Kundnani, *Spooked!*

[21] Briggs, R, 'Community Engagement for Counter Terrorism', *International Affairs*, 86, 4 (2010).

[22] Edwards, C and Skidmore, P, *A Force for Change: Policing 2020 (London: Demos, 2006)*.

[23] Spalek, B et al, '*Police–Muslim Engagement and Partnerships for the Purposes of Counter-Terrorism*: An examination' University of Birmingham, 2008 & 2009; M Sageman, *Understanding Terror Networks*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004); R Lambert, *The London Partnerships*

[24] Some de-radicalisation programmes target those who have already acted on them, such as individuals in prison.

[25] Horgan, J,*Walking Away from Terrorism: Accounts of disengagement from radical and extremist movements* (London: Routledge, 2009).

[26] Horgan, J, 'Rehabilitating the Terrorists?: Challenges in assessing the effectiveness of de-radicalization programs', *Terrorism and Political Violence* 22, 2 (2010).

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[28] Neumann, *Prisons and Terrorism*.

[29] Lambert, *The London Partnerships*.

[30] Mackie, DM, Worth, LT and Asuncion, AG, 'Processing of Persuasive In-group Messages', *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 58 (1990).

[31] In respect of Muslims, extremism is often synonymous with certain religious schools of thought that are highly orthodox such as Da'wa Salafism, and political movements such as the Muslim Brotherhood or Hizb ut Tahrir as well as smaller informal groupings.

[32] AIVD, *The Radical Dawa in Transition: The rise of Islamic neo-radicalism in the Netherlands*, (General Intelligence and Security Services of The Netherlands (AIVD), 2007), p. 75.

[33] According to a 2009 Home Office Statistical Bulletin, 10 individuals have been charged with incitement of terrorism abroad with 7 convictions (including Abu Izzadeen and Simon Keeler), while 4 individuals have been charged for encouragement of terrorism with 3 convicted.[33] The encouragement of terrorism applies to any statement that is likely to be understood as an inducement, and does not require that an individual is actually encouraged or that the offender intended his statement to be acted upon.[33] Additional charges and convictions have been used including the solicitation of murder (used in cases against radical preachers Abdullah el-Faisal and Abu Hamza), in the current context, against non-Muslims. Additionally, the prohibition against the use of threatening words to stir up racial hatred enacted under the Public Order Act of 1986, has been used against el-Faisal and Hamza.

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[35] For example A Awlaki in *44 ways to support Jihad*, www.neefafoundation.org (accessed July 2010) explains that "the writings of the scholars of Jihad tend to be the most deeply rooted in Sharia because they speak it out as it is…[they] are willing to displease anyone."

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[38] Reeves, R, & Collins, P, *The Liberal Republic* (London: Demos, 2009).

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[40] AIVD, *The Radical Dawa in Transition* (2007) p26.

[41] AIVD, *Radical Dawa in Transition* (2006) p65.

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[43] Levitt, M, 'Dutch Report'*;* NCTb (National Coordinator for Counterterrorism) 'Salafism in the Netherlands: A passing phenomenon or a persistent factor of significance?' (2008).

[44] AIVD, Radical Dawa, p75.

[45] http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/publications/counter-terrorism/proscribed-terror-groups/?view=Standard&pubID=765824 (accessed July 2010) Fourteen organizations in Northern Ireland are proscribed under previous legislation.

[46] Campbell, D, 'Labour warned over limits to free expression', The Guardian, 15 August 2008.

[47] Bollinger, L, Uninhibited, Robust, and Wide-Open: A Free Press for a New Century (Oxford University Press, 2010); The Tolerant Society: Freedom of Speech and Extremist Speech in America (Oxford University Press, 1986).

[48] Her conviction was later overturned. See D Gardham, ' "Lyrical Terrorist" Samina Malik cleared on appeal', The Telegraph, 17 June 2008.

[49] Singh, D, 'Our Shared Future', (London: Commission on Integration and Cohesion, 2007)

[50] Speech by David Cameron, 'Bringing down the barriers to cohesion', available at: conservativehome.blogs.com/torydiary/files/bringing_down_the_barriers_to_cohesion.pdf

[51] The Gallup Coexist Index 2009: A Global Study of Interfaith Relations, with an in-depth analysis of Muslim integration in France, Germany, and the United Kingdom, available at www.MuslimWestFacts.com

[52] *Improving Opportunity, Strengthening Society: a third progress report*, (London: Department for Communities and Local Government, 2009).

[53] 'Our Shared Future'.

[54] O'Leary, D, ed, *The Politics of Public Behaviour*, (London: Demos, 2008).

[55] Kellard, K, Mitchell, L and Godfrey D for BMG Research, 'Preventing Violent Extremism Pathfinder Fund: Mapping of project activities 2007/2008', (London: Communities and Local Government, 2008).

[56] OPM (Office for Public Management), 2008 Evaluation of West London Alliance Pathfinder.

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[70] 'Preventing Support for Violent Extremism through Community Interventions: A Review of Evidence: Rapid Evidence Assessment Summary Report', DeMontfort University, (London: Communities and Local Government, 2010).