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Thomas, Paul

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## 2 Prevent and Community Cohesion in Britain – The Worst of All

Possible Worlds? *Paul Thomas*

### Introduction

The shocking murder of soldier Lee Rigby in Woolwich, London, May 2013 has obliged the security frame which highlights the radicalisation of British Muslims as a continuing threat to the UK. Although this was the first British civilian fatality caused by domestic terrorist actions since the 7/7 London bombings of 2005, the Woolwich attack was quickly utilised to support the discourse of a continuing Islamist threat to Britain – a frame which has, since 7/7, been largely forced to rely upon the prosecution of plots rather than incidents. Given the sudden re-emergence of (admittedly low impact) terrorist violence, the Woolwich murder has played a central role in the renewed political and media attention paid to Prevent: Britain's policy for preventing attraction towards terrorism and tackling those ideologies which justify violence. Introduced in 2006 as part of the wider CONTEST counter-terrorism strategy (Home Office, 2003), Prevent has involved a spend of at least £200 million on community-based education and engagement. This British approach has been significantly influential on similar policies subsequently developed by other Western countries that have also identified threats of domestic Islamist terrorism (Aly, this volume; Neumann, 2011). Political commentary after Woolwich has been largely articulated through the radicalisation frame and the proposed responses to the attacks involve the amplification of the Prevent strategy. Yet Prevent has been significantly controversial and contested from its very beginning. This controversy has not just focussed on the effectiveness of Prevent in preventing further terrorist plots and actions, but also on its impact on wider relationships between the state and Muslim communities. A persistent allegation is that Prevent has been a key vehicle for a fatal securitisation of this relationship, with a supposedly educational, 'hearts and minds' programme actually covering for the development of a large-scale surveillance scheme controlled overtly by the Police and Security Services (Kundnani, 2009). Connected, but secondary to that headline critique, has been the suggestion that Prevent has had a messy, unhelpful and confused relationship with the parallel British policy priority of 'Community Cohesion', the post-2001 state policy approach to ethnic community relations, 'multiculturalism' and to the societal integration of ethnic minorities (Cantle, 2001; Thomas, 2011). It is the central contention of this Chapter that the relationship between these two policy agendas now represents the worst of all possible worlds. Here, Prevent continues to work in contradiction to the analysis and approach of Community Cohesion, not only causing organisational problems between the two policy programmes at national and local state levels but also fatally undermining the effectiveness of Prevent on its own terms because of its failure to take on that analysis. The 2011 Prevent Review has actually deepened the problematic, securitised nature of Prevent's monocultural focus on British Muslims whilst at the same time any national policy concern with community cohesion, or 'Integration' across communities has disappeared.

It is the relationship between the two British policy agendas of Prevent and Community Cohesion that this chapter is therefore concerned with. The Prevent/Cohesion relationship was a significant concern for the House of Commons Communities and Local Government Select Committee Inquiry into Prevent in 2009/10. The resulting report (House of Commons, 2010) criticised a confusing overlap of the two policies and suggested a clear demarcation, with Prevent becoming the sole property of the Home Office and its Office for Security and Counter-Terrorism (OSCT), and the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) focussing solely on Community Cohesion and ethnic integration. This recommendation was accepted in the new Coalition government's Prevent Review of June 2011 (HMG, 2011), leading to a general perception that the two policies of Prevent and Community Cohesion (or Integration, as the Coalition preferred to refer to it as; DCLG, 2012) were in synergy and that the newly streamlined Prevent was therefore more effective.

This analysis, and the claims of productive synergy they lead to, is entirely disputed by this chapter for a number of reasons. Firstly, it argues that the clear policy demarcation claimed simply doesn't, and cannot, exist at the ground operational level. Secondly, it argues that this national level, post-2011 policy split has significantly exacerbated and further securitised inherent problems and tensions within Prevent: it has left the 'spooks' (the Security Services and their security-focussed Police colleagues) in sole, centralised charge of what is supposed to be a ground-level engagement programme based around youth and educational programmes. Thirdly, and most importantly, the chapter argues that this later demarcation of Prevent and Community Cohesion has made Prevent even more problematic and less effective in its own terms because it removes Prevent even further from, and privileges it even more in relation to, the policy analysis and practices of Community Cohesion. Here, Prevent has side-lined the development of local Community Cohesion practice (Monro et al, 2010) and increasingly securitised local and national state relationships with Muslim communities (Husband and Alam, 2011), with its resulting suspicions and mistrust badly undermining the very 'human intelligence' needed to prevent active involvements in terrorism and its ideologies (English, 2009).

In contrast, the chapter argues that Community Cohesion, as it has been understood and practised at ground level in areas of the UK (Thomas, 2011), is actually the most effective way to engage marginalised young Muslims and their communities in a 'hearts and minds' anti-terrorism programme without a counter-productive stigmatisation and reification of their essentialised faith identity, and without the fatal securitisation of state/Muslim community relations that is inherent to Prevent as it currently stands. In short this chapter proposes that the conflict between Prevent and Community Cohesion is addressed not by a further split and demarcation, but instead by a much closer relationship and synergy that would involve the end of Prevent as it is currently constituted and instead a 'hearts and minds' programme aimed at marginalised young people of **all** communities and concerned with addressing attractions towards hatred and intolerance and with greater support for and engagement in democratic political processes.

To develop and justify these arguments, the chapter first gives an overview of the nature, content and scope of Britain's Prevent programme to date, alongside consideration of its

inherent tensions and problems. The chapter then focuses in particular on the relationship between Prevent and Community Cohesion and what the Community Cohesion analysis suggests about an effective counter-terrorism community education and engagement strategy. Here, it needs to be acknowledged that Community Cohesion itself has been, and remains, a highly-contested concept and policy agenda (Cantle, 2001; Alexander, 2004; Robinson, 2005; Thomas, 2011). The chapter briefly outlines these controversies but also explains and justifies the positive conception of Community Cohesion utilised here. It then goes on to analyse the developing relationship between the Prevent and Community Cohesion policy agendas and to suggest how a more positive synergy can be developed, a synergy that can effectively contribute towards effective counter-terrorism education and community engagement.

### **Making Sense of Prevent**

Whilst 'Prevent' was one of the four work strands identified by the initial CONTEST strategy in 2003, it remained underdeveloped until the 7/7 bombings prompted an urgent consideration of the need to understand and prevent a British domestic Islamist terror threat (Hewitt, 2008). These reactive beginnings need to be borne in mind as the developments, and problematic limitations, of Prevent are considered. The development of a preventative, 'hearts and minds' element of Britain's counter-terrorism work deserves some praise, particularly as the natural reaction of states subject to domestic terror atrocities is to concentrate on utilising their repressive power to identify perpetrators and plotters (Gupta, 2008).

However, a preventative counter-terrorism policy in itself is no guarantee of avoiding counter-productive reactions, with both the scale and nature of Britain's Prevent policy approach proving problematic from the start (Thomas, 2008; 2009). Describing this policy programme is not straightforward as it has involved a number of distinct and arguably contradictory elements. Large-scale programmes of community-based engagement and education programmes aimed at young Muslims have been operationalized through local authority youth and community work departments, and through state funding for third sector Muslim community organisations. However, Prevent has also involved a large number of new Police posts, over 300 in the 2008-11 iteration of the policy, split between enhanced regional Counter-Terrorism Units (CTUs) and 'engagement posts', an arguably curious hybrid approach for a supposedly 'hearts and minds' programme. Up until 2011, a significant proportion of Prevent funding via local authorities was channelled to Muslim community organisations for what can only be described as community capacity-building around after-school Madrassas (Mosque schools) and other forms of community facilities, whilst at the national level significant efforts were made through Prevent to develop new and more polyphonic forms of Muslim representation and even religious leadership. Specific Prevent programmes have been developed in Prisons, Young Offenders Institutes and through youth justice organisations, with some of this involving direct educational delivery to young Muslims groups and individuals. In contrast, Prevent work aimed at Universities and Further Education Colleges has **not** involved direct educational delivery to students, but rather enhanced liaison between educational institutions and Police/Security Services and greater scrutiny of student meetings and activities on and around campuses.

A number of distinct phases can also be identified within Prevent's development. The initial 'pathfinder' year of 2007/8 (DCLG, 2007a and b) saw local authorities and other bodies expected to initiate activity with little notice or negotiation (Thomas, 2008; Husband and Alam, 2011). These local authorities were selected on the crude basis of having 5% or more of their population being 'Muslim' (i.e. mainly of Pakistani or Bangladeshi origin, with ethnic origin simplistically conflated with a 'Muslim' faith identity: Thomas and Sanderson, 2011), with this statistical approach providing a clear indication of the lack of intelligence insights around Islamist extremism in Britain. In the following 2008-11 period, Prevent was expanded to all local authorities with 2% or more of their population as Muslim, and very significant amounts of money being committed across the programme - £140 million in total between 2008 and 2011. Local authorities were asked to account for this Prevent activity under 'National Indicator 35' of the government's spending monitoring system but were, in practice, given very significant latitude over how they allocated Prevent money. Some handed all or large parts of it to local Muslim community organisations in a very 'light touch' approach to monitoring and evaluation by the relevant local authority (Iacopini et al, 2011), whilst others used the funding 'in-house' to develop Prevent activities (Lowndes and Thorp, 2010). On a national level, Prevent money was utilised to develop new umbrella bodies such as 'Advisory Groups' for Muslim Women and Young Muslims, and bodies such as the Sufi Muslim Council that were encouraged to provide 'moderate' religious interpretations and leadership. This very significant funding given directly to local and national Muslim organisations has been portrayed as a 'responsibilisation' strategy that puts responsibility for countering extremism onto Muslim communities (McGhee, 2006), something arguably consistent with the wider 'third way' and communitarianist (Levitas, 2005) social policy approach of New Labour which doubted the ability of government alone to make social progress. This can also be seen as consistent with Labour's acknowledgement and encouragement of faith bodies as governmental partners (Meer and Modood, 2009; O'Toole et al, 2013).

Whilst some Labour ministers talked the talk of the 'values-based' approach (Birt, 2009), in practice their pragmatic and 'means-based' approach to funding allocation enabled the involvement of a wide range of Muslim community organisations, including salafists capable of influencing individuals increasingly attracted to violent extremism. Such an approach came to an abrupt halt with the election of the Coalition government in May 2010. They first suspended much of the Prevent budget and then, in their eventual Prevent review of June 2011 (HMG, 2011), significantly altered the size and approach of Prevent. Funding was restricted to 28 priority areas on an 'intelligence-led basis' (although this list looked curiously like the old demographically-based one; O'Toole et al, 2012), and the sole, securitised control of OSCT identified above meant that local autonomy over Prevent activity was very significantly restricted. This downsizing and re-shaping of Prevent had succeeded in putting it below the radar for the general public and the media until the 2013 Woolwich murder. Alongside this came the clear triumph of the 'values-based' approach, highlighted in Cameron's 'Munich' speech (2011) and demonstrated by the withdrawal of Prevent funding from a number of Muslim organisations regarded as ideologically suspect in relation to western liberal norms.

Prior to 2011, a number of local authorities receiving Prevent funding identified positive outcomes resulting from their involvement (Turley, 2009; O'Toole et al, 2013). This included greater understanding of, and better partnership relationships with local Muslim communities for some local authorities and police forces, although it is somewhat surprising that a counter-terrorism programme was needed to bring this about. The limited number of independent local evaluations of Prevent identified a strengthening of Muslim civil society structures locally (Thomas, 2008), a new focus on faith and on local faith organisations (Iacopini et al, 2011), significantly increased funding for Muslim organisations (Husband and Alam, 2011), stronger collective bodies for local Muslims and a development of contact with more Muslim young people (Lowndes and Thorp, 2010). However, arguably these positives were, and are, greatly outweighed by the negative interpretations of Prevent's content and impact. Kundnani's *'Spooked'* report (2009) highlighted a growing ground-level feeling that surveillance was a key aspect of Prevent, presenting specific examples of youth workers being pressurised to pass intelligence to the Police, and CTU staff playing pivotal roles in decisions over Prevent funding to community groups. Key architect of Prevent, Sir David Omand has argued that making a distinction between intelligence-gathering and education within a 'hearts and minds' programme is unrealistic (APPGHS, 2011), but the evidence of Police, and even CTU/Security Service, Prevent personnel getting involved in direct education delivery to Muslim young people and their communities (Thomas, 2009; Knight, 2010) arguably illustrates an unacceptable blurring of boundaries, with Prevent increasingly looking like 'Pursue in sheep's clothing' (Husband and Alam, 2011). Alongside that has come very significant social engineering of representation, debate and even religious interpretation and practice within British Muslim communities, an 'internal penetration' by the state of Muslim communities that Stuart Hall (BBC, 2011) has characterised as a dangerous and worrying development within British state policies of multiculturalism. Underpinning both these critiques was the concern that Prevent focussed on Muslims only, and on entire Muslim communities, leading to issues of state stigmatisation, 'virulent envy' (Birt, 2009) from other ethnic and faith communities not receiving such dedicated central government funding and problematic contradictions between Prevent and Community Cohesion. It is the latter tension, and its direct impact both on these other problematic features and on Prevent's ability to be successful in its own terms that the chapter now turns to.

### **Community Cohesion and its implications**

Britain's post-2001 policy shift towards Community Cohesion (Cantle, 2001; Home Office, 2005) has been both significant and highly contested, with the meaning and implications of this shift fiercely argued over by academic commentators (Robinson, 2005; Finney and Simpson, 2009; Thomas, 2011). Community Cohesion has become both an analysis of existing ethnic relations in Britain, and a concrete policy agenda to be implemented at ground level (Thomas, 2011). Its development was both pre-existent to, and stimulated by, the 2001 riots in Oldham, Burnley and Bradford. In the wake of those riots, the government-commissioned Cantle Report suggested that Britain's multicultural towns and cities were significantly less harmonious, or 'integrated', than was popularly portrayed – no surprise to

those who had previously analysed the sort of duo-cultural ex-industrial towns that had witnessed rioting (Webster, 1995). For Cantle, and for the locally-commissioned reports (Ouseley, 2001; Ritchie, 2001; Clarke, 2001) in the areas experiencing violent disturbances (with the Bradford report commissioned and written before the July 2001 disturbances but reaching strikingly similar conclusions to Cantle), the ground-level reality was of ‘parallel lives’, with different ethnic communities – particularly white and Asian communities, in the case of the north of England – having very little to do with each other and very little commonality in terms of feelings and identifications. Cantle’s analysis, accepted by the government (Denham, 2001), was that in this situation of parallel lives it was much easier for separatist feelings, cultures and identifications to develop unchallenged and unmediated by cross-community contact of any quality or depth. The significant media and political focus here on the ‘separateness’ of British Muslim communities (Travis, 2001) led many commentators to see Community Cohesion from the start as a one-sided policy of blaming Muslims and forcing them to change (Kundnani, 2002; Alexander, 2004).

Whilst this analysis has prompted on-going academic controversy over the direction of travel for physical ethnic segregation (Carling, 2008; Finney and Simpson, 2009), the concern for Cantle was as much about social interactions, culture and the lack of shared identifications, an emphasis often over-looked, with the clear implication that extremist attitudes can develop more easily in separatist environments. Here, the undoubted evidence that British towns and cities are slowly becoming more ethnically mixed does not necessarily translate into greater tolerance or more positive feelings about ‘others’ (Thomas and Sanderson, 2013) and towns like Oldham and Rochdale can feel somewhat removed from the aspiration of ‘convivial cosmopolitanism’ (Gilroy, 2004). The suggestion, though, that such towns have handled ‘race relations’ less well than apparently more ‘integrated’ cities like Leicester has to be scrutinised carefully. Leicester, many other apparently multicultural cities outside of London has significant ethnic segregation, or ‘congregation’ (CRE, 2001) to view it slightly differently. The difference between Leicester and northern ex-industrial areas like Oldham and Bradford is that in Leicester a viable post-industrial economy has developed, whereas there is much less positive sign of such economic regeneration in many areas of the north of England. Such negative economic re-structuring has left both white and Asian communities in northern towns and cities with both economic marginalisation and resentments, and with highly constrained housing and work options. However, the data on the ethnic make-up of British schools (Burgess and Wilson, 2005) shows more ethnic segregation than local population data would predict, suggesting that some parents from **all** ethnic communities are using their agency to send their children to schools where ‘they’ are the majority.

Whilst Cantle and others identified a significant role for agency, both in causing ‘parallel lives’ and to any approach for overcoming it, there was also a clear indictment of previous state policy approaches of multiculturalism, particularly the post-1981 phases of ‘political multiculturalism’ (Solomos, 2003). That approach, also created in the aftermath of urban riots, saw local authorities and eventually national government employ ‘strategic essentialism’ (Law, 1996) to challenge the open racism and gross ethnic inequalities that then pervaded British society. Such an approach necessitated identifying the relative position of

separate, essentialised ethnic communities and then developing targets and action plans to close inequality gaps. Alongside this came funding streams and the development of public sector posts and facilities dedicated to specific ethnic communities. Whilst this approach has very significantly contributed to reducing ethnic inequalities and non-white marginalisation in Britain, it did come with downsides. The Community Cohesion analysis suggests that it also strengthened and solidified separate, ethnic-specific identifications, significantly reduced spaces for cross-community dialogues and cooperation, inevitably promoted conflicts over funding led by 'community leaders' fighting for 'their' community, and provoked significant envy and resentment from white majority communities who perceive multiculturalism to be about favouritism for non-whites. The fact that political multiculturalism developed in tandem with a very significant downplaying of concern with and the language of social class has left some marginalised white communities feeling that they are the marginalised (Kenny, 2012). Such feelings undoubtedly influenced the 2001 riots in Oldham and Burnley, and such British feelings are mirrored by the evidence around the white majority backlash in the Netherlands against the language and priorities of multiculturalism (Sniderman and Hagendoorn, 2009). Such an analysis would suggest that political multiculturalism had run its course by 2001, causing resentment with majority communities whilst privileging ethnic minority communities that, in some cases, could no longer be termed 'disadvantaged' (Modood et al, 1997).

Such a conclusion can be seen as central to the post-2001 discursive policy shift from multiculturalism to Community Cohesion, and from the separate needs of individual communities to commonality. These shifts in themselves have been used as evidence of cohesion being a return to failed policies of assimilation (Alexander, 2004). It is possible to identify some statements by politicians and some sections of the 2001 reports to support such an analysis (Travis, 2001), but the post 2001 debates about British Community Cohesion have been remarkably evidence free. The evidence that is available of Community Cohesion being understood, mediated and operationalised at a local level (Thomas, 2011) suggests that Community Cohesion in practice has been actually been a re-naming, and a 're-balancing', as Meer and Modood (2009) term it, of British multiculturalism, rather than its 'death' (Kundnani, 2002). This case study evidence showed youth workers operationalizing Community Cohesion through processes that still recognised and worked with distinct ethnic, faith and social identities, but which then augmented those identifications with stronger experiences of, and identifications with, commonality through educational processes built around 'contact theory' (Hewstone et al, 2007): a social psychology approach to prejudice reduction. Whilst contact theory itself is contested because of the potential for contact to harden, rather than reduce, significant prejudices, the processes of youth cross-community contact avoided such dangers through their depth and longevity. Such processes, as with the Community Cohesion agenda nationally, were implicitly working towards 'cooler' and more intersectional conceptions of identity (McGhee, 2006).



## **The Prevent/Cohesion Conflict**

The significant ground-level support for the analysis and approach of Community Cohesion meant that Prevent was immediately viewed as problematic by many when it was hastily launched in April 2007. Indeed, local authority leaders in the key area of West Yorkshire, home to the 7/7 bombers and site of the Bradford riot, failed to see the need for Prevent, given that the substantial Community Cohesion programmes that they had already initiated were directly concerned with reducing support for racialised extremism within segregated communities (Thomas, 2008; Husband and Alam, 2011). This concern was also shared by key Muslim community figures at the national and local level:

*Many government and civil society actors in our study were critical of the ways in which Prevent was conceived and implemented, its impact on Muslim communities and the constraints it placed on Muslim civil society organisations' engagement with government (O'Toole et al, 2013:53). Only a great deal of national government pressure brought the West Yorkshire authorities, and other reluctant local authorities nationally, on board with Prevent. Indeed, many local authorities avoided using the title 'Prevent' at all, (Thomas, 2008; Iacopini et al, 2011), preferring opaque titles like 'pathfinder fund' or 'stronger communities'. Such formulations ran a very real risk of deceiving local communities, but were part of how local authorities managed the thankless task of balancing contradictory national government demands and suspicious local Muslim citizens who felt increasingly under surveillance as entire communities. Such a ground-level response reflected how local authorities were wrestling with the contradictory government policy agendas of Prevent and Community Cohesion, and their clear preference for the latter's assumptions, as a case study of policy implementation in Sheffield highlighted:*

*The result for local actors is a dual, conflicting process: community cohesion de-emphasises 'race', while ethnic and religious differences are accentuated in security and immigration discourses' (Lewis and Craig, 2013:2). Furthermore, it is important to note that the independent evidential base which underpinned Prevent's early years of operation was painfully thin (Thomas, 2010), a highly worrying reality, given the scale of Prevent's programme and its intrusion into other policy programmes concerned with minority ethnic communities, as discussed above. The very varied ways that local authorities initially managed and dispersed Prevent funding (Thomas, 2012), even within one geographical region (Lowndes and Thorp, 2010) highlighted both local-level uncertainty over Prevent and the Labour government's initial willingness to allow significant local autonomy. This rapidly changed, as the newly-established regional Counter-Terrorism Units and their staff took increasing control of local Prevent operations and the funding decisions around them, with the result that any initially creative or 'off-message' variations such as trying to work with non-Muslim communities around 'extremism' were quickly ended (Kundnani, 2009), although such varied practice managed to survive a little longer in specific sectors like Youth Offending Teams.*

This tension over the degree, if any, of local autonomy regarding Prevent work partly reflected the national government tensions between the two departments running Prevent – the DCLG, who also co-ordinated Community Cohesion and who favoured local autonomy,

and the Home Office/OSCT, who favoured no local autonomy whatsoever and wanted the ‘amateurs’, as the Police/CTUs saw them, of local authorities to do what they were told. This progressive securitisation continued in the 2011 Prevent Review. Furthermore, alongside this increasing securitised direction and control came a more mundane restriction on the local authorities attempting to develop creative Community-Cohesion-based programmes. National government demanded that local authorities should operationalise Prevent rapidly and develop the multi-agency local command and control mechanisms (largely controlled by the Police/CTU) of the so-called ‘Gold’, ‘Silver’ and ‘Bronze’ groups alongside continued enhancement of ‘tension-monitoring’ structures. This meant that any focus on and continued development of Community Cohesion work and supporting structures was side-lined because the elected councillors and professional staff needed to drive this new work approach had been completely engulfed by Prevent work (Monro et al,2010). Alongside this was the OSCT/Police Prevent money and power in comparison to the DCLG/local authority limited resources and widespread responsibilities at both national and local level, resulting in increasing Prevent domination over Community Cohesion. O’Toole et al (2013:57) quote a senior civil servant at the OSCT as acknowledging that, because of the sheer power of OSCT, ‘*so what happened was Prevent took over Cohesion*’.

It was also the case that, because of the securitised and overtly counter-terrorism basis of Prevent that the Police and Security Services were bound to dominate that specific policy programme, despite the rhetoric of local engagement and partnership. Key Labour DCLG Minister John Denham is quoted as saying:

*I found in the CLG, after some very rigorous examinations with officials that there was no understood model of how Prevent was meant to work (O’Toole et al, 2013:57).*

Just as the cohesion and community engagement-focussed DCLG struggled with an overtly securitised agenda, so local authorities at ground level were ill-equipped to lead Prevent, leaving the door open for Police/CTU to run programmes supposedly based on education and partnership. This is highlighted in an empirical study of the role played by West Midlands CTU and its officers in Prevent:

*The Police seem to have been given the responsibility of delivering Prevent because other local bodies did not possess the organisational capability to successfully implement, manage and adapt a programme... despite Prevent being proposed as a multi-organisational programme, the Police in the West Midlands are the central organisation and undertake the majority of the work relating to Prevent (Lamb, 2012:91).*

The intra-national government tensions identified above regarding Prevent’s direction and control came to a head in 2009, when the allegations of spying made in the ‘*Spooked*’ report (Kundnani, 2009) and picked up by the national media (Dodd, 2009) provided an opportunity for the Labour-dominated CLG Select Committee to launch an Inquiry in to Prevent and to attempt to free DCLG from Prevent and its increasing OSCT control. The Inquiry process

saw consensus across many contributors that DCLG should not 'do' Prevent, but in the course of the Inquiry evidence-gathering there were some questionable assertions around the Cohesion/Prevent relationship. Prominent here was an assertion in Police evidence that Prevent had been ineffective locally because most activities had, in reality, been 'Community Cohesion' (ACPO, 2009).

This demonstrated a significant lack of understanding around what the Community Cohesion policy agenda actually represented. What such an assertion actually meant was that much local Prevent activity in its initial 2/3 years had been bland, comprised of general youth and community activities for large numbers of Muslim young people (DCLG, 2008; Thomas, 2010). Such Prevent activity was emphatically **not** Community Cohesion because it involved Muslims only, selected on the basis of their 'Muslimness' that was re-enforced by the faith focus of some work (Iacopini et al, 2011), and had no element of cross community contact or even the involvement of anyone who was not a Muslim (Thomas, 2009). What such work was in reality was generic community development or community capacity-building work aimed at one community only – the very policy approach that Community Cohesion was designed to replace (Cantle, 2001). Indeed, during the evidence hearings for the CLG Select Committee Inquiry, representatives of the other major faiths queued up to complain that Muslims were getting funding for general community/faith capacity building and that they were not – pointing to 'virulent envy' (Birt, 2009) even at the elite actor level. I personally made an evidence submission (House of Commons, 2010) and gave oral evidence in support of more focus on Community Cohesion. The Select Committee accepted that perspective as evidence in support of their eventual recommendation for a formal Community Cohesion/Prevent, DCLG/Home Office split, a recommendation later accepted and implemented by the 2011 Prevent Review. However, my assertion to the Select Committee, and the overall thrust of their resulting Report, was actually saying something deeper and more fundamental about Prevent itself – both myself and the Select Committee were actually arguing that **everyone** should get out of the Prevent business, because it was not, and still is not, a productive way to win 'hearts and minds' regarding violent extremism. Community Cohesion is, but was and is being fatally side-lined by the focus and scale of Prevent.

### **Divorced but still co-habiting?**

The Coalition government's Prevent Review of 2011 was portrayed as dealing with the Prevent/Community Cohesion relationship for once and for all through organisational change. Significantly delayed by disputes within the Coalition over the extent to which the new iteration would take a 'values-based' approach and identify supposedly problematic attitudes within wider Muslim communities as a whole (Thomas, 2012), the Review apparently accepted the Select Committee's recommendations in separating Prevent and Community Cohesion by removing the DCLG from involvement in Prevent. This, and the associated downsizing in the scale and breadth of the new Prevent, did succeed in winning broad support, albeit largely because no one was actually satisfied with the original version of Prevent for significantly different reasons (Thomas, 2009; 2010).

The withdrawal of the DCLG from involvement in Prevent was portrayed as good for both Community Cohesion and Prevent by addressing their supposed overlap and confusion. However, this was hardly a case of all speed ahead for Community Cohesion. Prior to 2011, the national prioritisation and compulsory local enactment of Prevent had already side-lined development of Community Cohesion policy and practice (Munro et al, 2010; Thomas, 2012), whilst post-crash austerity increasingly squeezed budgets for work such as cohesion which were seen as less nationally vital than Prevent. Having criticised Prevent in opposition for approaching entire Muslim communities only as Muslims, not as British citizens (Neville-Jones, 2009), the dominant Conservative element of the Coalition might have been expected to prioritise cohesion or 'integration', but instead they visibly washed their hands of any concern with it. Delayed even longer than the Prevent review, the eventual Coalition policy document on Integration (DCLG, 2012, deployed as part of a deliberate attempt to avoid Labour's language of 'Community Cohesion') was a flimsy and woefully brief document. Rejecting any notion of national targets or monitoring, it portrayed Integration as a local matter that national government would offer no comment on and it confirmed the ending of all national policy direction and funding on the issue whilst failing to use the terms 'racism' or 'equalities' at all. The claim that this was simply driven by the wider, and very deep, cuts in overall public spending (which have fallen disproportionately on local authorities serving multicultural urban areas) was undermined by the fact that the only national funding identified for Integration work was given to the Church of England and the Scout Association, both white, 'establishment', middle class- dominated organisations that are arguably not well-placed to lead cross-community dialogue.

Whilst Community Cohesion has been side-lined and undermined as a policy agenda and British local authorities have simultaneously undergone very significant spending cuts as a whole, all local authorities have been forced to continue focussing on Prevent-related activity. Even if not Prevent-funded, local authorities are required to maintain multi-agency co-ordination arrangements and tension-monitoring processes, whilst some have also had to deal with very significant costs and public order threats associated with rallies by far-right groups such as the English Defence League that can be understood as part of an on-going cycle of 'cumulative extremism' (Eatwell, 2006). In almost all cases, these responses have to come from the same local authority officers and practitioners charged with continuing to work on cohesion and integration (O'Toole et al, 2012), so questioning the supposed demarcation of the Prevent Review. Indeed, the 'Muslim Participation in Contemporary Governance' project run by the University of Bristol identifies that: *our data suggests that actors charged with the delivery of Prevent are sceptical about this separation* (O'Toole et al, 2013:61) and quotes one local Police Prevent co-ordinator as saying:

*It's virtually the same individuals who are involved in the cohesion bit that are predominantly involved in the Prevent* (O'Toole et al, 2013:61).

Furthermore, the Prevent activity that has continued in the 28 funded areas is still very significantly focussed on work with key Muslim young people and community groups at a

local level and is organised through local authorities. Key local authority staff have to develop proposals and bid for funding, whilst local authority practitioners lead and implement much of the funded programmes – in both cases, largely the same local authority staff responsible for the continuing development of cohesion and integration activity despite the absence of national government funding or interest. The policy and departmental distinction between Prevent and cohesion/integration called for by the Select Committee Inquiry and supposedly implemented by the Prevent Review simply doesn't, and can't, exist on the ground. The failure of elite political actors to recognise this ground-level reality can be highlighted through contrast with one of the conclusions within the Home Affairs Select Committee Inquiry Report into 'The Roots of Violent Radicalisation':

*'Witnesses tended to broadly welcome the outcome of the Prevent Review, following the clearer split between counter-terrorism and counter-radicalisation work, the separation out of activity between the Home Office, focussing on violent extremism and the DCLG focussing on non-violent extremism'*(House of Commons 2012:19).

This claimed distinction was and is not recognisable at the ground operational level. Arguably, the Prevent/Community Cohesion relationship now represents the worst scenario possible. Any national direction and support for cohesion/integration has disappeared whilst the same policy officers and practitioners charged with attempting to take cohesion forward locally are still facing Prevent demands. Since the Prevent Review, autonomy over the direction and content of Prevent activity has significantly reduced, but local authorities are still expected to organise and deliver the work. The Prevent-funded local authority areas now have to apply for funding to the OSCT at six-monthly intervals against OSCT-determined criteria. This time-consuming application process brings no guarantee of success for these funded-areas, with applications being refused or returned for significant amendment. Anecdotal evidence suggests that bids significantly involving research or activity largely with mainly white communities are still refused, with many of the other applications going as far as Ministers themselves before being approved. Detailed scrutiny and approval processes are undertaken by the OSCT staff of CTU Police and Security Service Officers. Thus it can be argued that the Prevent Review of 2011 represented a significant further securitisation of Prevent and hence of the local state's relationship with Muslim communities, but also that the securitised Prevent agenda is still delivered and co-ordinated local by local authorities and their staff, despite the window dressing of the removal of DCLG from the policy agenda. Meanwhile cohesion/integration policy work has progressively slipped off the agenda.

### **Creating Prevent/Cohesion Synergy**

This chapter has acknowledged that past and present British governments deserve praise for developing a preventative educational and engagement strategy that addresses attractions towards terrorism and ideologies supporting it. However, Britain's Prevent programme has been conceptually flawed and contradictory from the start, with the 2011 Prevent Review simply reducing the scale and profile of the programme rather than effectively addressing

those inherent tensions. It has been argued here that the Prevent/Community Cohesion tensions acknowledged by government are not just at the organisational and responsibility level (addressed by later policy adjustments); rather they are at the fundamental conceptual level. The chapter has argued, drawing on clear support for the position from ground level policy makers and practitioners identified in empirical research (Thomas, 2008; 2011; Husband and Alam, 2011; Turley, 2009) that there must be much greater synergy, rather than separation, between Community Cohesion and Prevent for the goals of the latter to be effectively addressed. To date, Prevent has been a separate and contradictory programme, aimed at Muslims only, that has created understandable alarm and resentment within Muslim communities and ‘virulent envy’ over resource allocation within other non-Muslim communities (Birt, 2009). In this way it has been contradictory to the analysis and policy agenda of Community Cohesion in both essentialising and reifying Muslim identity, so simplistically conflating strong faith identity with a heightened terrorist threat and advocating ‘moderate’ faith identity as the only possible solution. This both ignores other possible understandings of attraction to terrorism for individuals and runs counter to wider British policy efforts to develop a human rights based conception of citizenship based on more intersectional and ‘cooler’ understandings of identity (McGhee, 2006).

In contrast, Community Cohesion, as it has been actually understood and practised at ground level (Thomas, 2011) has worked with and acknowledged distinct ethnic, faith and geographical identifications, but has sought to augment them with stronger forms and experiences of commonality through application of ‘contact theory’ (Hewstone et al, 2007) and programmes that address common needs and interests. The strong support for such policy approaches amongst ground level political leaders, policy-makers and professional practitioners outlined above meant that from the start the need for a separate, distinct Prevent programme, especially one with all the monocultural, essentialising flaws outlined above was questioned. Such local concerns were overruled but the initial iteration of Prevent under the Labour government did allow significant local autonomy. That progressively reduced until it largely disappeared under the Coalition government. Here, the real story of Prevent has been the increasing securitisation of the British state’s relationship with its Muslim communities, a reality arguably inevitable as the rapidly growing OSCT and its network of CTUs and Prevent Police officers has asserted its national and local control over the programme. This does not provide a productive basis for genuine educational and engagement-based strategies that enable young people to explore challenging political, philosophical and religious issues and to embrace democratic processes and conventions. Such strategies can only be developed through Community Cohesion-based processes that acknowledge distinct identifications and experiences but which also bring young people of different backgrounds together in substantial and meaningful ways to explore real political and moral questions, in recognition of the fact that young people of **all** backgrounds have vulnerabilities regarding political extremism and terrorism. ‘Mainstreaming’ and even re-naming Prevent processes (House of Commons, 2012) without having a clear and resourced cohesion/integration strategy will only obscure rather than address Prevent’s fundamental flaws.

Real progress would require a re-energised and nationally-funded, cohesion-based educational programme that encompassed the goals of Prevent whilst moving away from the counter-productive title and distinctness of Prevent as it currently stands. Such an approach was advocated by think-tank Demos and other contributors to the Home Affairs Select Committee Inquiry into Prevent in 2011/12 (House of Commons, 2012). Indeed, the Home Affairs Select Committee concluded that:

*The strongest forces against radicalisation are the partnerships of mutual respect and shared citizenship within the UK and within local communities in our towns and cities* (House of Commons, 2012:34).

Such a programme could and should build on existing positive youth-based process, such as the UK Youth Parliament initiative and the National Citizen Service. It should include work with specific groups of young people with particular needs and interests, including explicit anti-extremism work programmes with marginalised and vulnerable groups and individuals, but within a much stronger cross-community framework that focusses on strengthening democratic citizenship for **all** young people rather than state-sanctioned forms of surveillance and acceptable Muslim identity for some.

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