



foundation
rooted ideas, radical change

Enough is Enough

Addressing the Root Causes of Radicalisation



Ian Sansbury

About Oasis

Oasis is a ground-breaking global Christian movement and a group of charities and social enterprises working in 62 communities located in 11 countries around the world. We have a radical and genuinely distinctive vision of community, seeking to reconnect people to each other and to the services they need. That vision is built around the concept of community hubs: the joining together of all the ways in which Oasis exists and acts within a community – the church, school and all the joined-up community services we provide.

We work with and within some of the most vulnerable communities, seeking to become an integral part of every neighbourhood we work in. We achieve all this through the development of Oasis 'Hubs', which provide wide ranging and integrated services designed to meet the breadth of human need. Our aim is to build communities that are healthy, safe, supportive and full of opportunity; communities in which every individual is supported to reach their God-given potential in life.

In the UK, Oasis works in 36 communities, delivering academy schools, foodbanks, debt advice, youth and children's work, adult education, family support, housing and health and psychosocial support. Oasis Community Learning, our Multi-Academy Trust, is the second largest MAT in the country with 49 schools serving over 25,000 students.

Our vision is for community - a place where everyone is included, making a contribution and reaching their God-given potential.

About the Oasis Foundation

The Oasis Foundation is the research and policy unit of the Oasis group of charities and social enterprises. It represents our opportunity to give back some of our thirty years of learning in church-led social action, to help inform public policy and to encourage replication of what we and others have found to work. Our current areas of policy focus are:

- The role of the Church in public service delivery
- Radicalisation and gang culture
- Sexuality and inclusion
- The UK's response to child refugees
- Education

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Executive Summary

'But it is time to say `Enough is enough'. Everybody needs to go about their lives as they normally would. Our society should continue to function in accordance with our values. But when it comes to taking on extremism and terrorism, things need to change'¹.

Those were the words of the UK's Prime Minister, Theresa May, on June 4th 2017, following the London Bridge terrorist attack two days earlier. We agree that the UK's approach to Islamist radicalisation must change. But rather than simply ratcheting up the country's counter-terrorism activities, which was the clear implication of the Prime Minister's speech that day, we believe that the nation's response must go much further, in responding fully and strategically to the root causes of Islamist radicalisation.

Furthermore, this paper articulates the clear similarities between Islamist radicalisation and other forms of youth radicalisation, particularly gang culture, aggressive forms of racism and political extremism. It reflects the academic consensus and Oasis' own experience of working in communities across the UK, that:

- The causes of radicalisation are complex and multi-layered;
- The different forms of radicalisation have many similar and overlapping causes; and
- If youth radicalisation in all its forms is to be overcome, our policy responses must reflect those complex and overlapping root causes. The UK needs a much broader and more strategic response than we currently achieve.

Our policy recommendations, which reflect that consensus and which are detailed on page 22 onwards, are as follows:

Re-Assessing the Prevent Strategy

- The Prevent strategy, as it is currently formulated, is incomplete and too short-term in its focus and should be replaced with a longer-term, more comprehensive and re-branded strategy through which grassroots communities are empowered to combat radicalisation;
- The new strategy should have a significant focus on equipping and empowering mainstream Muslim voices in our communities to rearticulate both mainstream Islamic theology and the very positive role that young Muslims can play in British society;
- Prevent should be subject to more transparent, evidence-based evaluation, both through better funding for the Research, Information and Communications Unit within the Office for Security and Counter-terrorism at the Home Office and the independent commissioning of research by academics and practitioners.

*'We moved to the how of terrorism without sufficiently understanding the why. This was one of a number of early mistakes in tackling terrorism, because without understanding the why, without engaging with the root causes, we created a vacuum in the thinking of policy-makers who needed to prevent individuals from setting foot on the track towards terrorism'.
Baroness Warsi, Conservative Peer*

¹ <http://time.com/4804640/london-attack-theresa-may-speech-transcript-full/>

Developing a Cohesive National Narrative on Radicalisation

- Government, and indeed politicians of all political parties, should seek and employ a new narrative on radicalisation; one that avoids demonising Islam and one that more honestly reflects the many consistent factors driving different forms of radicalisation within our society;
- On a more strategic basis, UK political, societal and cultural narratives should increasingly seek to adopt an omnicultural approach, recognising and celebrating our shared humanity, rather than multiculturalism, in which differences are emphasised. Government should establish a Commission on Omniculturalism to explore how questions of integration and the celebration of our common humanity can be incorporated into all facets of government policy.

Empowering communities

- Government should appoint a Communities Tsar, to oversee the development and delivery of a National Strategy for Community Empowerment and Cohesion and to manage the interaction of central government departments (Home Office, DCLG, DfE, Office for Civil Society), local government and the voluntary sector;
- Through the office of the Communities Tsar, Government should develop, properly fund and deliver a National Strategy for Community Empowerment and Cohesion;
- Government and civil society, working together, should identify, evaluate and disseminate replicable models of community empowerment and cohesion;
- Government should identify and proactively build the capacity of voluntary sector organisations working in the field of community empowerment and cohesion.

Radicalising Young People to a Positive Narrative

- The National Strategy for Community Empowerment and Cohesion (see above) should incorporate a range of properly resourced and nationally coordinated but locally relevant youth empowerment and engagement programmes. These should include but not necessarily be limited to: sport, arts and music, citizenship and education.
- These programmes should wherever possible engage existing national, regional and local movements and membership organisations, such as the Scouts Association and Girlguiding UK, Army Cadets, Volunteer Police Cadets, St Johns Ambulance, the Boys' and Girls' Brigades, and other similar bodies;
- Where possible, these programmes should be asset-based, drawing on strengths that already exist in each community;
- Investment should be made in a robust programme of evaluation to enable the identification and wide-scale replication of programmes that are shown to have strong outcomes in delivering youth engagement and community cohesion.

Instruments of Re-Connection: Education, Youthwork and Youth Mentoring

- The Department for Education ('DfE') should renew its focus on character formation across our schools, focusing on core human values, such as compassion, gratitude, consideration and humility as much, or perhaps more than, aspiration and achievement;
- DfE should improve funding for the development and evaluation of character education programmes, particularly focused on the inter-relationship between the development of core human values and the subsequent human development (and flourishing) of the individual;
- DfE should renew its focus on, and improve standards in, the teaching of History, Religious Education and PSHE;
- DfE should commit greater curriculum focus to the teaching of skills and competencies (critical thinking, dialogue, conflict resolution etc.) that equip young people to challenge and critique radicalisation and extreme ideologies;
- Central government, local authorities and civil society, working together, should develop early intervention anti-radicalisation strategies designed specifically for primary age children;
- Government, schools providers and civil society should commit to, and properly fund, a relentless focus on driving up educational standards and attainment in our poorest communities;
- Central government and local authorities, working together, should commit to properly funded youth work and youth mentoring, particularly in the areas of greatest disadvantage and lowest levels of community cohesion;
- Central government, local authorities and civil society, working together, should commit resources to improved recruitment and training for youth workers, to reflect the importance of the role in supporting the development of young people, particularly those in deprived communities.

Tackling disadvantage

- Government should recognise the immense short-term cost, in both human and financial terms, of our failure to resolve the issues of youth radicalisation. Government should commit appropriate investment to resolving the long-term issues of identity, connection, belonging and purpose, of deprivation and economic marginalisation, of the challenges of segregation and disconnection, of mental health and family breakdown that plague our communities. We believe that that investment is credible in simple financial terms, as well as in human and moral terms.

Enough is enough. It is time for a radical shift in policy; a change that will respond fully to the root causes of radicalisation; a change that will make Britain's youth resilient to radicalisation, in all its many forms.

A Word about Evidence and Definitions

In exploring the similarities between different forms of radicalisation, this paper focuses predominantly on Islamist and gang-related forms of radicalisation. This choice is largely practical, based on Oasis' own experience and on the predominance of available practice-based and academic evidence. There remains a relative paucity of academic analysis of the drivers of aggressive forms of racism and youth political extremism. We hope such analyses can be developed, as experience suggests that many of the processes we outline here relate equally to those forms of youth radicalisation.

We also recognise that there is a temptation in any comparative study of this kind to try to 'force square pegs into round holes', to seek to demonstrate commonality where none exists in order to prove a particular thesis. We recognise that there are causal areas in which Islamist radicalisation and gang culture differ and we have, we hope, indicated where those differences exist. However, we believe there is strong enough evidence to suggest substantial commonality of cause and therefore a significant degree of similarity in the required policy response.

In terms of definition and language, throughout this paper we use the general term 'radicalisation' to represent all forms of radicalisation, focusing primarily on young people and including, in particular, both Islamist radicalisation and gang-based radicalisation. Throughout this paper, we have adopted Wilner and Dubouloz' (2010, p. 38) definition of radicalisation as a 'personal process in which individuals adopt extreme political, social, and/or religious ideals and aspirations, and where the attainment of particular goals justifies the use of indiscriminate violence'. Where we seek to comment more specifically about 'Islamist radicalisation' or 'gang-related radicalisation', we are explicit in using those terms rather than the more generic label 'radicalisation'.

Finally, throughout this paper we use the term 'mainstream Islam' to reflect the theology and practice of the overwhelming majority of Muslims who do not subscribe to the extremist ideologies of Salafi-jihadism. In using that term, we are not seeking to impose a value judgement of what should or should not constitute the mainstream but only to denote the clear difference that exists between the Islam practised by the vast majority of Muslims and the narrow extreme of Salafi-jihadism.



The Multi-Faceted and Non-Linear Nature of Radicalisation

'What we are fighting, in Islamist extremism, is an ideology. It is an extreme doctrine. And like any extreme doctrine, it is subversive. At its furthest end it seeks to destroy nation-states to invent its own barbaric realm'²

That was David Cameron's articulation of the threat of Islamist radicalisation in July 2015 at the launch of the Extremism Bill. It is a narrative that continues to drive UK policy on extremism and counter-terrorism today; one that focuses on Islamist ideology to the exclusion of almost anything else. Later in that July speech, Cameron acknowledged that other drivers for extremism, such as 'historic injustices and recent wars, or...poverty and hardship' might exist. But he went on to argue:

'Now let me be clear, I am not saying these issues aren't important. But let's not delude ourselves. We could deal with all these issues – and some people in our country and elsewhere would still be drawn to Islamist extremism. No – we must be clear. The root cause of the threat we face is the extremist ideology itself'².

And the rhetoric has changed little in the two years since that speech. Theresa May's speech in June this year, following the London Bridge attacks, included:

'...while the recent attacks are not connected by common networks, they are connected in one important sense. They are bound together by the single, evil ideology of Islamist extremism that preaches hatred, sows division,

and promotes sectarianism. It is an ideology that claims our Western values of freedom, democracy and human rights are incompatible with the religion of Islam. It is an ideology that is a perversion of Islam and a perversion of the truth'³.

It remains clear that UK government policy towards Islamist radicalisation is focused primarily on one driver: that of ideology.

That mono-causal perspective is deeply at odds with the evidence. The clear academic consensus is that radicalisation is a multi-layered process (Decker & Pyrooz, 2011, p. 153) requiring 'an alignment of situational, social/cultural, and individual factors.' (Allan, et al., 2015, p. 1). Magnus Ranstorp (2009, p. 6) writes of the 'multifaceted combination of push-pull factors involving a combination of socio-psychological factors, political grievance, religious motivation and discourse, identity politics and triggering mechanisms that collectively move individuals towards extremism'. The academic evidence suggests that there is no single, linear pathway towards radicalisation, that for different individuals the pathway will differ and that radicalisation will emerge 'once several factors are present' (Bartlett & Birdwell, 2010, p. 9).

Multi-causality for Islamist radicalisation is widely supported, not least by the Home Office itself (2012, p. 142) but also by numerous academics and expert organisations (e.g., Powell, 2016, p. 48, Orav, 2015, p. 2, Institute for Strategic Dialogue, 2010, p.



2, European Commission's Expert Group on Violent Radicalisation, 2008, p. 10). In July 2015, 280 academics signed a letter to the Independent arguing that 'social, economic and political factors, as well as social exclusion, play a more central role in driving political violence than ideology'⁵. Those arguments are well supported by the extensive survey of British Muslims by Policy Exchange and ICM (Frampton, et al., 2016, p. 59) in which eight different potential causes of radicalisation were classified as 'important' by over 50% of respondents.

A similar, multi-causal, picture emerges for the radicalisation of young people towards gang culture. The Centre for Social Justice identifies eight or more root causes: family breakdown and dysfunction, educational failure, economic dependency and worklessness, addiction, serious personal debt, mental and emotional health problems, a lack of positive role models and discrimination and stereotyping (Centre for Social Justice, 2012, p. 9).

The reality is that the drivers of radicalisation are complex and inter-related. The UK's policy response, in turn, must therefore be more nuanced and more deeply appreciative of those drivers. The next section will examine each of the drivers in turn, to provide a depth of context to the policy recommendations that follow.

'There is no standard profile of a terrorist and no single pathway or route that an individual takes to becoming involved in a terrorist organisation. Not all drivers will play a role in every instance of radicalisation. Rather, drivers and risk factors appear to be inter-connected and mutually reinforcing but exert influence on individuals to varying extents'.
Home Office, 2012⁴

2 <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/david-cameron-extremism-speech-read-the-transcript-in-full-10401948.html>

3 <http://www.reuters.com/article/britain-security-may-statement/text-uk-prime-minister-mays-statement-following-london-attack-idUSL8N1J10GH>

4 (Home Office, 2012, p. 142)

5 <http://www.independent.co.uk/voices/letters/prevent-will-have-a-chilling-effect-on-open-debate-free-speech-and-political-dissent-10381491.html>

The Drivers of Radicalisation

Ideology

The Roots of Ideological and Cultural Difference

Ideology is clearly one of the drivers of Islamist radicalisation; to claim otherwise would be obvious folly. However, ideology is a complex concept and one that politicians should handle with far more care than is often the case. As El-Badawy, et al (2015, p. 4) suggest, 'The ideology of global extremism can only be countered if it is first understood'.

Most critically, there is a fundamental difference between the religion of Islam as practised by the vast majority of the world's Muslim community and the narrow politico-religious ideology of Salafi-jihadism, which guides extremist groups like ISIS, Jabhat al-Nusra and al-Qaeda and which is being used to radicalise young people into violent extremism. Mohammed Hafez (2007, pp. 64-70) suggests that Salafi-jihadi ideology is characterised by five features:

- *Tawhid*: affirming the unity of God's lordship in the universe: 'one God, one state and one *ummah* (the global Islamic community)' (El-Badawy, et al., 2015, p. 4);
- *Hakimiyyat Allah*: an emphasis on God's sovereignty, through which only God can define right and wrong, good and evil, permissible and forbidden and which supersedes all human reasoning;
- The rejection of innovation (*bida*) in Islamic theology. The Qur'an is the final revelation of God and is complete; every innovation usurps God's role and violates His unity and sovereignty;
- The permissibility and necessity of *takfir*: declaring a Muslim to be outside the creed, the equivalent of excommunication in Catholicism;
- The centrality of *jihad* against infidel regimes that do not rule according to God's laws.

Theologically, Salafi-jihadists adopt a 'more literalist and more puritan approach to Islamic practice', believing that 'the Qur'an and the *hadith* (Prophetic tradition) are the only legitimate sources of religious conduct and reasoning' (Hegghammer, 2009, p. 249). They largely reject the innovation (*bida*) of subsequent Islamic theological scholarship and display a 'single-minded focus on violent *jihad*' (El-Badawy, et al., 2015, p. 4).

Politically, Hegghammer (2009, p. 253) describes Salafi-jihadi ideology as 'extremist and intransigent' and 'internationalist and anti-Western'. This stems in part from Salafi-jihadi focus on the concept of *ummah* (of social justice and the sense of a global Islamic community), which is increasingly at odds with the Western emphasis on individualism and liberty. In the words of Steve Chalke (2016, p. 67): '...it is this impulse, that has, in large measure, over the last few decades, given rise to the sense of urgency around the need to stand up to America – and to the West in general – and the influence of its values'.



The Specific Dangers of Salafi-jihadist Ideology

The fusion of political and religious goals within Salafi-jihadist ideology brings a number of very distinct challenges and risks.

First, and perhaps most critically, by comparison to other forms of youth radicalisation, is the sense in which a religiously articulated ideology can ensure control over behaviour (Christmann, 2012, p.31). In the words of David Lammy, the Tottenham MP (2013), 'This [ideological] distortion is so dangerous because it masquerades as an all-consuming faith. Whereas membership of the EDL or an inner-city gang can foster a type of lifestyle or, at worst, a livelihood, radical Islamism imposes a warped moral code and a polluted understanding of their [Islamist extremists'] purpose on earth'.

In a similar vein, individuals who are radicalised to Salafi-jihadist ideology, can exhibit 'a remarkable ability to ignore, deny, or reinterpret information which is incompatible with their belief system' (Flood, 1996, p. 20). Young people radicalised into Salafi-jihadi ideology can be extremely hard to deradicalise, suggesting there should be a strong policy emphasis on approaches which prevent, rather than attempt to reverse, radicalisation.

Finally, the fact that Salafi-jihadi ideology is a religious, rather than secular ideology, makes any attempt to challenge it far more complex. In the words of Assaf Moghadam (2008):

'Although they [Salafi-jihadists] selectively pick from the Islamic tradition only those elements that advance their narrow agenda, they nevertheless draw from the same religious sources that inform the lives and practices of more than a billion other Muslims. It is for that reason that ordinary Muslims – not to speak of non-Muslims – find it particularly difficult and dangerous to challenge Salafi-jihadists without running the risk of being accused of targeting Islam as a whole.'

There is, therefore, 'a distinct difference between the ideology of Salafi-jihadism and the Islam practiced by the majority of the world's Muslims' (El-Badawy, et al., 2015, p. 4). In addition, however, there are key differences in the depth of religious literacy and practice between Salafi-jihadi radicalisers and those they radicalise, which are very relevant in shaping policy. There is also an important role for the mainstream Islamic community to play in combatting the spread of extremist theology. It is therefore to the relative roles and influence of radicalisers, the radicalised and the wider community that we now turn.

The Radicalisers: Extremist Preachers at Home and Abroad

Salafi-jihadi ideology has spawned a growing number of extremist preachers, both within the UK and online, who advance a deeply conservative, oversimplified and dualistic form of their faith, through which they are capable of manipulating vulnerable young people to acts of terrorism. Over the past two decades, the British Government has focused significant effort in identifying and seeking to limit the impact of radical preachers, notably Abu Hamza, Abdullah El Faisal, Abu Qatada, Omar Bakri, Hani Al Sibai and Anjem Choudary.

There can be little doubt that countering what Chalke (2016, p. 47) calls ‘the over-literalistic manipulation and exploitation of the Qur’an... by ‘pied-piper preachers’ must continue to be a priority within our policy response to Islamist extremism. We need to find ways to break the links between fundamentalist preachers and the young people they incite to violence. And yet countering extremist preaching has been far from straightforward, particularly in a country that is rightly committed to safeguarding religious liberty and freedom of speech. Government is currently accused by many of a ‘paralysis at the heart of its counter-extremism policy’, driven to a significant extent by the seemingly all-consuming challenge of crafting a ‘legally robust definition of extremism that would have any chance of surviving a free speech challenge in the courts’⁶.

If it is difficult to counter UK-based extremist preachers, it is far harder to eliminate online incitements to religious violence emanating from abroad. In its 2016 report, ‘Radicalisation: the counter-narrative and identifying the tipping point’, the Home Affairs Committee acknowledged that, ‘the use of the internet to promote radicalisation and terrorism is one of the greatest threats that countries including the UK face’ (Home Affairs Committee, 2016, p. 11). By the end of 2016, the Counter Terrorism Internet Referral Unit (‘CTIRU’) had removed over 250,000 pieces of online extremist or terrorist material since the unit was launched in 2010. The CTIRU now removes over 2,000 pieces of extremist material a week, more than the amount that it removed in the whole of 2012⁷. Around 70% of CTIRU’s caseload is reported to be Daesh-

related⁸. Given the growth in such literature and the apparent escalation in numbers of young Muslims who are being drawn to its message, it seems that we are increasingly losing the battle to control its supply.

Limiting the supply of extremist preaching, both from UK-based preachers and online, is therefore fraught with difficulty and unlikely in itself to prevent radicalisation among our young people. While the UK must continue to respond vigorously and judicially to preaching that incites violence and hatred, it seems that effective policy must focus far more on countering the demand for such material, by enhancing the resilience of young people to its message and by empowering Muslim communities to develop powerful counter-narratives.

The Radicalised: Re-Examining the Ideological Realities of Radicalisation

Enhancing the resilience of young people to radicalisation demands a proper understanding of the processes and drivers that underpin radicalisation, processes which the Home Affairs Committee (2016, p. 9) recognise as being insufficiently understood. What is critical for us to recognise, however, is that there is a distinct difference in the depth of religious literacy and practice between radicalisers and the radicalised. For many young Islamist extremists, ideology can often be little more than skin-deep.

A leaked MI5 report from 2008⁹ suggested that ‘a large number of those involved in terrorism do not practise their faith regularly and many engage in behaviours such as drug taking, drinking alcohol and visiting prostitutes’. It went on to suggest that ‘many who become involved in violent extremism lack religious literacy and could be regarded as religious novices’. This is supported by a recent UN study of the processes of radicalisation within Africa, which discovered that 57% of respondents who had joined an extremist group voluntarily had ‘little or no understanding of religious texts’ (United Nations Development Programme, 2017, p. 5).

Those findings are reinforced by Olivier Roy (2017):

'The typical radical is a young, second-generation immigrant or convert, very often involved in episodes of petty crime, with practically no religious education, but having a rapid and recent trajectory of conversion/reconversion, more often in the framework of a group of friends or over the internet than in the context of a mosque. The embrace of religion is rarely kept secret, but rather is exhibited, but it does not necessarily correspond to immersion in religious practice'.

These expert perspectives have important implications for anti-radicalisation policies in the UK. Firstly, it is increasingly clear that although extremist Islamist ideology provides an important 'pull' towards radicalisation, the lack of religious literacy and practice strongly suggest the importance of other 'push' factors towards radicalisation (issues of identity, connection, belonging and purpose, deprivation and economic marginalisation, mental health and community and family breakdown) which must also be considered in developing a policy response. These 'push' factors are articulated in more detail in the pages that follow.

Secondly, it is evident that a relatively unsophisticated Government and media focus on ideology as the main driver of Islamist radicalisation has contributed to the wide-scale demonisation of all forms of Islam, resulting in an increased sense of alienation among young Muslims and their increased vulnerability to radicalisation. As the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (2012, p. 4) has suggested, Islamist radicalisation '...finds fertile ground in growing intolerance, racism and xenophobia, including as a result of counter-terrorism policies which have stigmatized and discriminated against certain individuals based on characteristics such as religion, racial or ethnic origin'.

- 6 <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2017/sep/17/paralysis-at-the-heart-of-uk-counter-extremism-policy>
- 7 <http://news.met.police.uk/news/250000th-piece-of-online-extremist-slash-terrorist-material-to-be-removed-208698>
- 8 <https://www.theyworkforyou.com/wrans/?id=2016-02-24.28422.h>
- 9 <https://www.theguardian.com/uk/2008/aug/20/uksecurity.terrorism1>

As we explore later in this paper, there is widespread academic opinion that Prevent, in understanding 'ideology to be the core radicalising agent', demonises Islam and can alienate Muslims (radical and moderate alike) and that it can therefore be counter-productive (Powell, 2016, pp. 46,82).

Demonisation can be the result of counter-terrorism policy, such as Prevent, but it can also be formed through political rhetoric, particularly in the aftermath of terrorist events. We have already articulated, at the beginning of this paper, the deliberately ideological narrative of successive British Prime Ministers. In the words of Afua Hirsch (2014): '...even though David Cameron may have said the killers of David Haines "are not Muslims, they are monsters", young Muslims still have a profound and consistent sense of being demonised by society'.

The overwhelming policy focus on ideology as the main driver of Islamist radicalisation, together with a lack of precision in ideological definition, have contributed substantially to our failure to combat Islamist radicalisation. Not only has policy failed to recognise and address the other drivers of radicalisation but clumsy narrative has often appeared to demonise Islam as a whole, rather than the narrow Salafi-jihadi ideology within it, helping to drive vulnerable young people into the arms of extremist recruiters.

Breaking the Links Between Radicalisers and the Radicalised: The Role of Community

Islam is not in itself an extreme or violent ideology, any more than Christianity or any other world religion. As we have already outlined, there is a distinct difference between Salafi-jihadism and the Islam practiced by the vast majority of the world's Muslims. The Policy Exchange / ICM poll of British Muslims found that only 2% of respondents expressed sympathy for violence in political protest or terrorism, compared to 5% and 4% respectively for the population as a whole (Frampton, et al., 2016, p. 8). Indeed, evidence suggests 'that a well-established religious identity actually protects against violent radicalisation'¹⁰ and that 'higher than average years of religious schooling appears to have been a source of resilience [to radicalisation]' (United Nations Development Programme, 2017, p. 5).

And yet, the clumsy labelling of Islamist radicalisation as simply an ideological issue has alienated Muslim communities and made it harder for mainstream Islamic identity, community and practice to become the bulwark against Islamist extremism that it needs to be. We have made it harder for mainstream Muslim imams, community leaders, teachers and parents to develop a powerful counter-narrative that can engage young Muslims with a message of inclusion, hope and opportunity, a message that will attract them more than the supposed certainties promised by extremist recruiters. As Baroness Warsi (2017, p. 86) suggests, 'Today's government is worryingly less engaged with British Muslim communities than it was in 2005 and less trusted by them'.

Looking Beyond Ideology

Ideology therefore has a critical but complex role to play, both in our understanding of the processes of Islamist radicalisation and in developing an effective policy response. In the face of expert academic and practitioner opinion, policy positions which suggest either that Islamist radicalisation is "all about Islam" or "nothing to do with Islam" are simply untenable. The former position simply demonises Islam, pushing more young people into the arms of the extremists and limiting the willingness and ability of mainstream Muslims to create an effective counter-narrative. The latter risks underestimating not only the very specific challenges in combatting Salafi-jihadist ideology but also the significant opportunities which exist in engaging mainstream Muslims to overcome extremism.

Breaking the links between extremist Salafi-jihadi preachers and our young people is critical but as the UK is currently finding, legislating to stop the supply of such preaching, within the UK and online, is extremely difficult in a modern and liberal society. Policy which focuses on ideology to the exclusion of virtually all the other drivers of radicalisation is, in our opinion, doomed to fail. UK anti-radicalisation policy must focus far more on the 'push' factors that make our young people vulnerable to radicalisation, drivers that influence all forms of youth radicalisation. It is to those factors that we now turn.

'If we're to succeed in defeating terrorism, we must enlist Muslim communities as some of our strongest allies, rather than push them away through suspicion and hate'. Barack Obama (2015)

10 <https://www.theguardian.com/uk/2008/aug/20/uksecurityterrorism1>



Identity, Connection, Belonging and Purpose

Questions of ideology are intimately linked with matters of identity, connection, belonging and purpose. Academic consensus points to those interconnected factors as significant drivers of both Islamist and gang-based radicalisation. Indeed, from Oasis' experience of working in communities, we would suggest that issues of identity and belonging are significant drivers of all forms of radicalisation among young people.

Identity, Belonging and Purpose in Islamist Radicalisation

Academic analysis of identity among Western Muslims increasingly points to issues of 'dual identity' (Khosrokhavar and Roy, in Bartlett, et al., 2010, pp. 39-40) in which young Muslims are 'constantly managing two sets of norms': a British identity and an Islamic one. These, often unresolved, inner conflicts can lead to a sense of 'identity crisis or confusion' (Christmann, 2012, p. 24) which can, in some individuals, be reconciled by extremist ideologies, which provide 'a clear (albeit negative) identity, a set of norms that reduces uncertainty' (Bartlett, et al., 2010, pp. 39-40).

It is a phenomenon that is graphically articulated by Afua Hirsch (2014) in a Guardian newspaper article:

'If you are not white in the UK, people constantly ask you where you are from. With a father who was born here and a mother who moved here when she was 11, I have tried a variety of answers to this question: "south London" rarely suffices. People want an explanation; perhaps an arrival date, a stamp in the passport.

In this new reality, Muslims have something to cling on to. As Kash Choudhary, a rapper on the Asian grime scene, told me: "For British Pakistanis like me there is a gap. I don't feel British. When I go to Pakistan, I don't feel Pakistani. But I do know that I'm a Muslim-Islam fills that gap."

This, often unresolved, sense conflict leaves many young Western Muslims vulnerable to radicalising influences, given the certainty and structure that fundamentalism can provide (Christmann, 2012, p. 24). In the words of a report published by the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (2012, p. 3), 'Violent extremists exploit and nurture these perceptions to portray themselves as providers of justice and safety for 'their community' and to pressure young people into taking side'.

This phenomenon appears to be particularly prevalent among young men, 'generally aged between mid-teens and mid 20s' (Christmann, 2012, p. 23). As Christmann goes on to note, there are strong parallels here between Islamist radicalisation and other forms of radicalisation, suggesting that 'higher levels of impulsivity, confidence, risk-taking and status' can all play a part in the process.

'There is no escaping the fact that terrorist attacks have almost exclusively been led and executed by young men. Males isolated from the rest of society, fixated by a binary worldview where there is only faith and infidelity. ...It is not uncommon for fringe groups of all ideological persuasions to systematically target these men by manipulating their sense of hopelessness and lack of belonging'.

David Lammy MP, 2013

In this light, it is perhaps unsurprising that young Muslim males are vulnerable to radicalisation. 'Islamist groups can help to form the personal identity of recruits and also function as an alternative social network' (Malik & Russell, 2016, p. 5). Prospective terrorists can find in extremist groups, 'not only a sense of meaning, but also a sense of belonging, connectedness and affiliation' (Borum, in (Allan, et al., 2015, p. 19) and of 'recognition, fellowship and identity' (Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, 2012, p. 4).

They can, as David Cameron suggested in 2015¹¹, feel deeply energised by their radical affiliations. The process of radicalisation can be accelerated by excitement in the idea of violent activity (Bartlett & Birdwell, 2010, p. 9), an energy and excitement that they are typically unable to find elsewhere in their communities. And of course, they can also see themselves as altruists, fighting for a cause on behalf of others (Silke and O'Gorman, in Chalke, 2016, p. 29). Young people can also join violent extremist groups because they offer 'forms of support that meet their material and socio-psychological needs, e.g., money, protection, and solidarity' (Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, 2012, p. 4).

In the telling words of Professor Andrew Silke (in (Malik & Russell, 2016, p. 5):

'Much like the Christian fundamentalists, [the Muslim Brotherhood] spend endless hours convincing potential converts of righteousness of their cause – the Brotherhood also attempts to integrate all dimensions of the individual's life within the Brotherhood's 'family'. Prayer and service combine to create the sense of kinship so crucial in Middle Eastern life. Many young people in the Islamic world are bewildered, and the Brotherhood provides them with the sense of belonging and purpose that they so desperately need.'

Ideology and identity are deeply intertwined, but if we are to understand the real root causes of Islamist radicalisation, rather than reach conveniently for the broad brush of ideology, we must recognise the void of identity and connection that renders young people vulnerable to radicalising forces.

Identity, Belonging and Purpose in Gang Culture

The process of radicalisation into gangs provides many parallels to Islamist radicalisation, in terms of the drivers of identity, belonging and purpose. In the words of Jessica Glicken and Julienne Smrcka (2002, p. 5):

'The formation of both of these groups [gangs and terrorist groups] is stimulated by the belief in a lack of opportunity for self-realization, a search for structure and moral order in what appears to be a chaotic world, and the associated felt devaluation of self-identity. The groups become a means to define that self, and to provide the resources and share the responsibility for acts that will create a world within which these individuals can see hope and opportunity'.

They go on to suggest that gang members 'usually do not belong to 'mainstream society' but rather to socially marginal or economically disadvantaged groups. These marginal and/or disadvantaged groups are usually defined by race or ethnicity, and occasionally by religion'. In short, in a similar way to those vulnerable to Islamist radicalisation, those lured into gang culture have experienced a crisis of identity and disconnection from what might perhaps be regarded as mainstream society.

'The latest wannabe terrorists are those who have left Britain to join ISIS. Big guns, big cars, plenty of girls and the opportunity to play out computer-game violence in the real world is sadly attractive for bored young men, many of whom are seen as failures at home'. Baroness Warsi, 2017

¹¹ <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/david-cameron-extremism-speech-read-the-transcript-in-full-10401948.html>

In this context, and again in a similar way to the process of Islamist radicalisation, the gang provides its members with a sense of individual power, social and moral security, opportunity, a strong code of morals, and 'rites of passage [which] provide explicit markers of status' (Glicksen & Smrcka, 2002, pp. 2-3). But perhaps the most important sense of similarity is in the sense of belonging which both gangs and extremist groups provide their members. In the words of Jessie Feinstein and Nia Imani Kuumba (2006), "While gangs may lead young people into dangerous situations and breed community division, distrust and fear, the friendship, support, security and sense of belonging they offer are often overlooked by those working with young people involved in gangs'.

However, the phenomenon of identity, purpose and belonging, as it pertains to gangs is perhaps best expressed in the words of the Centre for Social Justice in their landmark 2009 report *Dying to Belong*. In the executive summary to that report, CSJ describe, 'a generation of disenfranchised young people... alienated from mainstream society' who have 'created their own, alternative society – the gang – and they live by the gang's rules: the 'code of the street'. It is an outcome that David Lammy, the MP for Tottenham parallels with the rise of political extremism in our communities:

'In one community, the English Defence League has radicalised the anger of disillusioned young white men and channelled it towards immigrant communities they believe are destroying their way of life. In another, a culture that idolises guns, knives and nihilism has drawn predominantly young black men

into the world of street gangs. Boys from the age of 10 are taught to abandon all others apart from the gangs they belong to and to fight for turf with their rivals. Here, the very notion of masculinity has been bastardised to the extent that in their code, power and respect can only be achieved through intimidation and fear.' (Lammy, 2013)

Where young people, particularly young men, face a crisis of identity, disconnection and a lack of purpose and belonging, the evidence suggests that they will be vulnerable to the forces of radicalisation. They will be vulnerable to those people (Islamist fundamentalists, gang leaders or political extremists) who can offer them a sense of belonging and opportunity, of identity and individual power, of security and status. Of course, the precise nature of that radicalisation will depend on context: a Muslim youth from Manchester's Moss Side will be vulnerable to Islamist extremism, a black youth from Tottenham to gang culture, a white youth from coastal Kent to right wing political extremism. But the root causes of radicalisation are crucially similar and far more deep-seated than our current policy responses suggest.

Deprivation and Economic Marginalisation

A further driver for both Islamist and gang-related radicalisation is that of deprivation and economic marginalisation. In terms of Islamist radicalisation, there is a growing academic consensus that deprivation plays a facilitative rather than a causative role in the process of radicalisation (Christmann, 2012, p. 25). Deprivation and poverty can 'act as a fertile terrain for radical mobilisation' (Briggs, et al., 2006, p. 45). Indeed, the most comprehensive recent review of Islamist terrorism offences published by The Henry Jackson Society in 2017 (Stuart, 2017, p. 939) suggests that, where data on underlying deprivation is available, 82% of Islamism-related offences between 1998 and 2015 were committed by individuals from the 30% most deprived areas in the UK.

Based on the evidence, it seems clear that relative and persisting inequality and a perception of blocked social mobility and injustice provide at least part of the motivation to Islamist radicalisation. And of course, these issues of inequality and injustice are intimately linked to those of identity examined earlier in this paper. The 'lack of opportunity for self-realization' (Glicken & Smrcka, 2002, p. 5) and the sense of long-term hopelessness that afflicts young people in many of our communities is unsurprisingly a breeding ground for radicalisation as they search for something that will bring individual meaning and a sense of personal success.

That sense of hopelessness is often enhanced by the marginalisation and enclavisation of Muslim communities (Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, 2012, p. 3). How much the residential segregation of Muslim communities is a matter of individual choice, cultural preference or lack of opportunity is unclear (Bartlett, et al., 2010, p. 38) but there is a good deal of evidence that these cultural barriers can exacerbate issues of identity and injustice (Christmann, 2012, p. 26).

A similar scenario exists in areas prone to gang culture. The Centre for Social Justice's 2009 and 2012 reports, *Dying to Belong* (2009, p. 210) and *Time to Wake Up* (2012, p. 12), articulate clearly the critical link between unemployment and the increased involvement of young people in gangs. Money, or the lack of it, plays a direct role in attracting young people to gang life (Centre for Social Justice, 2009, p. 210).

And as Jessica Glicken and Julienne Smrcka (2002, p. 3) suggest, wider research on gangs has identified 'dysfunctional families, failed schools and non-existent community structures' as drivers of gang-related radicalisation, all of which are symptomatic of our most deprived neighbourhoods. They go on to argue: 'If the macro-community marginalizes a group of individuals or causes them to feel powerless, they will seek structures within which they can exercise power and create such structures if they do not exist. If mainstream society offers no road to success, it will be sought (or created) through alternative communities such as gangs.'

'Counterterrorism experts - in particular those actively engaged in social and community work at the grassroots level - have long said that alienation and social isolation, being overlooked by and not having a stake in society are key factors in understanding how some young people become drawn to the terrifying, violent purpose and agency of murderous extremism. Not everyone who experiences those things will turn to violence - of course - but it does seem to be a precondition'. Rachel Shabi, 2015

Mental Health

Mental health also appears to be a factor in both Islamist radicalisation and gang-related radicalisation, although perhaps to different extents.

Public Health England's 2015 report, *The Mental Health Needs of Gang-Affiliated Young People*, suggests that: 'The links between gang-affiliation and poor mental health can operate in both directions. Poor mental wellbeing can draw young people to gangs while gang involvement can negatively impact on an individual's mental health' (Public Health England, 2015, p. 4). The report suggests that young people with poor mental wellbeing, often developed through disadvantage, hopelessness and social exclusion, can be drawn to gang affiliation as a source of social support, status and belonging, a means to protection or in response to specific conditions, such as ADHD and conduct disorders, that manifest themselves in impulsivity, sensation seeking and externalising behaviours (Public Health England, 2015, p. 7).

Continuing gang membership has a persistent negative impact on mental health, gang members having significantly higher levels of mental illness than both men in the general population and non-gang affiliated violent men. 86% of gang members were identified as having antisocial personality disorder, 67% alcohol dependence, 59% anxiety disorder, 58% drug dependence, 34% suicide attempt, 25% psychosis and 20% depression (Public Health England, 2015, p. 6). The evidence suggests that poor mental health is a driver for both initial and continuing gang involvement.

The evidence for mental health as a driver of Islamist radicalisation is less clear. While young Muslims who are radicalised 'are not necessarily mentally ill' (Young, et al., 2016, p. 8), it does appear that poor mental health can be a contributory factor to radicalisation, particularly among so-called 'lone wolf' terrorists. A recent police study of 500 cases¹² dealt with by the Channel anti-radicalisation scheme found that 44% of the individuals involved were assessed as being likely to have vulnerabilities related to mental health or psychological difficulties, with a further 15% assessed as possibly having such vulnerabilities.

Similarly, research cited by Interpol suggests that perpetrators in more than a third of "lone-actor attacks" carried out in Europe between 2000 and 2015 suffered some sort of psychiatric disorder¹³. While the evidence is less than clear and more analysis is undoubtedly required, it does seem that '...the self-radicalized lone wolf is more likely to be mentally ill than the radicalized youth that joins a group' (Seifert, 2015).

Strategic responses to both gang-related and Islamist radicalisation should therefore consider the impact of mental health on their vulnerability to recruitment.

¹² <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2016/may/20/police-study-radicalisation-mental-health-problems>

¹³ <http://www.independent.co.uk/voices/german-terror-attacks-mental-illness-religion-isis-terrorism-scapegoats-a7155366.html>

Community and Family Breakdown

Finally, academic evidence suggests community and family breakdown as drivers of both Islamist and gang-related radicalisation. Public Health England's 2015 report, *The Mental Health Needs of Gang-Affiliated Young People*, points to the contribution of attachment insecurity and poor parental bonds to adverse outcomes including conduct problems and delinquency, violence and poor mental health. In the words of the report, those factors are 'often cited as a driver of the 'need to belong' that attracts young people with troubled backgrounds to gangs' (Public Health England, 2015, p. 10).

Similar vulnerabilities can exist in the path to Islamist radicalisation, as Maajid Nawaz, the founding chairman of Quilliam, has suggested: '...extremist recruiters...provide a sense of belonging, where perhaps that sense of grievance, and the identity crisis, led to a vacuum in belonging. So the recruiter steps in where family should be stepping in, where a father figure should be stepping in, or mother figure, and provides that sense of belonging'¹⁴.

'Unless we back those who tackle the root causes of gang violence – like broken families, poor education, worklessness and addiction – and until we liberate the potential of those who can get people out with a better hope and approaches that work – we will continue to fall short. We will continue to bury far too many children'. Christian Guy, 2013



Complex Causality Demands a More Nuanced Policy Response

Both Islamist radicalisation and gang-related radicalisation are complex and multi-layered in their causality. There is no single path to radicalisation and Islamist and gang-related forms of radicalisation share a number of drivers, suggesting that a common policy approach to both is likely to be appropriate.

What is most clear, however, is that current UK anti-terror policy, which treats ideology as the prime motivator for Islamist radicalisation, is deeply misguided, probably counter-productive and can only ever scratch the surface of the problem. Radicalisation occurs in different communities to young people from widely differing backgrounds. And the causes of radicalisation among young people in the UK are far more deep-seated than we typically care to acknowledge. Radicalisation, in all its forms, is the symptom of long-term issues of identity, connection, belonging and purpose, of deprivation and economic marginalisation, of the challenges of community segregation and dis cohesion, of mental health and family breakdown.

David Cameron was wrong: even if we are able to remove radical Islamist ideology from our communities, the underlying drivers of radicalisation will remain and the young men of Moss Side will be radicalised to some other cause, most likely the gangs that previously predominated that community. Instead, if we genuinely want to address radicalisation, in all its many manifestations, UK policy must attend to the root causes we so often choose to ignore, rather than simply responding to the convenient label of ideology. In the words of Chief Constable Simon Cole, the police lead for the Prevent strategy¹⁵:

“There comes a point when you have to stop pulling people out of the river and you have to find out who’s pushing them in. You’re not going to arrest your way out of a terrorist crisis, it is not possible to do that. I don’t think there is an example anywhere in the world of it working like that.”

‘The violent gang or the terrorist movement is a symptom of the problem, not the disease. Whilst, over the last years, the trend has been towards putting vast amounts of energy and resource into tackling the presenting issue, often the issues behind the issue, the cause or causes behind the behaviour, have been ignored’. Steve Chalke, 2016

14 <http://www.lbc.co.uk/radio/presenters/maajid-nawaz/maajid-nawaz-on-the-cause-of-radicalisation/>

15 <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2016/may/20/police-study-radicalisation-mental-health-problems>

A New Policy Response to Radicalisation

The similarity in drivers for Islamist and gang-related radicalisation that we have identified above suggest greater commonality in policy response. In addressing those common root causes, we believe that the UK can create far greater long-term resilience to all forms of youth radicalisation. In addition, we believe that a common strategy can itself be a unifying force. By responding fully to the needs of all

our young people – of all faiths, ethnicities and backgrounds – the UK can avoid the issues of perceived discrimination that have plagued our responses to both Islamist and gang-related radicalisation. Indeed, a fair and balanced approach is necessary in overcoming the sense that disproportionate resources are being deployed to one community, one faith or one ethnicity more than any other.

Re-Assessing the Prevent Strategy

As most readers of this paper will be aware, Prevent is part of the UK government's counter-terrorism strategy, CONTEST. Prevent is intended to safeguard vulnerable individuals who are at risk of radicalisation and relies largely on intelligence from communities and their leaders.

Before assessing the success (or otherwise) of the Prevent strategy, it is important for us to

'Despite the need for a multifaceted response, the battle to win hearts and minds has become a problematic conflation and muddle of a counter-subversion strategy, a 'battle of ideas' strategy and a surveillance and intelligence gathering strategy'.

Lauren Powell, 2016

acknowledge that the world, and within it the UK, is in the grip of a critical and intensifying security situation. Terrorist activity has intensified significantly in recent months, with, in the UK alone this year, attacks in Westminster on March 22nd, on the Manchester Arena on May 22nd, London Bridge on June 3rd,

Finsbury Park Mosque on June 19th and Parsons Green tube on September 15th. This

list is likely to be out of date by the time many read this report, given that further, regular attacks now seem almost inevitable.

In that context, we absolutely recognise the need for the UK, and other Western nations, to have a robust anti-terror strategy, capable of ensuring the early detection and prevention of terrorist activity and the identification and de-radicalisation of Islamist extremists. However, it is important to note that the continuation and intensification of Islamist terrorist activity has occurred despite fourteen years of the operation of Prevent. That more young Muslims than ever are falling prey to radical recruiters suggests that a different approach is required, one that responds to the underlying causes of radicalisation.

This report is not intended to provide an in-depth analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of the Prevent strategy but it is clear that political, academic and practitioner opinion of it is deeply divided. Negative perspectives argue that the strategy is unjust, creating a 'serious risk of human rights

‘While the national Prevent programme has achieved some success, there is a feeling that it has become more and more top-down in recent years and has lost community buy-in. If it is to succeed, we need to restore that grassroots involvement.’ Andy Burnham, 2017

violations’ and that its demonisation of Muslim communities and families and individuals is counter-productive, in that it can alienate those who can provide a genuine bulwark to radicalisation (Singh, 2016, pp. 15-18). In 2014, Harun Khan, the deputy head of the Muslim Council of Britain told the BBC that Prevent was alienating young Muslims and pushing them towards radical groups¹⁶. Greater Manchester’s mayor, Andy Burnham, has called the Prevent brand ‘toxic’¹⁷ and has pledged to replace it with an anti-radicalisation strategy that engages far more closely with grassroots communities. David Anderson, the Independent Reviewer of Terrorism Legislation, has called for an independent review of the Prevent strategy, suggesting that the Muslim community sees Prevent as a ‘sort of spying programme’ (Home Affairs Committee, 2016, p. 18).

The opposite view, supported empirically by the Policy Exchange / ICM poll of British Muslims in 2016, is that there is significant support for greater government activity to prevent violent extremism. In the words of the authors of that report:

‘The government should not be “spooked” into either abandoning, or apologising for, the Prevent agenda. Our survey shows that there is support for government initiatives to tackle the problems of radicalisation (as well as the everyday problems that Muslim communities face). Prevent is not perfect and doubtless, there is room for improvement; but those leading the contemporary ‘Preventing Prevent’ campaign seem to favour a situation in which the government abandons efforts at intervention altogether. Our survey suggests there is little appetite for this amongst Britain’s

Muslim communities, who on various issues seem relaxed about government intervention and are actually supportive of traditional ‘law and order’ policies’ (Frampton, et al., 2016, p. 87).

The reality, unfashionable as it may be, is probably somewhere in between. Given the very pressing security situation that the UK faces, our security services need a near-term strategy that will help to identify and respond to those vulnerable to radicalisation. Of that there can be little doubt. But there can equally be little doubt, in the face of widespread criticism from academics, practitioners and many impartial political observers, of the need for a thorough overhaul, and rebranding, of Prevent.

There is, as Baroness Warsi (2017, p. 86) suggests, a need to ensure that counter-terrorism is done with, rather than to, British Muslims, a need to ensure that our anti-radicalisation strategies in the UK make the most of the positive bulwark to extremism represented by mainstream Muslims in our communities. We need to equip and empower mainstream Muslims in our communities to develop a self-confident counter-narrative that articulates both mainstream Islamic theology and the very positive role that young Muslims can play in British society today.

¹⁶ <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-28934992>

¹⁷ <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2016/jun/09/andy-burnham-calls-for-toxic-prevent-strategy-to-be-scrapped>

There is also a need for better evidence-based evaluation of the drivers of radicalisation and of the effectiveness of the Prevent strategy, and to that end we very much support the conclusions of the Home Affairs Committee in recommending a more evidence-based approach to policy (Home Affairs Committee, 2016, p. 9) and Lauren Powell (2016, p. 80) in her recommendation for a better funded Research, Information and Communications Unit within the Office for Security and Counter-terrorism at the Home Office.

Critically, however, and in the light of the overall thrust of this report, we would point to the short-term nature and incompleteness of Prevent as a response to radicalisation. Given the much broader drivers of radicalisation in our communities, our national response must be much more comprehensive. It is to those other areas of activity that we next turn.

Policy Recommendations

- The Prevent strategy, as it is currently formulated, is incomplete and too short-term in its focus and should be replaced with a longer-term, more comprehensive and re-branded strategy through which grassroots communities are empowered to combat radicalisation;
- The new strategy should have a significant focus on equipping and empowering mainstream Muslim voices in our communities to rearticulate both mainstream Islamic theology and the very positive role that young Muslims can play in British society;
- Prevent should be subject to more transparent, evidence-based evaluation, both through better funding for the Research, Information and Communications Unit within the Office for Security and Counter-terrorism at the Home Office and the independent commissioning of research by academics and practitioners.



Developing a Cohesive National Narrative on Radicalisation

As this paper has already rehearsed, UK government policy has, in our view, focused far too narrowly on Islamist forms of radicalisation and not on the broader processes by which our young people become vulnerable to many different forms of radicalisation. In doing so, and in focusing almost single-mindedly on ideology, government has not only failed to respond to the wider causes of radicalisation but has also developed a narrative that helps to sustain the sense of alienation and demonisation among young Muslims.

As Holly Young et al (2016, pp. 10-11) point out, there is a genuine risk of an escalation in racism and discriminatory behaviour in the aftermath of a terrorist act and a responsibility for government to choose the narratives it employs very wisely. Specifically, they (2016, p. 10) suggest moving away from a narrative of multiculturalism, in which ethnic and cultural differences are emphasised, to one of omniculturalism in which similarities are recognised and celebrated. Their views are echoed by Maajid Nawaz, the founder of Quilliam, who has suggested that, 'Multiculturalism failed these [Muslim] communities. It's high time we had a policy that celebrates what we have in common rather than how we're different, and a policy that focuses on integration rather than segregation'¹⁸.

Only by recognising that all young people are vulnerable to radicalisation and adopting a more inclusive, positive and empowering narrative about our youth can we develop ways of speaking about this issue that unify rather than divide.

Policy Recommendations

- Government, and indeed politicians of all political parties, should seek and employ a new narrative on radicalisation; one that avoids demonising Islam and one that more honestly reflects the many consistent factors driving different forms of radicalisation within our society;
- On a more strategic basis, UK political, societal and cultural narratives should increasingly seek to adopt elements of omniculturalism, recognising and celebrating our shared humanity, rather than multiculturalism, in which differences are emphasised. Government should establish a Commission on Omniculturalism to explore how questions of integration and the celebration of our common humanity can be incorporated into all facets of government policy.

¹⁸ <http://www.lbc.co.uk/radio/presenters/maajid-nawaz/maajid-says-multiculturalism-is-dead/>

Empowering Communities

As we highlight earlier in this paper, there is a good deal of evidence that community and a 'well-established religious identity' can act as a bulwark to Islamist radicalisation.

As the Institute for Strategic Dialogue (2010, p. 26) suggest: 'Community engagement is often described as sitting at the 'soft' end of the spectrum in terms of responses to radicalisation and violent extremism, but it is one of the most difficult types of intervention to get right'. The Institute further suggests (2010, pp. 4-5) that civil society, rather than government, is best placed to deliver this work; that charities and community-based organisations are often far better able to engage directly in enabling improved parenting, neighbourhood support and community resilience. Young et al (2016, p. 40) support this view, suggesting that 'grassroots organisations are more credible – and thus more effective – as messengers than government'.

Furthermore, as Frampton et al (2016, p. 59) suggest, Muslim communities are overwhelmingly supportive of a variety of measures to help tackle the causes of violent extremism, including:

- Giving young Muslim people a greater voice in decisions affecting them;
- Giving Muslim women a greater role in decisions affecting them;
- Efforts by the government to tackle anti-Muslim discrimination and prejudice;

- Better leadership within the Muslim community;
- Government funding for special programmes to help Muslim communities combat violent extremism.

The Institute for Strategic Dialogue (2010, p. 26) also identifies some of the critical elements of community-based anti-radicalisation work. They point to the importance of 'strong and trusted interpersonal relationships, a high degree of commitment to partnership working, long-term sustainability, the involvement of credible actors, locally-specific responses sensitive to wider influences, the involvement of well trained and confident professionals to ensure individuals receive the right kinds of support, and an appropriate distinction between counter-polarisation and counter-radicalisation work' (ibid. p. 26).

Effective work with gangs similarly relies on community engagement and empowerment. As The Centre for Social Justice (2009, p. 212) point out, the development of gang culture is directly related to community alienation. They suggest that: 'For any gang prevention strategy to be sustainable it must be embedded in, and owned by, the community and this is likely to require considerable community capacity building'. CSJ (2009, p. 215) further suggests that: 'Politicians need to be seen working side-by-side with the communities they represent and should be making decisions based on the actual needs – rather than what they perceive to be the needs – of the community'.

Anti-radicalisation work must therefore involve empowering and equipping communities to develop their own resilience. And yet, as Baroness Warsi (2017, p. 106) points out, it is this long-term and very strategic development work that can most readily fall victim to cuts in government spending:

'It's work often called Community Cohesion and Integration in government, and in my experience it is badly funded and the first to face the axe in the face of austerity and budget cuts, in my view attracts some of our least-talented civil servants and is generally seen as low priority and not the serious work of government'.

While the recent Casey Review (2016) included some welcome suggestions for deprived communities, its overriding focus on integration rather than community building and resilience necessarily and detrimentally limited its scope. Rather than seeking to address how and why we can ensure that communities of all types, and the individuals who live in them, can flourish, the review focused too narrowly on issues of desegregation. It therefore reflected only a narrow subset of the issues which our communities face, many of which, as we've seen, contribute to youth radicalisation.



If we are to be serious in making our young people more resilient to radicalisation, this must change. We need to deliver a strategic national approach to delivering community cohesion, one which leverages grassroots charities and community organisations, which empowers communities to deliver the required change and which is properly and sustainably funded. The UK lacks a meaningful communities policy and the few organisations that focus on the critical role of delivering improved community cohesion are fragmented and under-funded.

Policy Recommendations

- Government should appoint a Communities Tsar, to oversee the development and delivery of a National Strategy for Community Empowerment and Cohesion and to manage the interaction of central government departments (Home Office, DCLG, DfE, Office for Civil Society), local government and the voluntary sector. This would, we suggest, have a fundamentally different brief to the recently announced Commission for Countering Extremism, which is widely expected to have a predominantly security rather than communities focus and which is therefore likely to respond more to the symptoms than the root causes of radicalisation;
- Through the office of the Communities Tsar, Government should develop, properly fund and deliver a National Strategy for Community Empowerment and Cohesion;
- Government and civil society, working together, should identify, evaluate and disseminate replicable models of community empowerment and cohesion;
- Government should identify and proactively build the capacity of voluntary sector organisations working in the field of community empowerment and cohesion.

'I believe that the primary answer to the problem of radicalisation is, in fact, radicalisation; radicalisation into a positive and compelling narrative that is worth living by. I know that it sounds shocking, but it is only owning a healthy and life-affirming story which creates the resilience that will guard against a warped and destructive one'.

Steve Chalke, 2016, p. 96

Radicalising Young People to a Positive Narrative

As we explore earlier in this paper, there is much to suggest that radicalisation among young people is being driven by a crisis of identity, connection, belonging and purpose. Quite simply, young people in our communities are increasingly vulnerable to radicalisation because they struggle to understand how they relate to ‘mainstream society’. Both Islamist and gang recruiters prey on this sense of disconnection, providing a sense of purpose and belonging with which the mainstream is unable to compete.

Our policy response must quite simply be the radicalisation of our youth to a more positive narrative: one which ‘engages, excites and motivates them...one which celebrates rather than fears youth empowerment’ (O’Connell, 2015).

At one level, this is about providing opportunities for young people ‘to explore the concerns that radicalisers seek to exploit’ and about modelling a genuinely ‘inclusive society that listens and responds to the needs and concerns of all citizens’ (Institute for Strategic Dialogue, 2010, pp. 4-5). Community cohesion initiatives must seek to ‘undermine victimhood narratives, provide alternative narratives and uproot extremist ideologies through open debate and civil society led campaigns’ (Young, et al., 2016, p. 40).

But at a much more fundamental level, the process of creating identity, connection, belonging and purpose is about inspiring young people to a wholly more positive narrative. It is a process through which the potential of every young person is recognised and in which they are given the support they need to attain it. It is a process that Baroness Warsi (2017, p. 106) has described as ‘Promote’, the P that she argues has been missing from policy-making, and that Oasis has branded ‘INSPIRE’¹⁹.

In Baroness Warsi’s terms, ‘Promote is the confident, sure-footed presentation of who we are as a nation, an inclusive shared identity, genuine two-way integration. I call it the sunny uplands of policy-making rather than grey skies that is Prevent: not the old-fashioned madrasa-style beat-them-into-learning that is Prevent but the inspirational environment of a chi-chi prep school. (Warsi, 2017, p. 106).

Alternatively, in the words of Oasis founder Steve Chalke (2016, p. 130): ‘...if we really want to succeed rather than simply attempting to ‘prevent’, we must also learn how to ‘inspire’; inspire young people by giving them a compelling overarching story to live by that adds value to the world by bringing peace, at the same time as it brings them to a deeper and more compelling sense of self-worth, purpose and direction’.

And at perhaps the most basic level, the reality that boredom can be an aggravating factor towards radicalisation suggests the importance of young people having ‘relevant, engaging and meaningful activities available to them’ (Centre for Social Justice, 2009, p. 199).

¹⁹ INSPIRE (www.oasisinspire.org) is a national youth initiative which will launch in 2018 and through which children and young people will learn peace-making and conflict resolution skills through a curriculum being designed by Oasis, the Coventry Cathedral Reconciliation Ministry and the Quakers. It will culminate in national events in cathedrals and other faith centres in November 2018 in which children and young people will commemorate the 100th anniversary of the end of the First World War.

This is supported by Ross Deuchar's work with gangs in Glasgow, which presents 'clear and compelling evidence that many young people resist or move quickly out of gangs as soon as there are attractive alternatives to engage them such as sport and civic participation' (Chalke, 2016, p. 103). Arts and sports programmes are also presented by the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (2012, p. 9) as important contributors to 'inter-cultural dialogue, reconciliation and integration', helping to 'build bridges between divided groups and communities by providing young people with a neutral activity to engage in collectively'. Where these are recognised by community leaders and involve community members, they are typically more likely to engage young people.

Some of this policy direction is in place, through initiatives like the National Citizenship Service and government funding for activities to prevent young people from being radicalised into gangs. But these initiatives have been at best tentative and, as Baroness Warsi colourfully suggests, they often lack the ability to inspire and motivate our young people and are therefore unlikely, ultimately, to succeed. At the very least and as we note later in this paper, Oasis believes, from our substantial experience in community-based education in some of the most vulnerable neighbourhoods, that a renewed focus on character education is required in the UK's schools. This should focus on the formation of core human values such as compassion, gratitude, consideration and humility as much, or perhaps more than the development of aspiration and achievement.

In the face of so entrenched an issue as youth radicalisation, our national response has been uninspiring and poorly resourced and we should not be surprised that it has

been unsuccessful. Young people must, in the words of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (2012, p. 3), be 'radicalized towards peace and democracy' and 'encouraged to embrace and actively promote peace, tolerance and democracy'. In order to achieve that, society must 'offer credible alternatives to violent extremism, including in terms of narratives, role models and opportunities for mobilization, such as democratic participation, civic engagement, access to health and social services and employment opportunities' (ibid, p.4).

Policy Recommendations

- The National Strategy for Community Empowerment and Cohesion (see p.28) should incorporate a range of properly resourced and nationally coordinated but locally relevant youth empowerment and engagement programmes. These should include but not necessarily be limited to sport, arts and music, citizenship and education.
- These programmes should wherever possible engage existing national, regional and local movements and membership organisations, such as the Scouts Association and Girlguiding UK, Army Cadets, Volunteer Police Cadets, St Johns Ambulance, the Boys' and Girls' Brigades, and other similar bodies;
- Where possible, these programmes should be asset-based, drawing on strengths that already exist in each community;
- Investment should be made in a robust programme of evaluation to enable the identification and wide-scale replication of programmes that are shown to have strong outcomes in delivering youth engagement and community cohesion.

Instruments of Re-Connection: Education, Youthwork and Youth Mentoring

Youth engagement initiatives provide a key element of the fight to protect our young people from radicalisation. A further critical set of instruments, however, are the teachers, mentors and youth workers who engage with our children and young people as they develop their attitudes towards the world. As Professor Louise Richardson, the Vice-Chancellor of Oxford University, suggests, education is the most effective ‘antidote’ to violent extremism.²⁰

Formal Education

While it is encouraging that government recognises the important roles that our schools play in combatting radicalisation, it is disappointing that the agenda (focused primarily on Prevent and British Values) remains so limited and negative. Instead, a great deal more can be done to continue the journey towards high quality character education and formation in our schools, particularly programmes which focus on the development of core human values, such as compassion, gratitude, consideration and humility²¹.

Further advances in both knowledge- and competency-based education are also required. Our young people, of all faiths and none, need to be more religiously and historically literate to enable them to distinguish better between destructive and constructive forms of religious faith and to be more understanding and accepting of faiths other than their own.

But perhaps most of all, our schools must focus on ‘building key skills and competencies – such as critical thinking, dialogue and peaceful conflict resolution’ as much as on developing knowledge (Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, 2012, pp. 5-6) (Home Affairs Committee, 2016,

p. 30). Young men should be prompted to ‘challenge patriarchal and macho stereotypes to which they have subscribed under the influence of their peers’ and young women should be encouraged to question prevailing opinions about the traditional position of women in the community that they tend to conform to (ibid, p.3). As Lauren Powell (2016, p. 83) suggests, ‘Prevent should be more about educating and building resilient and articulate individuals with the ability to debate and discuss in a respectful, inquisitive and intelligent manner’.

‘Education is the cornerstone of social mobility. Children and young people spend a significant proportion of their time in school and it is here that, especially for those living in dysfunctional family environments, they should be learning the skills for a successful future. Unfortunately, for too many young people in our most disadvantaged communities this is not the case’.

The Centre for Social Justice, 2009

²⁰ <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/education-32977768>

²¹ The Oasis 9 Habits programme (www.oasisuk.org/9habits) and the Church of England’s emerging character education programme (<https://www.cefel.org.uk/character/>) are two useful examples, as is the Jubilee Centre’s study on the interrelationship of gratitude, generosity, compassion, forgiveness and humility (<http://www.jubileecentre.ac.uk/1584/projects/current-projects/gratitude-and-related-character-virtues>).

History, Religious Education ('RE') and Personal, Social, Health and Economic ('PSHE') education are therefore critical to the process of engaging young peoples' understanding of religious, social and cultural difference. And yet these subjects are widely perceived to be declining, both in terms of the quantity and quality of provision. Ofsted's 2013 review of PSHE, *Not Yet Good Enough* (2013, p. 4) identified that the 'quality of PSHE education is not yet good enough in a sizeable proportion of schools in England' and that standards were declining. This was reiterated by the Commons Education Committee (2015), which recommended that 'Government take steps to incentivise schools to raise the quality of PSHE...in schools'. The Religious Education Council and NATRE's 2017 State of the Nation report suggested that 28% of secondary schools give no dedicated curriculum time to RE (2017, p. 5) and called for Government to improve 'the level of provision and standards of teaching of RE' (2017, p. 7).

In the face of these shortcomings, there is a risk that for too many of our young people, the time and space for critical thinking, reflection, questioning and the development of deep understanding is lacking at a time when they are most in need of something to argue against, to find tension with and discover meaning. Without safe and constructive places for those processes to happen, young people will always find somewhere else to explore their sense of belonging and to have their questions of identity answered. Those spaces can often be unsafe and the identities they can foster can be deeply at odds with what we would hope for, for our young people.

There is also a danger that our focus on preventing radicalisation at secondary level misses the reality that too many children are vulnerable to radicalisation, or indeed have already been radicalised, before they enter year 7. Oasis' experience of delivering schools and youth and children's work in some of the country's most vulnerable neighbourhoods is that many children are part of active gang culture at the age of 11. To be effective in increasing resilience, the anti-radicalisation work outlined in this section must start at primary school age.

Finally, and perhaps most fundamentally, if many of our young people are vulnerable to radicalisation because, based on the family or community they have been born to, they see little hope for the future, our schools must be engines of hope and opportunity for all. We must continue the revolution in our schools, and the closure of the attainment gap between wealthy and poor communities and families. If the Education Policy Institute's judgement is correct (Andrews, et al., 2017, p. 6), that at the current rate of progress the attainment gap between disadvantaged pupils and their more affluent peers will take 50 years to close, young people in our society will be vulnerable to radicalisation for many decades to come.

Youth Work and Youth Mentoring

Although formal education is a critical element in improving young peoples' resilience to radicalisation, informal education, and particularly youth work, can perform a critical complementary role. Not all teachers will have the confidence and specialised skills to respond to more entrenched forms of radicalisation (Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, 2012, p. 3) and schools will often lack the freedom of engagement that youth workers typically possess.

In 2009, the Centre for Social Justice (2009, pp. 199-201) clearly articulated the importance of targeted youth work in combatting gang culture. It called for proper funding for detached youth work, ideally delivered by grassroots youth charities, given that disenfranchised young people are unlikely to access statutory support services. Rather than 'attempting to take a successful voluntary sector model and deliver it themselves', CSJ argued, 'local authorities should help to ensure that the essence of what made that project successful – such as an inspirational leader, exceptional staff, innovative approach, community-based nature – is maintained'.

Practitioners also point to the benefit of youth mentoring, particularly by those who have been de-radicalised. The Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (2012,

p. 10) reports that de-radicalised Islamist extremists 'can share their personal stories with young people and challenge violent ideology with more credibility' and can also 'make the most of their knowledge to help design new activities'. The Centre for Social Justice (2009, p. 195) points to a similar phenomenon in gang work, where mentoring has a 'dramatic and transformative effect on young people's lives'.

However, since that report was written, funding for all types of youth work has been cut substantially. Between 2012 and 2016, local authority funding of youth services was cut by £387m, with 3,652 fewer youth workers, 603 youth centres closed and 138,898 places lost (UNISON, 2016). In Unison's 2016 survey of youth workers, 80% said they thought young people feel less empowered, 77% reported increased mental health issues among young people and 91% said that the cuts were having a particular impact on young people from poorer backgrounds. Comments made by other survey respondents 'paint a picture of increasing isolation and lack of support for young people, who they feel are being increasingly ignored by society'.

If radicalisation is driven, at least in part, by disconnection from what might be loosely termed the mainstream and a crisis in identity and belonging, reductions in the funding and provision of the targeted youth work that can bind young people back into society appears deeply misguided. Unison's 2016 survey suggests worsening outcomes for all sorts of vulnerable young people, particularly ethnic minorities, young LGBT people, young disabled people and young women. But perhaps the greatest cause for alarm should be the fact that we have significantly reduced our ability to connect with disenfranchised young men, who represent the most vulnerable group to radicalisation.

Policy Recommendations

Education

- The Department for Education ('DfE') should renew its focus on character formation across our schools, focusing on core human values, such as compassion, gratitude, consideration and humility as much, or perhaps more than, aspiration and achievement;
- DfE should improve funding for the development and evaluation of character education programmes, particularly focused on the inter-relationship between the development of core human values and the subsequent human development (and flourishing) of the individual;
- DfE should renew its focus on, and improve standards in, the teaching of History, Religious Education and PSHE;
- DfE should commit greater curriculum focus to the teaching of skills and competencies (critical thinking, dialogue, conflict resolution etc.) that equip young people to challenge and critique radicalisation and extreme ideologies;
- Central government, local authorities and civil society, working together, should develop early intervention anti-radicalisation strategies designed specifically for primary age children;
- Government, schools providers and civil society should commit to, and properly fund, a relentless focus on driving up educational standards and attainment in our poorest communities.

Youth Work and Youth Mentoring

- Central government and local authorities, working together, should commit to properly funded youth work and youth mentoring, particularly in the areas of greatest disadvantage and lowest levels of community cohesion;
- Central government, local authorities and civil society, working together, should commit resources to improved recruitment and training for youth workers, to reflect the importance of the role in supporting the development of young people, particularly those in deprived communities.

Tackling disadvantage

Finally, but perhaps most fundamentally, ‘civil society can help to prevent radicalisation by tackling the underlying economic, social and political drivers of radicalisation’ (Institute for Strategic Dialogue, 2010, p. 4). As we noted earlier in this report, there is a link between poverty and deprivation and both Islamist and gang-related radicalisation. Addressing inequalities is therefore important in ‘deflating the effectiveness of the extremist narrative, and reducing the pool of frustrated youths who may be vulnerable to an extremist or violent ideology’ (Bartlett, et al., 2010, p. 62).

Questions of social inequality are obviously deeply politically charged and arguably beyond the scope of a paper focused on improving the nation’s response to radicalisation. However, we believe that it is time for the UK to grasp the nettle and move towards a more equal society, in which every individual has the opportunity to thrive and to reach their full potential.

The evidence suggests that this would be an investment well worth making, on financial as well as on moral and security grounds. In their latest five-year strategy, the Sutton Trust reflected that social mobility is lower in Britain (and the United States) than in other developed nations and that UK annual GDP could be boosted by 2.1% by raising social mobility to the western European average. A 2009 Audit Commission report (2009, p. 3) on the benefits of sports and leisure activities in preventing anti-social behaviour among young people estimated that a young person in the criminal justice system costs the taxpayer over £200,000 by the time they are 16, compared to £50,000 for one who is given support to stay out of trouble.

And at a more holistic level, the work of Kate Pickett and Richard Wilkinson (Pickett & Wilkinson, 2009) suggests that greater levels of income inequality correspond to worse outcomes for trust, mental illness (including

drug and alcohol addiction), life expectancy and infant mortality, obesity, children’s educational performance, teenage births, homicide, imprisonment rates and social mobility. Given the evidence we have collated here, we might quite reasonably add youth radicalisation to that list.

It seems appropriate to suggest that delivering a more equal society would yield better results in the long-term, financially as well as in moral and security terms. We recognise the significant investment that must be made if we are to respond wholeheartedly, and successfully, to the issue of youth radicalisation but we consider that it would be precisely that – an investment that would pay substantial dividends for generations to come.

Policy Recommendations

- Government should recognise the immense short-term cost, in both human and financial terms, of our failure to resolve the issues of youth radicalisation. Government should commit appropriate investment to resolving the long-term issues of identity, connection, belonging and purpose, of deprivation and economic marginalisation, of the challenges of segregation and disconnection, of mental health and family breakdown that plague our communities. We believe that that investment is credible in simple financial terms, as well as in human and moral terms.

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