Faith and state. British policy responses to 'Islamist' extremism[1]

Fe y Estado. La política británica responde al extremismo 'Islamista'

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Abstract

Islamist extremism has been the focus of intensive global scrutiny since September 2001. Many states have responded to the challenge of Islamic terrorism with a common anti terrorist strategy. Those policies include generic anti violence policies that consciously avoided to mention Islam; repressive policies that explicitly target Muslims extremists and policies that seek to integrate Muslims by soft or compelling methods. The article explores these policies in Britain.

Key-words: Islam; terrorism; extremism; integration; Britain.

Resumen

El extremismo islámico ha sido objeto de intenso escrutinio global desde septiembre de 2001. Muchos Estados han respondido al desafío del terrorismo islámico con una estrategia antiterrorista común. Tal estrategia incluye políticas genéricas anti violencia que conscientemente evitaron mención alguna del Islam; políticas represivas dirigidas explícitamente contra extremistas musulmanes y políticas que persiguen la integración de los musulmanes tanto mediante métodos blandos como mediante métodos persuasivos. El artículo explora estas políticas en el Reino Unido.

Palabras-clave: Islam; terrorismo; extremismo; integración; Gran Bretaña.

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Introduction

Islamist extremism has been the focus of intense global scrutiny since September 11, 2001 (9/11)[2]. As liberal democracies became the targets of attacks, they have had to respond with policies that have amplified or even dramatically changed their approach to fighting terrorism. In the early days after 9/11, many government leaders continued to view lslamist extremism as originating abroad. However, this evolved quickly in the wake of events such as the 11 March 2004 train bombings in Madrid, the assassination of Dutch filmmaker Theo van Gogh in November 2004 and the London transportation bombings of July 2005, each of which showed the vulnerability of European societies to internal attack.

Many European states have responded to these challenges with a common policymaking pattern. They have adopted an overlapping three-pronged strategy for tackling violence associated with Islam that includes: (I) generic anti-violence policies that consciously avoid mention of Islam; (2) repressive policies that explicitly target Muslim extremists; and (3) policies that seek to integrate Muslims into national societies, either by softly enabling or by firmly compelling such integration[3].

This chapter explores the British state response to Islamist extremism, using the overlapping three-pronged pattern as a lens through which to view its key strategic elements. This lens illustrates Britain's at-times ambiguous recognition of Islamism as a core element of new terrorist challenges; it highlights the state's focus on repressing Muslim extremists; and it discusses the ambition to integrate Muslims more successfully into British society. The ultimate goal, however, is to portray an accurate picture of British approaches to Islamist extremism that have been implemented since 2001. To do this, the following section briefly examines the history of Muslim immigration to Britain, highlighting factors that have spurred the state to ramp up its policymaking efforts since the 1980's. The subsequent section introduces the comparative European context before turning squarely to the British case. It analyses Britain's CONTEST strategy as a multiplicity of policies that reflect the overlapping three-pronged strategy.

From immigrants to Muslims to extremists

There are between 1.6 and 2 million Muslims living in Great Britain today[4]. According to the most recent census figures, just over half of the Muslims

[2] The author would like to thank Roger Eatwell, Matthew Goodwin and Shamit Saggar for their helpful input in the planning and execution of this essay, as well as Francesca Lambert for exceptional research assistance.

[3] For an expanded discussion see also Bleich (2009).

[4] The 2001 Census records 1.6 million Muslims, but a 2008 statement by the Home Secretary places the number closer to 2 million (*Guardian*, 8 April 2008).

residing in Britain in 2001 were immigrants, with the majority of those born in South Asia[5]. Significant 'Muslim' immigration began in the 1950s, but for most of the post-Second World War era these immigrants were not primarily defined by their religion. Until recently, it was far more common to identify them by their official status (immigrants, asylum-seekers/refugees or foreigners), or by their race, ethnicity or nationality (Black, Asian, Pakistani, etc.). This was partly a result of state rules and societal perceptions, and partly a result of the way the migrants organized themselves. Over the past 20 years, however, Islam has become an identity consciously deployed by many Muslims in Britain, and it is one that the state and society increasingly use to identify segments of the population. As religious identities have become part of the public conversation, so too have contentious issues surrounding religion. The 1989 Rushdie Affair marked a definitive turning point in the passage from 'immigrants' to 'Muslims', revealing the capacity of significant numbers of British Muslims to mobilize around their religious identity and of the British media, politicians and public to respond on similar terms. Since that time, tensions have cropped up in other areas too, generating debates about funding for religious schools, religious education within state schools, mosque construction, headscarves, ritual slaughter, Islamic rules for burying the dead, sharia courts and national blasphemy laws.

These discussions, and in particular the inflammatory book-burning tactics of the Rushdie protesters, have drawn attention to the potential for extremism among British Muslims. Yet, although Britain has been vocally criticized for harbouring known radicals – creating what has derogatorily been called Londonistan (Kepel 2004: 242-6) – there were no major acts of Islamist extremism in Britain between 1989 and 2001. Following 9/11, British policymakers began to pay attention to the possibility that Muslim citizens might perpetrate acts of terrorism on British soil. The December 2001 attempt by Richard Reid (the 'shoe bomber') to blow up a transatlantic flight highlighted the fact that Islamist terrorism was not confined to people of Middle Eastern or North African origin, and could be carried out just as easily by European citizens.

The November 2003 attacks on British targets in Istanbul and the March 2004 discovery of stocks of ammonium nitrate fertilizer in suburban London – linked to British citizens of Pakistani origin – led to further anxiety about Islamist extremism directed against Britain (Kepel 2004: 245). As a reflection of the winding down of permissive Londonistan policies, in late 2004 British authorities charged Muslim cleric Abu Hamza al-Masri with 'encouraging followers to murder Jews and other non-Muslims' and also charged Abu Qatada, who reportedly was the 'spiritual counsellor' of Mohamed Atta, the principal architect of the 9/11 attacks[6]. The 7 July 2005 (7/7) London transportation

[5] Available online: http://www.statistics.gov.uklcciJnugget.asp?id=958 (accessed 4 November 2008).

[6] *New York Times*, 20 October 2004. Abu Hamza Al-Masri was the imam of the Finsbury Park Mosque, which both Richard Rcid and Zacarias Moussaoui reportedly attended before their arrests.

bombings and the subsequent incidents of late July 2005 (in London) and of June 2007 (in Glasgow) can thus be seen as the culmination of the increasing concern about domestic lslamist extremism that has taken place since 9/11.

There has 'undeniably been a transition in Britain since the 1950's from a broad unease about immigration, to increased attention to Muslims as a specific group, to focused apprehension about Muslim extremists. But to their credit, few British policymakers have made the mistake of simply conflating Muslims with extremists. In fact, in the aftermath of recent attacks, most leaders have gone out of their way to condenm the perpetrators as fringe elements within the broader British Muslim community. In recent years, however, there has been a transition from focusing on the very few individuals willing to carry out attacks toward a broader group – perhaps as much as 10 percent of the British Muslim population – that comprise what Shamit Saggar (2009) has termed the 'circle of tacit support' that helps to enable the perpetrators to carry out their acts.

Survey evidence lends support to the notion of widespread Muslim integration contrasted with pockets of significant difference. Two Ipsos MORI polls conducted in the aftermath ofthe 7/7 attacks. For example, show that feeling strongly Muslim is not incompatible with a strong sense of belonging to Britain[7]. Moreover, the vast majority of Muslims surveyed in 2005 and 2007 agreed that immigrants should learn English, pledge their primary loyalty to Britain, integrate fully into British society and respect the rule of law[8]. Conversely, polls also demonstrate the potential for disgruntlement, cultural disconnects and even extremism. According to the 2005 National Survey on Equality, Diversity and Prejudice in Britain, 46 per cent of Muslims polled reported having suffered from prejudice or discrimination based on their religion (Abrams and Houston 2006: 43); 2005 and 2006 surveys found that 54 per cent of Muslims approved of arranged marriages and 40 per cent of Muslims backed introducing sharia in parts of Britain[9]; and in 2006, one-fifth of British Muslims canvassed expressed sympathy with the 'feelings and motives' of the 7/7 suicide bombers[10]. These surveys therefore reinforce the point that while almost all British Muslims reject extremism, there remain grounds for concern both about the very few willing to carry out attacks, and about those in the circle of tacit support.

[7] See Ipsos MORI 'Attitudes of British Muslims' and 'Muslims "Take Pride" in British Way of Life.'
[8] Ipsos MORI 'Muslims "Take Pride" in British Way of Life' and 'Muslim Attitudes - The Real Story'.
[9] Ipsos MORI . Attitudes of British Muslims' and *Telegraph*, 20 February 2006.
[10] *Telegraph*, 20 February 2006.

European and British state responses to Islamist extremism

Many West European countries have developed an overlapping three-pronged strategy for responding to the threat of lslamist extremism (Bleich 2009). The three elements of the strategy are:

1 generic counterterrorism policies that avoid references to Islam;
2 policies designed to repress lslamist extremism; and
3 policies to enable and to compel integration of Muslims into national life.

Britain, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands and Spain have each deployed this strategy in slightly different ways since 9/11 and subsequent events, but almost all of these countries have revamped their anti-terrorism provisions in a manner that downplays the centrality of Muslim extremism as a core concern. Although many recent laws were crafted with Islamist terrorism in mind, most states have opted to minimize the specific connection to Islam by referring to 'international' terrorism and by including at least some non-Muslim groups on their watch-lists or in their public pronouncements. These policy stances self-consciously seek to neutralize tensions associated with religion.

At the same time, European states have not entirely shifted the focus away from Islam. In particular, many countries have stepped up monitoring of suspected radical Muslims. There have been official government investigations into the practice of Islam, increased training and hiring of national security agents with relevant expertise, tape recording of religious services and scrutiny of particular mosques and public statements about tabs kept on potential suspects. There have also been proposals to track more closely foreign imams and foreign funding of domestic mosques and even a governmental proposal to require regular reporting to the police by anyone suspected of radical leanings. Increased monitoring has resulted in raids, round ups, arrests and trials of hundreds of suspected Islamist terrorists. France, Gennany, Italy, the Netherlands and Spain have each engaged in active repression of potential perpetrators of religiously motivated violence. In addition, many of these countries have translated the monitoring of mosques into expulsions of so-called 'rogue imams'. France has been among the most active states in this respect, with dozens of religious leaders deported since 2001, but Germany and the Netherlands have also shifted their laws and policies to facilitate expulsions[11].

Integration of Muslims has been equally high on European agendas. Religious consultation and representation have become a popular way to reach out to Muslim communities, as evidenced both by post-crisis meetings with Muslim leaders and by state encouragement of more formalized bodies, such as

[11] For an extended discussion of developments across Western Europe, see Bleich (2009).

France's Council of the Muslim Faith (CFCM), Spain's Islamic Commission or Italy's Consultative Council for Islam, each set up since 2003 (Laurence 2005, 2006)[12]. In recent years, European governments have also proven more willing than ever to fund initiatives specifically for the Muslim community. Whether financing privately organized Dutch language and culture training programmes for imams and Muslim chaplains, setting up university degree programmes in 'contemporary French civilization' for future imams, or enabling foundations in Spain and France that aid Muslim communities, these initiatives have taken new forms and deeper roots over the past few years[13].

European states have balanced policies that *enable* integration of religious minorities with policies that *compel* integration by obliging a degree of cultural conformity. The most notable policy in recent years is undoubtedly the 2004 French law banning religious symbols worn by students in public schools. Although cast in religiously neutral terms that apply to visible symbols of all faiths, the law's purpose was clearly to ban Muslim headscarves. Paralleling the French policy but on a smaller scale, five of the 16 Gennan federal states have outlawed headscarves for public school teachers, and in the wake of the July 2005 London bombings, the Italian government instituted heavy fines and imprisonment for wearing a burqa in public (Laurence 2006), and both Dutch and French political leaders have voiced support for banning the burqa outside of the home[14].

Britain's specific approach to countering Islamist extremism fits Europe's general three-pronged pattern quite closely. By early 2003, the government had launched its CONTEST counterterrorism strategy, which encompassed four core strands: PREVENT, PURSUE, PROTECT and PREPARE. In brief, the PREVENT strand reflects the third prong of integrating Muslims into British society through a focus on addressing disadvantages, challenging extremist ideologies and undennining the grounds that give rise to terrorist impulses. The PURSUE angle echoes the second prong of repressing violence by focusing on disrupting Muslim terrorists via intelligence gathering, police work and prosecutions. The PROTECT and PREPARE elements are closest to the first prong of the common state response in that they are generic policies – i.e. not specific to Muslim terrorism – aimed at reducing the vulnerability of targets and enabling a rapid and effective response to an attack[15].

[12] US Departament of State. Available online: http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2004/35485.htm (accessed 19 December 2008).

[13] *New York Times*, 18 October 2004; *Le Figaro*, 10 March 2005; *New York Times*, 24 October 2004.

[14] BBC News, 16 January 2006; Aljazeera, 9 March 2006; BBC News, 17 November 2006; BBC News. 22 June 2009. Local authorities in Belgium and Italy had also previously enacted or enforced bans on burqas, justifying the move by arguing that appearing masked in public presents a threat to security (lHF 2005: 46, 100-1).

[15] For the most recent assessment of the CONTEST strategy, see HM Government (2009).

Generic policies: how much focus on Islam?

Looking more closely at the fit between the strands of the British approach and each prong of the general model reveals the challenges of responding to Islamist extremism. In particular, British policymaking has been quite contradictory and conflicted in the extent to which it acknowledges the Muslim element of extremism and terrorism confronting the state. For example, while the PROTECT and PREPARE policies are the most generic elements of its overall strategy, they form part of the overall CONTEST approach. As such, they are packaged as part of a strategy that describes the 'principal current terrorist threat' to Britain as emanating from 'radicalized individuals who are using a distorted and unrepresentative version of the Islamic faith to justify violence', and which argues that 'the current threat from Islamist terrorism is serious and sustained' (HM Government 2006: 1).

Yet, as this language implies, British governmental officials have carefully chosen their words when discussing the 'Islamist' dimension of the problem. The very same summary of the CONTEST strategy takes pains to emphasize that such perpetrators are 'a tiny minority within the Muslim communities here and abroad' and that 'Muslim communities themselves do not threaten our security; indeed they make a great contribution to our country' (HM Government 2006: I). This explains the choice of' Islamist' rather than' Islamic' to describe such terrorists and the overwhelming use of the euphemism 'international terrorism' to summarize the threat in a way that avoids repetition of the words Islam or Muslim. It also accounts for the complete neutrality of language in the PROTECT and PREPARE dements of the CONTEST strategy. British policy makers very quickly developed an instinct to avoid linkages between terrorism and Islam wherever possible. This is reflected in discussions of protecting public places and preparing for the consequences of attacks, which are framed in the neutral language of dealing with a generic attack. It is also reflected in the Brown administration's transition away from discussing the 'war on terror', which many Muslims had come to see as code for targeting Islam. In the immediate aftermath of the June 2007 attack on Glasgow airport, the new prime minister avoided this catchphrase, as well as any mention of the word 'Muslim' a studied neutrality that both he and his home secretary repeated when introducing the latest version of the CONTEST strategy in March 2009[16].

In large part, downplaying the 'Muslim' angle of 'Islamist terrorism' is an element of a conscious strategy of responding to such extremism. However, in some measure, it also reflects the reality that focusing on Muslims is likely to be counterproductive in more ways than one. Apart from demonizing and alienating

[16] *Washington Post,* 4 July 2007; *New York Times*, 4 July 2007; *New York Times*, 22 July 2007; HM Govemment (2009: 4-5).

a faith group within the country and all of the disadvantages that accrue to divided states, a recent report by the British security service MIS concluded that it is not possible to develop a profile of the typical British terrorist. It found that most are 'demographically unremarkable' and that assumptions cannot be made based on skin colour, ethnic heritage or nationality[17]. At the same time, however, and reflecting the difficulty of calibrating a response to Islamist extremism, the report stressed that the most pressing threat to Britain today is from Islamist extremist groups, while also acknowledging that there are violent extremists in non-Islamic movements.

Repressing Islamist extremism

Britain's contemporary legal arsenal for repressing terrorism was initially formulated ill the 1970's following the onset of attacks by the Irish Republicanism movemen ts. By the late 1990s, government leaders felt the need to systematize the country's aggregation of piecemeal legislative tools. The Terrorism Act 2000 was designed to alleviate some criticisms of the longstanding Prevention of Terrorism Act[18], but it contained surprisingly little mention of Islamist terrorism. In a sign of the times. a March 2000 BBC story about the pending legislation described it as covering 'acts by animal activists, direct action by environnlental protesters, computer hackers, acts motivated by religious beliefs and action against property such as that in last year's riots and anti-capitalist protests in London'[19]. The fact that Islamist extremism was not a primary factor motivating the 2000 law stands in sharp contrast to legislation passed since that time. Britain has enacted four major laws since 9/11. The Anti-Terrorism, Crime and Security Act 2001, the Prevention of Terrorism Act 2005 (enacted prior to the 7/7 bombings). the Terrorism Act 2006 and the Counter-Terrorism Act 2008 have each refined and extended British powers to repress terrorism in ways that enable the PURSUE strand of the country's overall counterterrorism strategy. Although such legislation seldom explicitly mentions religion or Islam, each has been a direct response to the perceived threat of Islamist terrorism and has been used primarily to target Muslim extremists.

Taken together Britain's anti-terrorism provisions have endowed the country with potent tools for countering extremist acts. They increase police powers for investigation and detention of suspected terrorists; they make it illegal to incite terrorism or to provide training for terrorist purposes; they outlaw statements that involve the 'glorification' of terrorism; they allow the government to freeze and to seize financial assets associated with terrorism or with terrorists; they proscribe organizations deemed by the government to be involved in terrorism, making it an offence to belong to, support or display support for that organization; they enable

[17] According to a classified internal research document on radicalization reported in *Guardian*, 21 August 2008.
[18] The Prevention of Terrorism Act was passed in 1974 and was renewable annually.
[19] BBC News, 15 March 2000.

the government to enforce 'control orders' on suspected terrorists who cannot be convicted or deported, limiting their freedom of movement and association; and they facilitate deprivation of British citizenship and even deportation for those connected to terrorism[20].

While most of these repressive measures have their roots in legislation, there are also policy programmes that have been deployed as part of the PURSUE strategy. Most importantly, Britain has re-organized its intelligence services to streamline the gathering and analysis of information about terrorist threats. Its Joint Terrorism Analysis Centre (JTAC) was created in 2003 to coordinate the efforts of the intelligence community. It involves members of the Security Service (MIS), the Secret Intelligence Service (SIS), the Goverrunent Communications Headquarters (GCHQ), the Defence Intelligence Staff, and representatives from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, the Home Office and the police services. This group is responsible for assembling and analysing information about potential terrorist threats and for setting the official threat level within Britain[21]. Its explicit focus is on 'international terrorism' , which is summarized as 'Al Qaida and related terrorist groups'[22]. As such, it has become a prominent organization in the fight against Islamist extremism[23]. National and local police forces have also been reorganized or reconstituted to improve their ability to address terrorist threats (HM Government 2009: 63-4).

These tools have been applied in practice with significant effect. While data on sensitive or undercover investigations are closely guarded by authorities, official government reports claim numerous disruptions of potential attacks within Britain since 2000 (HM Government 2006:17, 2009: 62). In 2007/8, the Metropolitan Police Service (Met) reported 3,458 information referrals related to terrorism, all of which were given an initial assessment within the five days called for by intelligence protocols; the Met also reported 13 terrorist network disruptions in that same time period[24]. Between January and May 2008, the Met arrested 46 people based on terrorist investigations. 10 of whom were charged[25]. Nationwide, over 40 people were convicted on terrorism charges in 2007/8, receiving a combined total of 600 years in prison sentences. In one high-profile case, the surviving perpetrator of the Glasgow airport attack was handed

[20] The Immigration. Asylum and Nationality Act 2006 facilitates deprivation of citizenship, the right to abode and refugee status.

[21] For the govemment's summary of JT AC. see www.Intelligence.gov.uk/agencies/jtac.aspx (accessed 29 October 2008).

[22] See www.mi5.gov.uk/output/international-terrorism.html (accessed 21 October 2009).

[23] Britain's strategy also has an international dimension. In the fiscal year 2005/6, the UK spent over £7 million helping other nations with their connter-terrorism programmes; for example, it provided training and liaised with authorities in places such as Pakistan, Malaysia and North Africa (HM Government 2006: 22).

[24] See Metropolitan Police Authority, Report 7b of the 24 July 2008 meeting, at http/www.mpa.gov.uk/committees/mpa/2008/080724/07b.htm (accessed 30 October 2008).

[25] Ibid.

down two life sentences in December 2008 for his acts[26]. Also, as of June 2008, 15 control orders were in place, six of which had been served since March 2008 and three of whieh applied to British citizens[27]. These data demonstrate that the British state is making significant use of its increased powers of repression.

It has also applied its powers to ban Islamist militant groups, enforcing them against Al Ghurabaa and the Saved Sect on the grounds that they glorified terrorism. These groups were the successors to the controversial Al Muhajiroun organization, led by Omar Bakri Mohammad, who has been barred from re-entering Britain, and were seen as mobilizing forces behind the inflammatory protests of the Danish cartoons in February 2006. As of July 2006, it became an offence to belong to, encourage support for, or display clothing or articles that symbolize these groups. In explaining the decision, Home Secretary John Reid said 'I am determined to act against those who, while not directly involved in committing acts of terrorism, provide support for and make statements that glorify, celebrate and exalt the atrocities of terrorist groups'[28].

While it is not always clear how many terrorism-related arrests, prosecutions, convictions, deportations, bans and control orders specifically target Muslims, virtually all of the individual cases that have come to light involve Islamists[29]. A 2006 government report lists five successful prosecutions, including those of Mohammed Ajmal Khan, Abu Hamza, Andrew Rowe (a British Muslim convert), Saajid Badat and Kamel Bourgass, who received combined sentences of 61 years for offences such as conspiracy to provide money for a terrorist attack, solicitation to murder, possession of an article for a terrorist purpose, conspiring to destroy all aircraft and plotting to manufacture homemade poisons and explosives (HM Government 2006: 18). In two other prominent cases, six Muslim men were convicted in April 2008 of incitement to terrorism or of inviting others to provide money to support terrorism[30], and the four Muslim suspects in the 21 July 2005 attempted bombing were sentenced in June 2008 to a combined total of 44 years in prison[31]. The British state has thus shown itself to be aggressive in surveillance, arrests, convictions and control of suspected Islamist extremists in a way that has undoubtedly saved lives and provided a significant deterrent to acts of violence.

[26] BBC News, 17 December 2008.

[27] See Control Orders Update, Statement by Tony McNulty to Parliament, 12 June 2008, at http:// security .homeoffice.gov. uk /news-publications/news-speeches/control-orders-update-0608 (accessed 30 October 2008).

[28] *The Times*, 18 July 2006.

[29] As of December 2008, there were 45 groups proscribed in the UK under the Terrorism Act 2000, the vast majority of which are Islamist groups. There are also 14 Irish groups proscribed under earlier legislation. See http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/security/terrorism-and-the-law/terrorism-act/proscribed-groups (accessed 18 December 2008).

[30] http://cms.met.police.uk/news/convictions/six_men_convicted_of_terrorism_offences (accessed 30 October 2008).

[31] See Metropolitan Police Authority, Report 7b of the 24 July 2008 meeting, at http://www.mpa.gov.uk/ conmittees/mpa/200S/080724/07b.htm (accessed 30 October 2008).

Yet the PURSUE element of the CONTEST strategy has had notable and sometimes tragic setbacks. The day after the 21 July 2005 attempted attacks on the London transportation system, the police shot and killed Brazilian electrician Jean Charles de Menezes, mistaking him for a dangerous suspect. In June 2006, claiming specific intelligence gleaned from months of surveillance, police raided a home in the Forest Gate section of London[32]. They shot 23 year old Mohammed Abdulkahar in the process of arresting him. He and his brother were released a week later without charges and with the apologies of the police[33]. The final bill for the failed operation was over £2.2 million[34].

There have also been significant failures in applying the terrorism laws. In spite of the government's insistence – over heated objections – that 2006 provisions banning the glorification of terrorism were necessary, they have seldom been applied. Although they were part of the justification for banning Al Ghurabaa and the Saved Sect, they have not proven enforceable against other controversial groups that Prime Minister Blair explicitly vowed to disband – such as Hizb-ut -Tahrir[35] – nor against the sole individual against which they have been tested[36]. Moreover, in a September 2008 decision which *The Times* described as severe blow to Britain's anti-terrorist campaign', a jury failed to convict eight detendants of an August 2006 plot to blow up transatlantic fights[37] The Crown Prosecution Service immediately vowed to retry seven of the eight defendants - the eighth having been found not guilty - as part of an effort to salvage the 10 million pounds, two-year-long case and in September 2009 it obtained three convictions of the men involved[38].

In sum, British authorities have endowed themselves with potent resources for pursuing Islamist extremists, and have shown a readiness to use these tools. There have been stepped up surveillance, arrests, prosecutions, convictions, deportations and other forms of repression of extremists in recent years. While authorities have at times encountered major problems in enforcing their PURSUE strategy, there can be no doubt that increasing repression has been a major axis of activity since the events of 9/11 and especially since the attacks of 7/7. In spite of some high profile failures, this effort to repress has to be seen at least as a qualified success in that it has undoubtedly thwarted a number of attacks, and inasmuch as it reassures the public that the government is active and capable of protecting its citizens from great harm.

[32] BBC News, 2 June 2006.
[33] BBC News, 10 June 2006; BBC News, 14 June 2006.
[34] BBC News, 3 October 2006.
[35] *Observer,* 24 December 2006.
[36] This is the case of Abu Izzadeen, aka Omar or Trevor Brooks. See *The Times*, 9 February 2007
[37] *The Times,* 9 September 2008.
[38] *The Times,* 9 September 2008; BBC News, 7 September 2009.

Integrating Muslims into British society

British leaders have been at the forefront of developing policies designed to facilitate Muslim integration. From the outset of the CONTEST strategy, the PREVENT element has focused centrally on five key strands that aim to stop people from 'becoming or supporting terrorists or violent extremists' (HM Government 2008: 6):

> 1 challenging violent extremist ideology and supporting mainstream voices;
> 2 disrupting those who promote violent extremism;
> 3 supporting individuals who are being recruited to terrorism;
> 4 increasing communities' ability to respond to challenges of violent extremism; and
> 5 addressing grievances exploited by extremist ideologues.

From the govemment's point of view, the goal is 'winning hearts and minds' of people who might be attracted to terrorism or extremism. To do this, officials try to distinguish between those who are committing terrorist acts, those sympathizers who are in the circle of tacit support, and those who reject extremism and fully embrace life in Britain. It aims to isolate the active extremists, sway the fence-sitters and support mainstream Muslims. The govemment's rhetoric serves to reinforce these points:

> This is not about a clash of civilizations or a struggle between Islam and the West. It is about standing up to a small fringe of terrorists and their extremist supporters. Indeed, Govemment is committed to working in partnership with the vast majority of Muslims who reject violence and who share core British values in doing this.
>
> (Communities and Local Government 2007: 4)[39].

This strategy of integration has two main axes. It seeks to discipline Muslims that are susceptible to terrorist activities as well as to encourage all Muslims to take part in British society. It is a dual strategy of repression and accommodation that in itself entails a stick and a carrot, thereby supplementing the pure stick of repression embodied in the PURSUE strand of the CONTEST strategy.

A major part of the effort to delegitimize extremists involves fostering acceptable Islamic discourse within the country. One of the government's leading initiatives in this respect is its funding of *The Radical Middle Way*, which bills itself as 'a revolutionary grassroots initiative' whose goal is to bring young British

[39] For more information on the strategy, and on the Preventing Violent Extremism Pathfinder Fund launched in October 2006, see Lowndes and Thorpe.

Muslims into contact with Islamic scholars from around the world[40]. Since being founded in 2005, it has served as an independent, government-funded bridge between British Muslims and authoritative, antiextremist Islamic scholarship. With government support, *The Radical Middle Way* has organized a number of 'roadshows' in which respected Islamic leaders from the Middle East and other regions travel around Britain speaking to public forums.

Additionally, the government has stepped up efforts to introduce citizenship instruction in local mosque schools (*madrassahs*). Approximately 100,000 children between the ages of five and 14 attend *madrassahs* in Britain, typically for two hours after school each day (Communities and Local Government 2007: 5). The Department of Communities and Local Government and the Department for Children, Schools and Families are coordinating with Muslim communities to develop an understanding of best practices and best curricula and to push for wider adoption of citizenship programmes in *madrassahs* across the country (Communities and Local Government 2007: 5--6; HM Government 2008: 22)[41]. In undertaking these steps, the government is also attempting to provide a more prominent platform for mainstream views in order to marginalize extremist ones.

The strategy is complemented by a concerted effort to foster moderate leadership in the British Muslim community. The central government and local partners have created a wide variety of schemes for identifying those least likely to tilt toward extremism, and then for building their skills in ways that are calculated to discourage extremist activities among the community as a whole. The clearest examples of this policy involve establishing criteria and training for imams. Just before leaving office, Prime Minister Blair announced an additional £1 million in funding for Islamic Studies at UK universities, designating the topic a strategically important subject. This decision was based on the logic that such courses can help produce British-trained imams and undermine extremism[42]. Like most programmes in the UK, its application often differs by locality. The accent on training imams, for example, has taken a more specific form through the Black Country Imams project, which focuses on developing language and other skills for 36 imams from Dudley, Wolverhampton, Sandwell, Walsall and Birmingham (HM Government 2008: 18-19). These programmes are often piloted in specific regions or by local governments, and then heralded as potential models from which others can learn.

While there is significant local variation in how such programmes are developed and applied, there are also national standards that increasingly govern imams in Britain. As of August 2004, for example, the British government mandated that anyone entering the UK to work as a minister of religion prove

[40] http://www.radicaimiddleway.co.uk/abou_us.php (accessed 10 November 2008).
[41] http://theiceproject.com/(accessed 10 November 2008).
[42] BBC News, 4 June 2007.

a command of the English language[43]. Prison Service imams have received national training in an effort to help them work with convicted terrorists or those susceptible to radicalization while in prison (HM Government 2006: 13). As government-paid employees, these imams are subject to the new minimum standards for all Muslim chaplains employed by the state, whether in prisons, healthcare, the Ministry of Defence or in educational institutions (Communities and Local Government 2007: 11-12, 2008: 45).

Beyond improving the skills of imams, the government has also made an effort to reach out to women and faith-based organizations. The National Muslim Women's Advisory Group focuses on thinking through ways to empower Muslim women by increasing their role in 'civic, economic and social life'. According to one government publication, 'women can play a vital role in building strong communities and tackling violent extremism' (Communities and Local Government 2007: 9-10). This is a fascinating and innovative gamble by the government in a number of respects. It is an attempt to hear the voices of average Muslim women through moderate leaders, an effort to spur women to dispel stereotypes about their role in Islam, and a concrete initiative to empower Muslim women at the local leve1[44]. Women as a class of people are thus being cultivated as strategic actors that can turn others away from extremism. Given that most extremists are men, this may be an effective strategy if it is not seen as patronizing or as an effort to recruit informants. The government has also set aside £600,000 to establish a Faith and Social Cohesion Unit, designed to support the governance and effectiveness of faith-based community oriented groups, and to encourage unregistered groups to register themselves in order to take advantage of tax breaks (Communities and Local Government 2008: 45)[45]. Of course, the government's stake in registration is better knowledge of such groups' activities and a certain amount of oversight.

Muslim youths have also been the target of a number of government schemes, although in this case the goal appears to be equal part leadership training and diversion of at-risk individuals from less desirable activities. In two examples of touted local initiatives, the Leytonstone Muslim Community Centre has provided a leadership programme for youth in higher education who were 'at risk of isolation and detachment from their previous support networks', while another organization worked with younger men in a deprived ward in the London Borough of Waltham Forest, dealing with a range of issues surrounding

[43] The mandate also requires them to prove that they are ordained or have been practicing as a minister for at least 12 months out of the preceding five years. See http://www.workpermit.com/news/2004_08_23/uk/immigration_rules_for_ministers_of_religion.htm (accessed 18 December 2008).

[44] The multiple justifications for the initiative were given in January 2008 when the NMWAG was officially launched by Prime Minister Brown: http://www.communities.gov.uk/news/corporate/680335 (accessed 18 December 2008).

[45] See also http://www.charity-commission.gov.uk/tcc/faithsc.asp (accessed 10 November 2008).

citizenship, conflict resolution, and coping skills for managing the risks of antisocial behaviour, including extremism (HM Government 2008: 33). Because one of the government's stated objectives is to support individuals vulnerable to terrorist recruitment, it has encouraged local communities to sensitize service providers – such as teachers, social workers, and law and order employees – to the potential radicalization of individuals they come into contact with. In October 2008, to give one example, Secretary of State Ed Balls announced a £4.68 million initiative to disseminate an anti-extremism toolkit in schools, with advice for teachers trying to deal with students exhibiting extremist tendencies[46]. The government has also pushed to develop referral networks that can further assess the danger of radicalization, as well as programmes such as mentoring services that can be deployed to help deter any further slide toward extremist sympathy or behaviour (HM Government 2008: 27-9).

The steps listed thus far have been aimed principally at promoting moderate Islamic thought and mainstream Muslim leaders and at diverting potential extremists in the direction of a less radical path. It is no accident that this range of policies dovetails with a renewed emphasis on 'Britishness' as a way to cement a common identity and with a corresponding de-emphasis of 'multiculturalism' on the grounds that it may undermine community cohesion[47]. Although the concrete steps outlined above - like almost all undertaken under the integration umbrella - have both a repressive and an accommodating aspect, they are closer to the repressive end of the spectrum in their primary focus on curbing negative behaviour. Policies falling under this umbrella are designed less to reach out to Muslims on their own terms than they are to discourage discourse, activities and leaders judged to have failed the test of integration.

By contrast, there have also been a host of policy initiatives that reflect a softer side of the push to integrate Muslims into British society. In particular, the government has approached Muslim communities in an effort to encourage dialogue surrounding issues high on their agendas. Immediately following the July 2005 attacks, the prime minister and the home secretary hosted two meetings with Muslim leaders and agreed to establish community-led working groups to recommend ways to tackle extremism. Various ministers also hosted or attended meetings over the course of the next year in an effort to open lines of communication with Muslims and to engage in outreach to Muslim conununities. For example, the government supported several regional 'Muslim Forums against Extremism and lslamophobia', which brought together Muslim community members, law

[46] See *The Times,* 8 October 200S; see also the website of the Department for Children, Schools and Families, http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/publications/violentextremism/toolkitforschools/ (accessed 12 November 20(8).

[47] See the 2006 statements by then head of the Commission for Racial Equality Trevor Phillips in response to Gordon Brown's call for a national 'proud-to-be-British' day (*Guardian*, 14 January 2006).

enforcement officials, and public service providers to discuss not only how to curb extremism, but also a range of issues relevant to Muslims themselves (HM Government 2006: 13-14) and they have encouraged local authorities to conduct similar forums in order to field Muslim grievances (HM Government 2008: 36-7).

Efforts to facilitate communication with Muslims are also reflected in on-going groups such as the Muslim Women's Network and its successor the National Muslim Women's Advisory Group, which have been facilitated and at times chaired by ministers who are seeking to connect with the Muslim community (HM Govemment 2006: 13, 2008: 31, 34)[48]. While these groups are partly intended to strengthen actors deemed less extremist, they also serve as direct conduits for Muslims to voice their concerns to high government officials. Similarly, the Muslim Safety Forum coordinates meetings between Muslim leaders and police representatives to discuss community concerns, mainly related to extremism but also touching upon other issues (HM Government 2006: 22). The PREVENT initiative has also instituted a public relations campaign in the wider Muslim world, and has sent delegations of British Muslims abroad to help refute the image of Britain as being anti-Islam (HM Government 2006: 16). Through these initiatives, the government hopes to show that it is listening to and taking seriously Muslim voices.

The outreach to Muslim communities involves several highly symbolic changes to the criminal code that are meant to show that the state is not just listening but also acting upon Muslim concerns. Britain's Anti-Terrorism, Crime and Security Act 2001 included provisions outlawing religiously aggravated offences which extended the Crime and Disorder Act's 1998 concept of racially aggravated offences. As of the 2001 law, crimes motivated by or displaying hostility against people because of their faith are subject to additional penalties. Given that there was tremendous concern about anti-Muslim attacks in the wake of 9/11, this move was meant to take the edge off what was otherwise a very repressive law. The government also made several attempts to broaden incitement to racial hatred provisions to cover incitement to religious hatred. Although these were hotly contested, much delayed, and eventually watered down, they were implemented in 2006 through the Racial and Religious Hatred Act.

In a civil law vein, prominent figures such as the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Lord Chief Justice have bucked public and elite political opinion by endorsing adaptation of certain elements of sharia law within Britain[49]. In spite of vociferous criticism of the idea from many quarters - including from Sadiq Khan, a junior minister in the Department of Communities and Local Government as of October 2008 - sharia courts began passing binding judgments in 2007 under the auspices of the Arbitration Act 1996 (which also governs the

[48] See also http://www.communities.gov.uk/news/corporate/680335 (accessed 11 November 2008).
[49] BBC News, 8 February 2008; BBC News, 4 July 2008; *Guardian*, 4 July 2008.

use of Jewish Beth Din courts), *The Times* reported in September 2008[50]. While some of these steps may backfire by arousing public resentment or even outrage - especially in the case of sharia courts - such legal developments in the criminal and civil spheres constitute signals to Muslims that they are protected on a par with analogous groups.

The effort to integrate Muslims into mainstream policymaking extends to programmes aimed at fighting socioeconomic disadvantage, to programmes aimed to help faith groups, and to citizenship education about Britain's multicultural composition. For example, the government's broad social cohesion plans focus not just on racial issues, but also explicitly on reducing inequalities associated with faith, and even more specifically on steps that can help Muslims improve their educational, employment and housing situation (HM Government 2006: II; Home Office 2005). The government also launched a Faith Communities Capacity Building Fund in early 2005 which by mid-2006 had already spent £7.7 million, of which £1.5 million went to Muslim organizations (HM Government 2006: II). And the Department for Education and Skills recently published Sir Keith Ajegbo's *Curriculum Review on Diversity and Citizenship*, which recommends - among many steps - extending an understanding of Islam and Islamic culture, society and history across all communities in an effort to diminish misunderstandings and prejudices in the broader population (Department for Education and Skills 2007: 18: HM Government 2008). These efforts run parallel to those designed to promote inter-faith dialogues and understanding that have been popular in Britain and many other countries since 9/11 (Home Office 2005: 46).

Most broadly, the government has taken up the banner of Islamophobia as a major cause for national concern. It has used this term as a way to signal to Muslims that it is aware of a problem faced by their community, and as a rationale for broad outreach that includes public statements and symbols of support by high government officials (Joppke 2009). State officials have translated the abstract concern about Islamophobia into concrete policy initiatives, such as the late 2004 Association of Chief of Police Officers joint initiative. 'Islamophobia - Don't Suffer in Silence', which distributed 50,000 information packets to Muslim community venues and to police stations that were designed to encourage reporting of anti-Muslim incidents[51]. While some critics (Joppke 2009) charge that this platform has promised Muslims more than it can deliver - thereby arousing resentment and a quest for ever-greater recognition - its ambition is to demonstrate clearly that British government officials are ready, willing and able to divert energy, attention and resources toward fostering integration in the Muslim community.

[50] *The Times,* 14 September 2008.

[51] See the Forum Against Islamophobia and Racism's 16 November 2004 press release 'Police and Muslim Communities Work Toged1er to Tackle Islamophobia', http//:www.fairuk.org/pressreleases/2004/20041116FAIRUK_Press_Releasc.pdf (accessed 12 November 2008).

The goal of integrating Muslims more firmly into the British national community has thus been pursued through a number of avenues and through a wide variety of policy initiatives. Some are small-scale, local projects that vary by region or city, and others are national in scope. In total, the government has allocated tens of millions of pounds, hundreds of personnel and countless hours to the task[52]. While integration efforts at times have their repressive side, they also represent an honest efforts to reach out to Muslims[53]. Naturally, the government is not undertaking these initiatives out of the goodness of its heart. Attempts to integrate Muslims would not have been nearly as extensive were it not for the government's fear of extremism and its calculated strategy that integrating Muslims into British society is a necessary for the security of the country as a whole.

Conclusion

British state responses to Islamist extremism have conformed to an overlapping three-pronged strategy of consciously downplaying the Islamic element of the threat, repressing Muslim extremist activity and integrating Muslims through a dual strategy that itself involves elements of repression and accommodation. It is worth emphasizing that many of the specific policies deployed embody more than one of the three prongs. The notion of community-based counter-terrorism policing, for example, involves outreach to community members in order to gather better infonnation about potential threats. This strategy encompasses both an effort to repress terrorism, as well as an attempt to integrate communities as sympathetic stakeholders in the policing process (Klausen 2009).

There have also been dynamic elements to British state responses that suggest limits to any completely static interpretation of the three-pronged framework. The scope of repression and especially of integration efforts has greatly expanded over time. This is true comparing developments pre- and post-9/11 and even more so for those pre- and post- 7/7. There have also been small recalibrations of government terminology when discussing extremism. Most official publications dance around the Islamic or Muslim nature of the threat by referring briefly to Islamist terrorism before recasting the analysis in more faith-neutral terms. However, Gordon Brown has gone further than Tony Blair in emphasizing that terrorism is a criminal undertaking, and not one necessarily associated with any particular faith community. His avoidance of catchphrases

[52] See speech by Rt Hon Hazel Blears, MP, Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, speech 31 October 2007 to the Preventing Extremism Conference, at http: www .communities.gov.uklspccches!corporate/prevcntingextrcmism (accessed 12 November 2008).

[53] This is not to imply that they have all been successful, nor that the government's strategy is the best possible one. For a thoughtful critique, see Thomas (2009).

like the 'war on terror' suggests the government may increasingly shy away from terms that imply a connection to Islam, at least in events for public consumption.

Framing British responses to Islamist extremism as an overlapping three-pronged strategy remains very useful for grasping the main axes of Britain's policies, however. It has the additional advantage of unveiling many of the internal tensions between the constituent parts of the overall approach. Is it possible, for instance, to both strong ann and to reach out to Muslims in an effort to encourage integration? How can the state walk the fine line between repressing certain members of a community and encouraging others to feel fully part of British society? And rhetorically, is it logical to say in the same breath that Islamist extremism is the biggest security problem in Britain, but then stress that Muslims are not a threat and to euphemize the challenge as one of 'international' terrorism?

Although these internal contradictions may raise questions about the effectiveness of the overall strategy, examining Britain's approach in comparative perspective suggests that it fits squarely into a common European pattern among states coping with Islamist extremism. European countries must balance competing ideas and interests in crafting their policy responses, and it has been the competition among these forces that have propelled all nations to adopt an overlapping three-pronged strategy. States such as Britain have to acknowledge that Islamists are perpetrating deadly attacks, but also reassure the public that most Muslims reject such actions. They must demonstrate to the general public that they are capable of disrupting terrorist networks and promoting national cohesion, while also showing Muslims that they can be full citizens and not simply national pariahs.

These competing tasks are undeniably in tension with one another. As a result, liberal democratic states such as Britain are forced to develop policies that attempt to target each issue and each constituency as precisely as possible. Among European countries, Britain has been at the forefront of devoting time, energy and resources to this conundrum in a way that makes it a model from which other states can learn a great deal. Not all of its specific policies will have the intended effect, and the effect of many programmes will be impossible to judge by any standard policy yardsticks. But this may be the nature of dealing: with problems that will inevitably vex policymakers trying to walk the fine line required to maximize cohesion and undermine extremism.

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