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Introduction

A new threat of violent extremism?

Two number-based symbols seem to sum up the very different political world that Britain now inhabits: 9/11 and 7/7. The terrorist attacks on the World Trade Centre buildings in New York on the 11th September 2001 have become both iconic in their imagery and pivotal in relation to political actions and assumptions, not only for the United States but also for key allies such as Britain. In the direct wake of the 9/11 attacks has come the long-running military involvement in Afghanistan and its substantial impacts on neighbouring Pakistan, as well as the highly controversial invasion and occupation of Iraq. The former involvement was directly linked to the threat of Islamist violent extremism, the latter less so, but both involvements have had a profound impact on the relationship Western states concerned have with other, Muslim-populated states and with their own domestic Muslim populations. The question of the relationship between military involvements in Afghanistan and Iraq and Islamist violent extremism was brought into sharp relief for Britain by four coordinated suicide bomb attacks on public transport in central London on the morning of Thursday, 7th July 2005. Two weeks later, London narrowly averted further terrorist attacks when another series of suicide bombings failed due to technical deficiencies. The attack on Glasgow Airport in June 2007,¹ by the same Islamist cell who had failed to explode a car bomb in central London just days before, refocused public attention on the level of the threat.

The shocking attacks of 7/7 were carried out by four young British Muslims, all from West Yorkshire and apparently 'integrated', leading to the deaths of 52 commuters from a variety of ethnic and religious backgrounds, as well as the serious injury of many others. The videoed statements left behind by two of the 7/7 bombers explicitly addressed the British military involvements outlined above, with the broad Yorkshire accents of the terrorists somehow adding to the chilling impact of the statements. These 7/7 attacks in London mirrored the even more deadly attacks carried out in the Spanish capital Madrid the previous year, when a series of bombs planted on commuter trains on Thursday, 11th March 2004, by Moroccan-origin young Islamists killed over 180 people in and around the central Atocha station and at two suburban stations. About a third of those killed in these Spanish attacks were immigrants from a variety of countries. The Spanish government's immediate and wrong attribution of the responsibility to the Basque separatist group ETA

led to public outrage and a change of government in the subsequent election, a far-reaching impact for what had been a ramshackle plot.² In the years since 7/7, British police have foiled a number of substantial Islamist plots, with many leading to convictions.³ These plots have overwhelmingly involved young British Muslims, including a significant number of converts, in plans to cause explosions aimed at members of the general public, often on public transport or in other public spaces. The origins of a significant number of these plots can be traced earlier than 7/7, or even before the 2003 invasion of Iraq, so questioning the simplistic cause and effect argument put forward that British military involvement has inevitably provoked radicalisation. Some of these British Islamist plotters have had contact with each other, but there has been no evidence of any formal organisational structures or command hierarchies nationally.⁴ The suggestion that the Al-Qaeda leadership of Osama Bin-Laden and his associates, prior to Bin-Laden's killing by American Special Forces in Abbottabad, Pakistan in May 2011, had commissioned and directed such British bombings and plots is at least partially countered by the reality that these groups of plotters have more often already conceived and started to plan their attacks and then sought finance and support from 'Al-Qaeda central'. Some have had no documented contact with Al-Qaeda figures at all, suggesting that a significant part of this undoubted Islamist terror threat comes from 'self-starting', autonomous cells. The attempted murder of East London Labour MP Stephen Timms by Roshonara Choudhry, a Bangladeshi-origin young woman acting alone, in May 2010 showed that sometimes even a small cell of like-minded believers is not necessary. Choudhry was a highly gifted university student, close to finishing her degree and with a bright future in front of her, but whose political anger over British policy seemed to be further radicalised through viewing of Internet material, particularly sermons by radical Islamist preacher Anwar al-Awlaki.⁵

Not only is this threat of British domestic Islamist violent extremism a serious and continuing one, but it is a significantly different one from the dangers previously posed to Britain by Irish republican terrorism. The Irish republican threat between the early 1970s and the mid-1990s largely came from the Provisional Irish Republican Army (IRA) or offshoots such as the Irish National Liberation Army (INLA). These Irish republican organisations were hierarchical with military-style command and control structures, meaning that terrorist actions were planned and authorised by commanders. Whilst deadly force was often used, targets were largely military or political, with the minority of actions aimed at public spaces or places normally involving warnings to avoid civilian casualties. Incidents that did involve civilian deaths, such as the 1974 Guildford and Birmingham pub bombings, were portrayed by the Irish republicans as resulting from bungled warnings or the actions of rogue operatives who were then harshly punished. The current Islamist threat to Britain appears to be very different, both in its targets and in its organisation,

and attempting to understand the nature and make-up of this Islamist threat is one of the key areas of focus for this book.

In using the term 'Islamist', itself something explored in more detail, the book is acknowledging that this current and very serious terror threat faced by Britain is primarily about a minority of young British Muslims espousing a radical political narrative of Muslim identity, grievance and oppression, the drift of some of those young Muslims towards violent extremism to promote that political narrative, and the need to combat it. This terror threat of the past few years, combined with the 2001 disturbances in a number of northern English towns and cities that all involved young Muslim men of Pakistani and Bangladeshi origin,⁶ has suggested to some politicians that Britain has a significant 'Muslim problem'.⁷ The meaning and relevance to national cohesion and security of apparently strengthening Muslim identification in the context of globalisation and the profound associated impacts on identity and experience are highly contested issues. What is beyond dispute is that since the 2001 riots, and the global shock of the 9/11 attacks that occurred just weeks later, there has been a significant shift in the aims, language and content of British policy approaches to ethnic relations in general and to British Muslims in particular. The previous emphasis on ethnic diversity and specificity has been replaced post-2001 by an emphasis on 'community cohesion', a stated concern with commonality and shared values and experiences.⁸ In itself controversial, this move towards community cohesion has been accompanied by explicit attacks on multiculturalism that have suggested previous multiculturalist policies have encouraged separation and allowed ethnic minority communities to separate themselves. Such political pronouncements by Prime Minister David Cameron⁹ and others have given the impression that Britain is part of a lurch across northern Europe back towards assimilationist policies that are much less sympathetic to the needs and identities of ethnic and religious minorities or even to their presence at all.

The policy response of *Prevent*

The British political response to the Islamist terror threat has arguably encapsulated this wider reaction against ethnic diversity in general and Muslims in particular, leading to important questions as to whether the anti-terrorist policy responses, including the *Prevent* element, have been proportionate to the actual terror threat or have rather symbolised wider societal fears about the Muslim 'others' within. The *Prevent* policy approach was first introduced in October 2006 as one of the four elements of the wider government counterterrorism strategy, *CONTEST*. Prior to the 7/7 attacks of July 2005 outlined above, *Prevent* had been the least developed of the four *CONTEST* strands but, for one commentator, 'over the course of the

following five years, *Prevent* became the world's most extensive counter-radicalisation policy'.¹⁰ It has subsequently been replicated significantly in policies developed by Denmark, Australia and Canada, and influenced the development of similar initiatives in Germany, Sweden and the United States. *Prevent* was initially operationalised through targeted funding for all local authorities in England having Muslims as 5 per cent or more of their local population. Following this initial 'Pathfinder' pilot year of 2007/8, *Prevent* was developed and extended as a national policy priority. Funding was given to all local authorities first with 4,000 or more, then 2,000 or more, Muslim residents, with local authority involvement and compliance policed by the central government department concerned, the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG), through compulsory 'National Indicators' and monitoring of progress against them. At the same time, *Prevent* funding from the Home Office was directed at local Youth Offending Teams (YOTs) and Young Offenders Institutes (YOIs) via the Youth Justice Board (YJB), prisons, and further and higher education institutions. The element of this funding aimed directly at the Police Service nationally led to over 300 new dedicated *Prevent* police posts, whilst both the Security Service (MI5) and the Counter-Terrorism Unit (CTU) opened regional offices for the first time, explicitly to address the threat of violent extremism. In total, this national government *Prevent* programme of activity involved £140 million between 2008 and 2011. Taking power in May 2010, the Conservative-Liberal Democrat coalition government quickly scaled back the DCLG element of *Prevent* funding for that financial year and arguably echoed the recommendations of the recent House of Commons Communities and Local Government (CLG) Select Committee Inquiry¹¹ into *Prevent* by redirecting some of the money saved towards their new youth-focused National Citizen Service (NCS), a scheme claimed as community cohesion in action.¹² The coalition then commissioned a formal review of *Prevent* by the government's security 'watchdog' Lord Carlile, the outcome of which was serially delayed amidst allegations that the government was riven by exactly the same tensions and dilemmas over *Prevent* that had arguably marked the Labour government's approach to *Prevent*. The eventual publication of the revised *Prevent* strategy in June 2011, its content and the political discourse around it all showed that these fundamental tensions remained.¹³ Those continuing tensions and dilemmas over *Prevent* relate both to its actual effectiveness in 'preventing violent extremism' and to the impact and consequences of *Prevent* for wider issues of ethnic relations and community cohesion in Britain, and are the focus of this book. In particular, the book argues that *Prevent* has been badly flawed in its failure to accept and incorporate the community cohesion analysis of the dangers of overemphasising specific and separate ethnic or faith identities, and has consequently both worked in opposition to community cohesion and significantly damaged community support for the fight against terrorism.

To many observers, this programme of *Prevent* activity by the previous Labour government appeared to explicitly target Britain's Muslim communities as a whole for a mixture of admonition, education, intervention and surveillance, all based on the belief that there needed to be '*demonstrable change*' in those communities.¹⁴ Stuart Hall, Britain's most important sociological commentator on post-war immigration and the accompanying journey towards a more multicultural society, has characterised the response of *Prevent* as a very serious development and deepening of UK state multiculturalism, in both its explicit national government control and organisation, and in the extent of its 'internal penetration' of Muslim communities.¹⁵ The aims, assumptions, content and implications of *Prevent* are examined in this book. Throughout its relatively short life, *Prevent* has been actually understood and operationalized under a number of titles, including 'Preventing Violent Extremism', PVE as an acronym, or even as the obscure 'Pathfinder'. These changing names and the fact that in some localities *Prevent* work has operated without any formal title or reference at all highlight the sensitivities and tensions around this policy. For consistency, this book uses *Prevent* throughout. One of the most controversial aspects of *Prevent* has been its explicit focus on Muslims and Muslim communities, something that the book argues has not only been damaging to the broader goal of community cohesion but which has actually damaged attempts to win vital community support for identifying and defeating violent extremism.

A corollary of this has been an absence of focus on right-wing violent extremism or similar activity by animal liberationists or antiglobalisation and anticapitalism protestors. This is because Islamist violent extremism is viewed as 'international' in nature, both in its organisation and personnel, and so falls under the CONTEST strategy and funding, which focuses on international terrorism,¹⁶ whereas those other forms of potentially violent political extremism do not. For that reason, and to do justice to the complexities and ambiguities of the past and present *Prevent* work, the book primarily focuses on *Prevent*'s concerns with Muslims and Islamist violent extremism but does highlight parallels with right-wing/racist extremism and attempts to combat it when they are helpful. In particular, the book argues that the terrible events in Norway in July 2011, when a far-right activist killed 77 people, most of them young people shot at a socialist youth camp, showed the serious flaws in this UK government position. Coming just weeks after the relaunch of the UK *Prevent* strategy reiterated the lack of a domestic far-right terror threat, the Norway killings highlighted how an apparent 'lone wolf' terrorist was actually embedded within a large and growing right-wing, pan-European network that is increasingly drawn towards violent extremism. The killer, Anders Behring Breivik, had regular links with the English Defence League (EDL) and other UK right-wing groups whose members already have convictions for acts of terrorism, yet *Prevent* to date has shown no interest in this potential terror threat. This book suggests that is badly misguided, and that it demonstrates a

misunderstanding of the nature of both the Islamist and far-right terror threats. Above all, therefore, the book aims to identify how *Prevent* can both be more effective in its efforts to prevent violent extremism of *all* kinds and can support wider efforts to positively build common identities and cross-ethnic cohesion and resilience.

The purpose of this book

Given that the explicit aim of *Prevent* is indeed to ‘prevent violent extremism’, the book draws on a range of empirical research by the author and others, and a broader range of recent academic work around *Prevent* and ethnic relations, to question how effective *Prevent* has actually been so far in relation to this stated aim. The book’s position is that neither the undoubted Islamist terror threat posed by a small minority of young British Muslims nor the effectiveness of *Prevent* policies in relation to the broader mass of British ‘Muslims’ (itself a questionable characterisation) can be understood without debating the wider policy developments and discussions around ethnic relations, diversity and identity symbolised by community cohesion.

In this way, this book is a development of the analysis of the meaning and potential of community cohesion begun in my previous book, *Youth, Multiculturalism and Community Cohesion*.¹⁷ Like that earlier publication, this book is concerned with social policy and with how public policy design and practice implementation can be more effective. *Youth, Multiculturalism and Community Cohesion* offered what continues to be one of the very few empirically based analyses of how post-2001 community cohesion policies in Britain have actually been understood and implemented on the ground, and what this suggests about its future potential as a policy approach. That analysis was based on significant empirical research in Oldham and Rochdale, Greater Manchester around how educational practitioners such as youth workers had understood and implemented community cohesion approaches, and what were young peoples’ understandings of cohesion, segregation and ‘identity’ within their highly racialised local areas.¹⁸ That research suggested that, rather than being the lurch back to assimilationism that it is often portrayed as, community cohesion actually represents a potentially positive way forward for multiculturalism. Here, community cohesion is a re-balancing of multiculturalism, an approach that still recognises, accepts and works with ethnic difference but one that puts greater emphasis than previously on augmenting those separate identities with overarching common identities and interests. In practice, community cohesion is doing this through forms of work with young people based on ‘contact theory’, a social psychology-based approach to reducing prejudice and fear, and building commonality.¹⁹ Such interethnic ‘contact’ has no guarantee of producing positive outcomes around

cohesion and commonality, and the conditions under which greater interethnic contact can and does contribute to more cohesive and tolerant communities and to greater resilience against extremism are discussed in this book. Implicit in the Oldham and Rochdale case study of community cohesion in practice, and in the national government community cohesion policy documents, is the acceptance that existing and ‘hot’ ethnic or religious identities need to become of necessity somewhat ‘cooler’, and more ‘de-centred’ and intersectional forms of identity encouraged, if Britain’s complex and increasingly diverse multicultural society is to operate peacefully and successfully.²⁰

That analysis is crucial to the way this book tries to understand what the Islamist terror threat is, how government has responded so far, and how policy aimed at ‘preventing violent extremism’ can be more effective in the future. As in *Youth, Multiculturalism and Community Cohesion*, the book develops this analysis through examination of a strong base of empirical evidence around how *Prevent* approaches to date have been operationalised, understood and experienced. This empirical material includes my involvement in 2007/8 in evaluating the initial ‘Pathfinder’ year of *Prevent* activity in Kirklees, West Yorkshire (home of two of the 7/7 bombers) for Kirklees Metropolitan Council; my design and research leadership in 2007/8 of collaborative, *Prevent*-funded research into how young people understand ‘identity’ and cohesion in Rochdale, Greater Manchester for the Rochdale Pride Partnership (the Local Strategic Partnership for the area including Rochdale Metropolitan Borough Council and other public sector bodies); my presenting oral evidence in December 2009 at the House of Commons CLG Select Committee Inquiry witness hearings into *Prevent*;²¹ my collaborative research with colleagues at the University of Huddersfield on how two West Yorkshire local authorities have to date implemented and embedded *Prevent* and community cohesion policies within their activities (2009/10);²² and my collaborative involvement with colleagues in the University of Huddersfield’s Applied Criminology Centre who have evaluated for the YJB local implementation by YOTs of *Prevent* (2009 to date). This empirical evidence, and previous academic outputs based on it, is drawn on and supported by a series of recent interviews with professionals and community members involved in education, local government and community activity who have had personal experience of *Prevent* and the issues that it addresses in practice. In addition, previous research into approaches to promote effective anti-racist education with white young people is also drawn upon.²³ Alongside this personal empirical research, the book also draws on empirical material of others, including academic analysis of *Prevent*, approaches to British Muslims, and their relationship to the wider policy context of community cohesion. In particular, it draws on the helpful data relating to *Prevent* within key sources such as Husband and Alam’s *Social Cohesion and Counter-Terrorism* (2011) and Eatwell and Goodwin’s *The New Extremism in 21st Century Britain* (2010), augmenting this with new empirical data and further developing the

debates over *Prevent*'s content and purpose there. It uses all this material to analyse the aims, starting points and content of *Prevent* policy approaches initiated by the then Labour government from 2006 onwards as well as the new directions that the coalition government has mapped out since its election in May 2010. Within this, the book closely examines how *Prevent* has been understood and implemented in practice, how Britain's Muslim communities and those working with them have experienced and reacted to *Prevent*, and what evidence there is as to the effectiveness so far of these *Prevent* policies. This enables the book to squarely examine and discuss a number of interrelated criticisms of those *Prevent* policy approaches. These are listed below:

- *Prevent* to date has focused on and worked with Muslims only, in blatant contradiction to the analysis and approach of broader community cohesion policies, and has ignored what it suggests about the dangers of overemphasised ethnic identities and the causes of ethnic tensions and resentments in society.
- In doing so, *Prevent* has re-enforced and utilised simplistic and partial understandings of 'Muslim' identity, so arguably deepening one of the causal factors on Islamist violent extremism.
- This monocultural approach has involved clumsy and counterproductive attempts by the state to influence and engineer particular forms of leadership and religious practice within Muslim communities.
- This *Prevent* approach has also effectively ignored violent extremism in other communities, such as far-right/fascist politically motivated violence, so further stoking resentments among some British Muslims.
- More seriously still, the popular belief that *Prevent* has involved significant levels of surveillance on British Muslims has badly damaged the trust and dialogue between the state and Muslims, which will be central to effective counterterrorism in the long run.
- Profound political and operational tensions have been built into the design and implementation, both nationally and locally, of *Prevent* to date, so badly hampering efforts to prevent violent extremism.

In outlining and discussing such criticisms, the aim of the book is not to simply be negative about *Prevent* approaches to date but rather to learn from them and propose a number of ways in which future policy and practice approaches to this serious and long-term threat to British society, and its people of all backgrounds and beliefs, can be more effective, based on cohesion-based approaches that emphasise cross-community dialogue and resilience building, and genuine democratic involvement and debate. Whilst clearly focused on the

analysis of British *Prevent* policy approach, its aims, content and flaws, the book attempts to make parallels with experiences of Islamist terrorism and policy approaches to preventing such violent extremism in other states, such as the United States and the Netherlands, where appropriate. It is certainly my hope that in examining the British *Prevent* policy experience, the book offers evidence and insights of use to policy makers and academic colleagues in other countries who are grappling with similar challenges and dilemmas.

The structure of the book

Chapter 1 examines the threat of violent extremism facing Britain. It critically discusses 7/7 and the other Islamist terrorist incidents that have occurred alongside details of other foiled plots and convictions. This allows the chapter to step back and offer analysis of how we can understand the young British Islamist violent extremists involved – their backgrounds, motivations and beliefs. Such British events need to be understood within the context of the growth of Islamist neo-fundamentalism globally and Al-Qaeda-influenced radical extremism within it, and the chapter draws on key academic sources to examine different academic perspectives on the causes of and influences on the growth of this international Islamic militancy, especially its violent extremism forms.

Chapter 2 provides a wider context for the discussions of Chapter 1, and for the examination of *Prevent* policy aims, content and implementation later in the book. It does this by setting both the minority Islamist terror threat and policy responses to it within the wider picture of ‘race relations’ and changing British policy responses to ethnic diversity and identity since 2001. Here, the 2001 northern riots and the subsequent prioritisation of a new ‘race relations’ policy goal, ‘community cohesion’, are outlined and summarised. In particular, the chapter examines what the community cohesion analysis suggests about ‘parallel lives’ and separate identities within specific ethnic, religious and geographical communities, and how community cohesion practice has attempted to address the dangers of those separate and mutually antagonistic identities in areas of tension. Drawing on my previous empirically based academic work around the meaning and purpose of community cohesion, the chapter suggests the goals and standards by which state policies aiming to tackle separate, antagonistic identities and build stronger support for, and active involvement in, common identities, experiences and values should be judged. Together, Chapters 1 and 2 outline key things we know about the roots and causes of Islamist violent extremism, and the wider problem of separate and oppositional identities within British society, thereby suggesting standards by which we can judge the aims, content and implementation of governmental policy efforts to date to prevent violent extremism.

Chapter 3 begins the analysis of *Prevent* policies by examining the design and factual implementation of those UK policies, including both their stated and implicit assumptions and antecedents. This historical overview of the development of *Prevent*, and the significant modifications made along the way since 2006, enables the chapter to identify key past and present issues and tensions that are then examined in more detail in Chapters 4, 5 and 6. This chapter both examines past policy statements and implementation under the past Labour government and discusses the arguably contradictory statements and actions to date of the coalition government that took power in May 2010, including their major revision of the *Prevent* strategy announced in June 2011.

Chapter 4 discusses the monocultural focus on Britain's Muslim communities of *Prevent* policies, and the stark contradiction that approach has presented in relation to the broader political prioritisation of community cohesion. The chapter examines a number of problematic issues arising from this approach, including the resulting overt and clumsy 'engineering' of changes in the leadership, culture and religious practices of Muslim communities, the resentment engendered among young Muslims at the broad focus on them combined with an apparent indifference to 'extremism' within other communities, and a perverse 'envy' among non-Muslim communities at the very considerable resources focused on Muslim communities through *Prevent*. In making links with 'extremism' in other communities, the chapter highlights learning for *Prevent* from previous, highly problematic, attempts to promote 'anti-racism' in white, working-class communities. It builds on this to examine the Norway massacre of July 2011 and what this revealed about far-right extremist networks that have strong links to the United Kingdom through groups such as the EDL, the fallacy of the 'lone wolf' far-right violent extremist, and *Prevent's* failure to address this growing threat.

Chapter 5 draws on significant empirical evidence to focus on the actual implementation of *Prevent* and the very considerable resulting tensions and 'turf wars' between different parts of the state at both national and local levels. Those tensions examined include the mechanisms by which central government has 'forced' local government involvement in and compliance with *Prevent*, tensions over leadership and direction at a local level and the dilemmas of local authorities who have seen both their autonomy and their ongoing efforts to develop cohesion and integration strategies locally seriously compromised by the imposition of *Prevent* from above, and the problematic relationship between the two different national government departments responsible for *Prevent*. In addition, the chapter examines the involvement in *Prevent* policy implementation of specific sectors such as universities and further education colleges, prisons and YOTs, to suggest that common problems can be identified across the range of *Prevent* policy implementation at ground level.

Chapter 6 develops further some of the tensions and issues identified in Chapter 5 by discussing the most powerful allegation against *Prevent* policy

approaches to date, namely that it has been an elaborate and far-reaching surveillance programme aimed at Britain's Muslim communities in general. The evidence for and against this allegation is considered, alongside discussion of how the policy managed to find itself in such a fraught and politically charged controversy. Within this, the chapter discusses the very considerable growth in counterterrorism policing and Security Service structures that *Prevent* has resourced and facilitated, and the role that these security-focused personnel have played in community engagement roles, such as the 'Channel' programme.

The Conclusion not only summarises the evidence and arguments developed in the earlier chapters but also uses this to propose concrete ways in which *Prevent* policy approaches to 'preventing violent extremism' can be more effective and win more trust and support from people of all backgrounds and political persuasions, so building greater cross-community solidarity and resilience and also reducing the chances of another terrorist outrage like 7/7 occurring in Britain.

Issues of terminology

In a book that is centrally concerned with assumptions around, and understandings of, highly contested concepts such as 'values', 'loyalties' and 'identity', it is important to discuss terminology deployed. Throughout the book, young Britons of ethnic minority backgrounds such as of Pakistani, Bangladeshi and Somali origin are referred to as 'Muslims' for two reasons. First, governmental attempts to 'prevent violent extremism' since 7/7 have, in my view, unhelpfully and simplistically generalised and essentialised these diverse individuals and communities as 'Muslims'. Second, there is significant academic evidence, including data presented in this book, that young Britons with ethnic backgrounds such as Pakistani, Bangladeshi and Somali are increasingly identifying their Islamic faith as their most preferred form of 'identification' when asked. These apparent developments, how we might understand them, and what their implications are, are a key focus for this book. Despite these justifications, in so using 'Muslim' as a description for these young people, I am aware that the book risks perpetuating exactly the sort of broad-brush 'essentialising' that it criticises and questions both within policy and some academic approaches. Here, the book is deploying the strategy that Gunaratnam describes in her important account of researching 'race' and ethnicity²⁴ as 'working with and against "race"', utilising the identification that most young British people of Pakistani, Bangladeshi and Somali origin choose, which is ascribed to them by political and media discourse, but also critically examining the strengthening of this identification and questioning its usefulness and limitations.

For consistency, the terms ‘Islamist terrorism’ or ‘Islamist violent extremism’ are used throughout to describe the terror threat that policy attempts to ‘prevent violent extremism’ have been focused on since 7th July 2005. ‘Islamist’ is deployed to denote individuals and groups committed to working towards both civil society and government being determined and controlled by Islamic religious doctrine/teachings, a position informed by their understanding and interpretation of Islam and the perceived situation of the Muslim ‘*ummah*’ globally. Academic understandings of the key tenets and motivations of this Islamist ideology are briefly outlined in Chapter 1.²⁵ Other authors have used terms such as ‘neo-fundamentalist’, Al-Qaeda-directed or Al-Qaeda-inspired, but none of those are wholly satisfactory. The concept of ‘jihad’ is much debated within the Muslim world, but some Islamist violent extremists see their justification in jihad and are so labelled by themselves and others as jihadis, whilst other commentators favour the term ‘takfiri’ to identify radical Islamist extremists prepared to wage violence against Muslims who they view as heretics. It is important to note that ‘Islamist’ when used here is linked to ‘terrorism’ or ‘violent extremism’ and has specific meaning, as there are much larger numbers of Muslims in Britain and internationally whose outlook and philosophy could be described as ‘Islamist’ but who totally reject illegality or violent extremism in any form. Similarly, ‘terrorism’ is a very controversial term, with many Muslim and non-Muslims alike seeing state military action by the United States, the United Kingdom and others in Iraq and Afghanistan as ‘state terrorism’. Chapter 1 begins by summarising understandings of ‘terrorism’, and then goes on to discuss the relevance of UK foreign policy to the threat of Islamist violent extremism currently faced, alongside other factors and influences.