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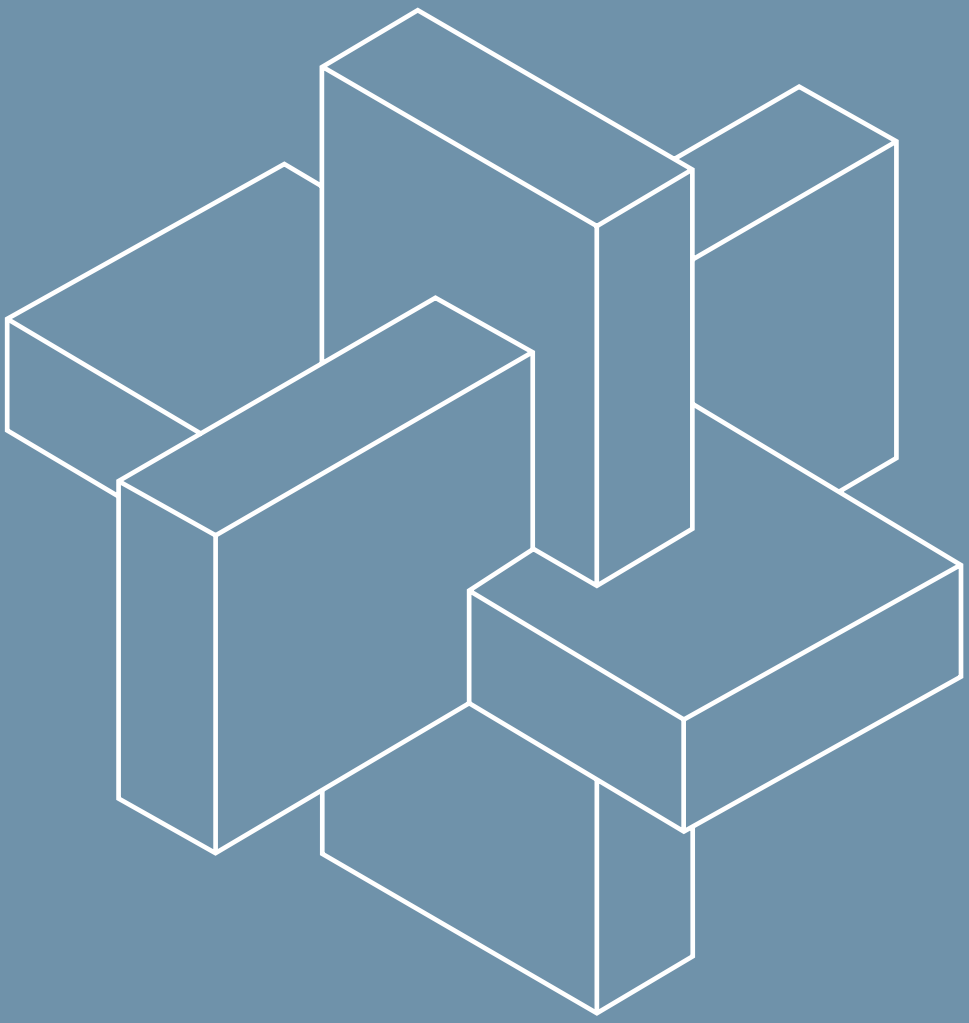

REFLECTIONS ON **COHESION**

Counter terrorism and Prevent: three ways to build trust and transparency

An updated counter-terrorism strategy for the UK was unveiled in June 2018, following on from terror attacks in Manchester and London during 2017. A key part of the updated strategy remains the Prevent programme, aimed at preventing radicalisation. 'A Shared Future' is the first report of a new Greater Manchester commission set up to tackle extremism and promote social cohesion. The report is welcome, but if this regional initiative and the Prevent programme are to succeed in schools and colleges, we must build greater transparency and trust, says Bob Hindle.

- Regional differences exist in Home Office data on Prevent and Channel referrals (the way people are identified and supported to prevent radicalisation).
- These local differences are not commented on in the report, or sufficiently well understood or unpicked, to enable an informed picture.
- Consistency in the way Prevent referrals are processed has also been raised as an issue but is not mentioned in the report.
- Building trust amongst young Muslim people is vital. Greater transparency of data, as well as more robust training for those with a duty to carry out the strategy is required, with clarity on how a 'safe space' can be created

'A Shared Future', released in the summer of 2018, was the first report by the **Preventing Hateful Extremism and Promoting Social Cohesion Commission**, established by Greater Manchester Mayor Andy Burnham in the aftermath of the 2017 terror attack on the Manchester Arena. It provides a welcome review of the operation of the Prevent duty in Greater Manchester as well as many wider issues relating to terrorism and social cohesion. But there is more work to do if we are going to understand the current picture and build trust, particularly amongst young Muslim people. I have identified three ways this goal could be supported, more sharply focused and applied to schools and colleges.

Building trust amongst young Muslim people is vital

Referrals, reassurance, and data release

Home Office data on Prevent and Channel referrals (2017) illustrate some regional differences. The sharp fall in referrals from the North West region from 2015/16 to 2016/17 are neither commented on in the Commission's report nor unpicked, other than to suggest further data disaggregation is required to provide a more informed picture at a local level and to use 'statistics to refute the claims' [p82] made against Prevent. Although Home Office data include details of referrals by age and region, which provide some proxy, these are not further provided by gender, ethnicity, and faith. This is important in generating reassurance, particularly to those in Muslim communities, with the acknowledgement that there is a "great deal of work to be done" in building trust.

The report of David Anderson QC into the London and Manchester terror attacks recommends a need to "ensure consistency in processing of [Prevent] referrals" (2017, p34). There is little in the Commission's report on this in the Greater Manchester or North West region, nor how its processes compare to those elsewhere in the UK.

Recent research on Prevent in Further Education colleges finds that teachers understanding of what to look for – the 'signs and specific beliefs' – is over simplified, with decisions reduced to straight lines and with sharp variations of practice. Evidence suggests there is no conveyor belt from conservatism to violent extremism, nor is there a 'one size fits all' set of characteristics. This adds to **existing research** which suggests the policy work at school remains inconsistent.

Training for teachers

The recommendation for mandatory Prevent training for new starters in public sector areas covered by the Government's updated counter terrorism strategy **Contest** is already in action in many schools and colleges inspected by Ofsted. The requirement for refresher training every three years must not be a missed opportunity. Training should focus on the robustness of staff understandings and link with wider report recommendations to build the trust of Muslim communities. This means a focus on equality and diversity, amidst a climate of intolerance and Islamophobia. The local context in the curriculum recommended by the Ajegbo report in 2008. and in **Ofsted's review** of Prevent in FE in 2016, make a good starting point.

The revised 2018 HM Government Contest strategy makes clear the need for a 'safe space' in schools and colleges to debate controversial issues, stating: *Our schools, colleges and universities should be places in which children and young people can understand and discuss sensitive topics. Encouraging free speech and open debate is one of our most powerful tools in promoting critical thinking and preventing terrorist and extremist narratives taking hold.*

Whilst **research** rightly suggests a need for policy work in schools to place emphasis on wider forms of extremism, building the trust of Muslim young people is vital. There must be clarity on how the safe space Prevent advises is provided, **can be created** and how policy work in school is supporting it. The Commission's reference to a 'lack of positive role models' highlights the role played by Muslim staff. The recommendation that 'research is required into what community experiences and beliefs of Prevent are' must extend to Muslim staff's own experiences and understandings of the duty.

notes limitations here with reference, rather generally, to 'Data Protection legislation'. These must be clarified to help support the generation of community trust in the workings of Prevent. Is all referral data collected by the police and the Security Services, however loosely made, and founded? Clarification must support the shift recommended by **Operation Dovetail**, with supervision moving away from the police to Local Authority safeguarding responsibilities.

If Prevent and the work of this new Commission is to succeed, it must build greater trust and transparency. This means the publication of localised data with more information and unpicking of what it might mean and its purpose. There must also be more robust training for teachers and the building of community support.

Above all, we need clarity on the counter terrorism procedures being used and the verification of information passed to Prevent teams, to ensure that it is as accurate as possible, as recommended by David Anderson. The use of 'flawed information' by the security services was identified in **the Chilcot Report** into the Iraq war. If we are to succeed in our efforts to build social cohesion, we must do all we can to prevent the same mistakes happening again.

Feedback and transparency

Calls for greater transparency are well founded. The review rightly makes reference to the need for 'some level of feedback' to organisations who make referrals. The Contest strategy, however,

This means a focus on equality and diversity, amidst a climate of intolerance and Islamophobia

Bob Hindle is a lecturer in Education at Manchester Institute of Education.

Opportunity lost? Why cultural and linguistic diversity are key, in the quest for community cohesion

Earlier this year, 'A Shared Future' the first report of a new commission set up to tackle extremism and promote social cohesion, was published. The Preventing Hateful Extremism and Promoting Social Cohesion Commission was established by Greater Manchester Mayor Andy Burnham in response to the 2017 terror attack at the Manchester Arena. But, argues Yaron Matras, while the report is welcomed, it fails to identify a strategy in support for, and understanding of, the city's many existing cultural and linguistic initiatives.

- The Preventing Hateful Extremism and Promoting Social Cohesion Commission published its first report on July 30th, 2018
- The Report mentions a rise in hate crime following the Arena bombing. There has also been a national rise in hate crime which has increased following other terror attacks
- If suspicion toward other cultures and lifestyles fuels extremism, then building bridges between cultures must be a core element of any strategy to support cohesion
- A practical agenda is needed, that will draw on the city-region's language diversity, to build bridges between cultures and alleviate the fear of 'others'

The Commission's report **'A Shared Future'** emerged in consultation with a variety of stakeholders – academics, community organisations, and the wider public. Its somewhat atomistic bundle of recommendations – from reduced bus fares and subsidised accommodation, to more support for persons with mental health problems and learning difficulties, and on to work placements and mentoring schemes – makes it somewhat difficult to identify the key theme. But I believe that an important opportunity to develop an agenda that builds on existing cultural initiatives, has been missed.

Hate crime & suspicion of 'others'

The Commission's premise as expressed in its title – 'Preventing hateful extremism and promoting social cohesion' – is that countering hateful extremism and supporting cohesion are part of the same package. Not surprisingly, however, the findings suggest that there is no single driver for extremism. The report states that Greater Manchester Police reported a 130% rise in hate crime following the arena bombing. This included a rise in anti-Semitic hate crimes as well as a fivefold increase in Islamophobic incidents, suggesting that hateful violence is not necessarily driven by a strictly 'retaliatory' motivation on the part of the perpetrators but instead by general suspicion toward people of other backgrounds.

The picture is thus complex. **Nationwide figures**, released prior to the Commission's report, showed a gradual increase in hate crime coinciding with the start of the EU referendum campaign. This doubled by the time the referendum took place, peaking within two months of the Brexit result. There was then a gradual drop, followed by increases after the Westminster Bridge attack in early 2017, the Manchester arena attack in May 2017, and the attacks at London Bridge and Finsbury Park later that year. Clearly, violent attacks have been a trigger for hate crime. But so has anti-immigration rhetoric. **Reports** of Mayor Burnham's own statements suggesting that not tackling immigration makes our streets less safe are in my view unhelpful.

Celebrate cultural diversity to strengthen cohesion

If suspicion toward other cultures and lifestyles fuels extremism, then building bridges between cultures must be a core element of any strategy to support cohesion. I believe the Commission should have paid greater attention to the many organic initiatives that celebrate cultural diversity, and which have already laid the foundations for a shared pool of values. Language diversity has been a central theme: **Levenshulme Language Day** brings together people of diverse backgrounds and different

generations, and **International Mother Language Day** has offered Manchester an opportunity to further develop its **vision of diversity**. Such efforts have continued to expand since the arena attack: The **Made in Manchester** multilingual poem, Manchester Museum's multilingual **Hello Future** campaign, and celebration of language diversity through **City of Literature** events all express the city's resilience and commitment to a pluralistic society. The motto 'City of 200 Languages' now appears on numerous messages that introduce Manchester to visitors and investors. These are just some examples of how positive branding around the theme of cultural diversity can strengthen cohesion. The Commission's recommendations could have done more to build on such initiatives and to recognise the role of our cultural institutions in strengthening respect and tolerance toward others.

Missing is also a concrete action plan to support the cultural foundations of social cohesion in areas that are directly within the Mayor's remit. The city-region's many **supplementary schools** such as **Manchester Arabic School** and numerous others have a key role to play in strengthening young people's confidence in their cultural heritage. They deserve direct support as a way of demonstrating trust and belonging, and of countering suspicion and alienation. The Mayor could equally use newly devolved powers around skills, to increase provisions for ESOL (English as a second language) learning and help alleviate the pressures on waiting lists that make it harder for new arrivals to break through the barriers of social isolation.

> **Building bridges between cultures must be a core element of any strategy**

Earlier this year, ahead of the Commission's report, I contributed to **On Cohesion**, the University of Manchester's Policy@Manchester initiative. I wrote that the Commission, and its then forthcoming report, provided an excellent opportunity to formulate a practical agenda to draw on the city-region's language diversity, to support and develop existing initiatives that build bridges between cultures and to alleviate the fear of 'others'.

I can now only hope that the Commission's report signals the beginning of such a strategy drafting process, rather than its conclusion.

Yaron Matras is Professor of Linguistics and Founder of the Multilingual Manchester Research Unit at The University of Manchester.

Actions speak louder than words

The idea of the 'troubled youth', at risk of exploitation and crime, is not a new one. In the debate around tackling extremism and building social cohesion, however, this theme takes on a more urgent tone. 'A Shared Future' is the first report of a new Greater Manchester commission set up to tackle extremism and promote social cohesion. Dr Jo Deakin asks, is enough going to be done and not just said, to give our most vulnerable young people a voice and the positive options they need?

- Policies that control and punish young people can lead them into, not away from, crime
- Research evidence shows the value of youth provision and of positive relationships with youth workers, yet many services are struggling to survive due to insufficient funding
- The first report from the Preventing Hateful Extremism and Promoting Cohesion Commission calls for greater investment in services for young people and the need for their voices to be heard
- This call is welcomed, but more specifics are needed that demonstrate a commitment to projects and services that offer hope and opportunity to young people, particularly those who are most marginalised.

My contribution to 'On Cohesion' was intended to add some wider perspective to the debate about radicalisation and social cohesion. At the heart of my argument is a recognition that young people labelled as 'at risk' (of criminal or anti-social behaviour, or of being drawn into terrorism) can easily become marginalised and excluded through punitive and controlling policies. Ironically, the policies that are intended to prevent crime can perpetuate the stigma-inducing 'risky' label that pushes young people towards it. Rather than stigmatising and marginalising, we should be including young people who are socially disengaged and creating alternative, more positive, pathways that afford young people dignity.

> **Policies that control and punish young people can lead them into, not away from, crime**

The GMCA's **Preventing hateful Extremism and Promoting Cohesion Commission** is an opportunity for Manchester to address its lack of community cohesion, and, as part of that, explore the wider issues of youth marginalisation. So, has the Commission addressed the brief, risen to the challenge and responded to the issues?

Youth services – funding what is proven to work

Much of **the report** is purposefully, and rightly, focused on preventing hateful extremism. However, it also tackles the wider issues within which hateful extremism can occur: social exclusion, inequality, and the silencing of marginal voices. In section 7, addressing the 'broader determinants of social exclusion', the authors call for additional investment in services for young people. This is a welcome call: I have seen from **my own research**, noted in the report, the value of youth provision, and, in particular, the value of positive relationships with youth workers.

The **Commission** recognises the need to allow people to voice their opinions and concerns, even when these are difficult discussions to have. This is never truer than with young people. Young people need a space to try out different ideas even when these may be unpalatable to others. It is only through a process of expression and discussion that opinions can be shared and modified. Difficult discussions about extremism and radicalisation should become commonplace in schools and **youth environments** and professional discretion

should be respected when it comes to whether and how to share this information.

The significance of these things cannot be underestimated. I echo the Commission's recognition of the excellent work being undertaken with young people in these challenging times and agree that more is needed. Across Greater Manchester we can see clear examples of great projects working successfully to engage young people, across the voluntary and statutory sectors. Sadly, however, this activity is all too often curtailed by a lack of funds. We have evidence of 'what works' with young people, so let's continue to fund it.

The proof of the pudding

In his **response**, Andy Burnham says that all young people should be able to 'grow up with a sense of hope for the future' and that this can be aided by providing 'opportunities for them to get on in life, expand their horizons and meet with others from a range of backgrounds'. I welcome this promise. But, as is always the case, the proof of the pudding is in the eating: how will these positive ideas be implemented in practice? What additional investment can be found to bring new ideas to life? How, too, can we hold onto what already exists that works, but is being reduced or shut down - the youth services and highly motivated individuals that can make a life-changing difference to our most marginalised and disadvantaged young people?

My vision of 'a shared future' is one that values all young people from all communities. It allows them space for discussion and expression, no matter what they need to say. It recognises their engagement in positive social action, no matter how small. And it prioritises youth work, allowing positive relationships to build and communities to strengthen, even in tough times,

So, in answer to my question: has the Commission addressed the brief, risen to the challenge and responded to the issues? My view is that it has taken a step in the right direction, but we have to forge a much stronger and more definite path of support for our young people. And one that puts its money where its mouth is.

Dr Jo Deakin is Senior Lecturer in Criminology and Criminal Justice, School of Law, The University of Manchester and Co-ordinator of the Horizon 2020 PROMISE research project.

Youth Engagement and schemes that build cohesion

Building cohesion among young people is not only important for the resilience of our communities now. Adolescence is a key period in people's lives where their attitudes towards the world are formed, where their views of their place in the world, and their outlook towards difference, are developed. After adolescence, such views can remain quite fixed over their lives. If we can help create cohesion among young people now, this can help foster long-term cohesion across their lives.

So how can we do this? I aimed to look at the role social and civic participation schemes can play in building youth cohesion. These schemes bring young people together from different backgrounds, to work together, in a co-operative environment, towards shared goals; particularly towards the betterment of their communities. However, in doing so, they also provide opportunities to meet and build positive relations with other young people from different ethnic groups.

Studying one such scheme, the UK National Citizen Service, what I found was that, after participation, young people reported significant improvements in their levels of cohesion. They came off the scheme reporting warmer attitudes towards other ethnic groups, more positive social contact with other groups, and more positive views of cohesion in their local areas. However, what was particularly striking was how effective civic participation was at building cohesion among young people from more segregated or disadvantaged areas. These young people joined the scheme with much lower levels of cohesion. However, they also saw the largest improvements in cohesion from involvement in the scheme. As such, not only can participation help build cohesion but it can also help close the gaps in social cohesion for young people in society; especially those who face the biggest obstacles to cohesion in their daily lives.

Fostering opportunities for greater social and civic engagement among young people, which bring together youth from different backgrounds, may therefore be an effective, practical, immediate, and affordable pathway towards helping build cohesion among young people and their communities.

Dr James Laurence is a Research Fellow at the Cathie Marsh Institute for Social Research, The University of Manchester.

Muslims and the re-affirming of Human rights

Muslims are increasingly at the heart of controversies concerning human rights where ensuring security and living together are two big concerns that implicate them. There is both a global and local dimension to this: globally it is evidenced in the concern with refugees – think of the on-going crisis in Syria and more recently the Rohingya, while locally Muslims are a different concern – think extremism, radicalisation, and terror.

At the global/geo-political level, Muslims are recognised as vulnerable through their displacement, while locally due to security and social cohesion concerns, they are mapped, serveilled and made hyper-visible. So, there is something uncanny about Muslims and human rights; they are in need of its protections, while also seen as undermining of its principles.

These controversies have prompted an appraisal of the viability of Human Rights protections and of the conception of the human at the heart of Human Rights discourse and practice - (just think about the popularity of social and political theory around the 'state of exception', for example). This ambivalence is often simplistically reduced to Muslims experiencing a frustrated sense of belonging - but it is not the whole picture. Amidst the resultant negativity, Muslims also display remarkable faith in Human Rights – not just in the principles but also in their standard setting.

How might we think about Muslims as agents in the affirming of Human Rights rather than in their undermining?

One way is to consider the time when focusing and legislating on Human Rights became necessary - after the Jewish question in Europe - which helped set the ground for a Universal Declaration of Human Rights. This gave way to knowledge about racism and a tradition of work in anti-racism that remains rooted in the principles of Human Rights.

British Muslims who in their earlier incarnation as black, Asians or immigrants have settled in cities like Manchester, because of the need and opportunity presented by industry. In doing so they have helped establish a tradition of anti-race work that has contributed to advances in equalities legislation and the emergence of multicultural public spheres.

Today, Muslims – or the case of Muslims – is helping to push the parameters of anti-race work so that it encompasses new challenges posed by the erosion of civil liberties and extra-legal measures that work to stigmatise communities in the name of the 'war on terror'.

The question and challenge I pose is about how Muslim agonism might be understood and utilised in the continued affirmation of Human Rights.

Rather than seeing the Muslim question as exceptional, how might we think and incorporate them in designs for living together?

Dr Ajmal Hussain is Research Fellow in Sociology at The University of Manchester, working on the Dialogue About Radicalisation and Equality (DARE) project.

Young Muslims: the response to Prevent

The response to Prevent and how this affects and shapes their understanding of political and social activism.

In my research work, one of our key findings was that young Muslims experience a strong sense of stigmatisation. These stigmas are related to the widespread, negative connotation of Islam and Muslims. However, it's not only prejudice they encounter, that makes them feel uncomfortable and devalued, they also reported personal experiences of racism and Islamophobia which often follow from the existence of prevalent stigmas in society. They felt that these stigmas are not only reproduced through media reporting on Muslims, but also reinforced by the **UK counter-terrorism Prevent strategy** and its implementation. These stigmatisations create further problems for the already complex and sometimes troublesome identity work that young Muslims face and contribute further to their marginalisation in the British society.

Countering stigmatisation

Our study also found that young Muslims are countering these stigmatising experiences by engaging in social and political activism in order to challenge these misrecognitions and discriminations. While there has been very visible anti-Prevent campaigns by the National Union of Students, such as the NUS 'Students not Suspects' campaign, other forms of countering stigmatisation were more manifest in less overt social and political engagement. Many more young people are active in charity, volunteering, educational and social activities which aim to counter negative images of Islam and represent Islam in a positive way. For young Muslims 'doing good deeds' can be a powerful weapon in the fight against stigmatisation.

We therefore recommend that:

- more attention needs to be paid to raising awareness about the discriminatory effects of stigmatisation. While we have clear legislations against hate crimes and discrimination, these do not cover stigmatisation. Stigmatising encounters are much more difficult to prove, but they have nevertheless a profound effect on the self-worth of the groups and individuals who experience stigmatisation.
- young people's community and charity work is recognised and publicised both to encourage young people who want to be active to become so, but also in order to disseminate positive stories about young people, including about young Muslims.

Dr Necla Acik is a Research Fellow and lecturer at the Centre for Criminology and Criminal Justice School of Law, The University of Manchester.

Read more and join the debate at http://www.manchester.ac.uk/policyblogs
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