

CCE COMMISSION FOR
COUNTERING EXTREMISM
EXPOSED

THE ISLAMOPHOBIA INDUSTRY
POLICING THOUGHTS & BELIEFS

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CAGE is an independent advocacy organisation working to empower communities impacted by the War on Terror policies worldwide. The organisation highlights and campaigns against such policies in hope to achieve a world free from oppression and injustice.

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INTRODUCTION

In this report we will address some of the theoretical underpinnings of the Commission for Countering Extremism (CCE)'s study on and approach to 'extremism', as well as take a closer look at the biographies of the individuals making up the CCE Expert Group.

We will highlight that the CCE is far from the "independent" body it claims to be, but rather that it is comprised of individuals and organisations that are deeply embedded within the global Islamophobia industry, and who are deeply invested in building the foundations of what is acceptable public belief and what is not.

The Commission for Countering Extremism (CCE) was announced in the Conservative Party Election manifesto 2017, as a means to 'identify examples of extremism and expose them, to support the public sector and civil society, and help the government to identify

policies to defeat extremism and promote pluralistic values'¹.

In January 2018, Sara Khan, formerly CEO of the counter-extremism organisation Inspire was selected as the Lead Commissioner for the CCE, and the Commission was formally established in March.

In July, the CCE announced that it had formed an 'Experts Group'² and was embarking on an evidence-gathering drive³ with views to publishing a study on 'all types of extremism' – the terms of reference for which were released in September⁴, with the Call for Evidence released in November⁵.

CAGE has previously spoken out⁶ against the existence of the CCE, tout court. Given that it is an instrument of the state's counter-extremism apparatus, we do not believe that the Commission will change its course due to any change in leadership, nor will a

new head make it any less damaging to all those who seek to challenge from the state. Calls such as these only serve to legitimise the CCE, which is yet another instrument of the British government's relentless cold war on its own citizens, marketed in the guise of "counter-extremism".



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PRECURSORS TO THE CCE

Though the formation of the CCE was included in the Conservative Party Manifesto 2017, its roots as a project go back a few years before then. To understand the nature of the CCE, it is necessary to take into consideration the proposed 'Counter Extremism Bill', later known as the 'Counter Extremism and Safeguarding Bill'.

Referenced in the Conservative Party Manifesto 2015⁷ and coming off the back of the newly ratified Counter-terrorism and Security Act 2015, this Bill was to introduce draconian powers against 'extremism' that fell short of the threshold of counter-terrorism legislation, and more aggressively target 'extremist ideology'.

These new powers included Banning Orders to target 'extremist' groups, as well as 'Extremism Disruption Orders' and powers to shut mosques and other premises used to support 'extremism'. The legislation was

to also strengthen the powers of the Ofcom broadcasting regulator to crack down on channels broadcasting 'extremist' content - all centrally premised on the need to combat so-called extremist ideology.

The Bill was formally announced in the Queen's Speech in 2015⁸ and again in 2016⁹. It was also the feature of a major speech by then-PM David Cameron in Birmingham in 2015^{10,11}, during which he made the bleak pronouncements that:

"For too long, we have been a passively tolerant society, saying to our citizens: as long as you obey the law, we will leave you alone"

and that:

"What we are fighting, in Islamist extremism, is an ideology. It is an extreme doctrine"¹².

Despite the government's bravado in pushing for the Bill, it ultimately never materialised.

It appears that the Bill ran aground due to the government's inability to adequately legally define 'extremism' which would be necessary for operationalising the powers of the Bill^{13 14 15}.

The announcement of such sweeping powers in the Bill was also one step too far for many.

The Bill was met with concern and opposition from a notably broad range of groups, including Parliament's Joint Committee on Human Rights¹⁶ as well as more traditional supporters and critical friends of government counter-extremism such as Conservative MP David Davis¹⁷ and former Independent Reviewer of Terrorism Legislation, David Anderson¹⁸.

Sara Khan also registered light opposition, stating that she believed the ends that the Bill sought to achieve should be carried out by 'civil society, universities and others', rather than through blunt legislation¹⁹.

The CCE has provided Khan with the opportunity to do just that, in building what

she terms a 'powerful counter-extremism movement'²⁰ whilst also developing a working definition of Extremism which the government was unable to previously. She has used the fact that she criticised the Counter Extremism Bill as evidence of her independence from government²¹ - though this is an extremely low bar as far as political opposition goes.

It is also entirely possible that the work of the CCE will lay the groundwork for the re-introduction of the Counter Extremism Bill, or similar powers, in the near future and a key starting point - as we are witnessing - is settling on a definition of 'extremism'.

For the CCE to function, much relies on this crucial step.



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COUNTER EXTREMISM, PREVENT AND THE APPROACH OF THE CCE

The CCE's mission is drawn from the Counter Extremism Strategy (2015)²².

In June 2017, the Minister of State for Countering Extremism, Susan Williams, elaborating on the role of the CCE, stated in Parliament²³,

“Challenging extremism is not a new government objective. The new commission will build on the comprehensive programme of work set out in the counter-extremism strategy. This strategy is all about working with communities, standing up for our fundamental values, supporting integration and striving to defeat extremism. However, there is more that we can and must do. The Commission for Countering Extremism will play a crucial part in supporting future

efforts to stamp out extremism in this country.”

The Counter Extremism Strategy operates alongside and in parallel to the PREVENT strategy. Effectively it takes the framework of ‘countering extremism’ as developed under PREVENT and spreads it deeper within society.

In the course of ‘countering extremism’, the Counter Extremism Strategy itself makes reference to ‘hate crime’, Sharia arbitration councils, practices such as Female Genital Mutilation and ‘entryism’ within schools, charities and universities.

The Strategy also mentions implementing a 'counter-ideology campaign' that focuses on:

- ***Contesting the online space***
- ***Strengthening institutions***
- ***Supporting individuals at particular risk of radicalisation***
- ***Building a partnership with all those opposed to extremism***²⁴

Self evidently, this is stretching the notion of 'counter-extremism', bringing cultural practices and religious bodies into the purview of the counter-extremism apparatus. This effectively opens them up to a whole host of civil sanctions and government interventions, operating in the pre-criminal space, that have been part and parcel of British counter-extremism.

It also entrenches this broad and securitised approach within civil society to ensure the reach of the counter-extremism apparatus is felt throughout society - picking up the baton from PREVENT.



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THE BATTLE OVER IDEOLOGY

The focus of British counter-extremism has long been the alleged 'ideology' of 'extremism'.

This has become increasingly apparent through the trajectory that PREVENT has taken – from ostensibly positioning itself against violence at its beginning, to weaponising 'Fundamental British Values' as the litmus test for 'extremism', and then more recently tackling 'non-violent extremism'.

By focusing on ideology as a driver of political violence - rather than the socio-political and economic circumstances from which violence can evolve - PREVENT and counter-extremism not only mistakenly draw a line between political belief and violence, but such an approach also absolves government from any role in fomenting violence.

In doing so, it enables the state to sidestep or downplay questions of domestic and foreign policy which shape those socio-political and economic circumstances, and shift the blame for political violence on to communities – especially Muslim communities. At the same time, this approach opens the door for the state to police thoughts and expression.

The elastic definition of what constitutes 'extremism' together with the mistaken and debunked theory that these ideas follow a trajectory to violence, allows for more ideas to be tarred with that brush, and effectively, this gives the state veto power over ideologies and thoughts it deems too subversive, and the ability to disrupt them.

The inability of the state to define 'extremism' legally works in their favour - allowing any definition to be stretched when

deemed politically convenient.

This has long been our primary contention with counter-extremism measures – the focus on ideology is a gateway to justifying state coercion, whilst invoking the spectre of ‘extremism’ or ‘terrorism’ often muzzles any debate about abuses of power.

The danger with the CCE therefore, is continuing in this vein and expanding the scope of ideas that the state can disrupt, discredit or even criminalise.

The recent calls for evidence to settle on a definition of ‘extremism’, which we will cover shortly in this report, are therefore highly questionable in terms of their true purpose and genuineness.

Fundamentally, it should not be the role of the state to decide what is and is not acceptable discourse.

DEFINITIONS OF EXTREMISM

From the outset, Sara Khan and the CCE made it explicit²⁵ that PREVENT was “outside their remit”, since it fell under the government’s counter-terrorism strategy as opposed to its counter-extremism one.

The logic behind this is flawed; PREVENT is the programme through which ‘extremism’ has been and continues to be defined, and one of the primary mediums through which that definition is operationalised. CAGE has recorded many cases that attest to this.

The 2015 Counter Extremism Strategy expressly states²⁶ that it “builds” on the “PREVENT duty”, recognising that “it must go further”.

The distinction between PREVENT and the Counter Extremism Strategy, upon which the CCE is premised, therefore rings hollow – the CCE will take the framework developed under PREVENT and expand it further; taking counter-extremism into civil society

whilst PREVENT focuses on the public sector.

So it seems that in attempting to dissociate from PREVENT, Khan and the CCE actually seek to augment and contribute to the theoretical underpinnings of PREVENT, while seeking to avoid the negativity of the programme itself.

As the definition of ‘extremism’ is a government one, as opposed to a legal one, it remains elastic and can be adapted as per the state’s shifting agendas.

The CCE accepts the government’s vague definition of ‘extremism’ – as opposition to ‘fundamental British Values’ as its starting point - and will expand outwards from there, rather than critiquing that definition.

It also takes reference from other ‘in-house’ definitions of extremism developed, such as that of the A Shared Future²⁷ report by Greater Manchester Combined Authority –



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which coined the term 'hateful extremism', and suggested a closer association between 'extremism' and 'hate crime'. We will critique this notion later in this report.

The CCE has also put forward the notion of a commonsense understanding of 'extremism' – this curiously circular reasoning posits that, absent an actual definition, "people are able to describe what extremist activities, attitudes and behaviours look like"²⁸ - as if it were an innate ability.

It treats 'extremism' as something that can be more or less felt subjectively – glazing over the fact that in the modern context, it is the basis of an expansive legal apparatus that warrants serious and urgent scrutiny.

When the penalties for 'extremism' are severe - including the possible removal of children²⁹ - this betrays a disturbing trivialisation of the notion of 'extremism' and the implications of being labelled as such. In this atmosphere of vagueness and subjectivity, the CCE has stated that it "has no plans at present to put forward a statutory definition"³⁰. However, the Extremism Study Terms of Reference point

to how the Commission will seek to "propose a consensus over the boundaries of extremist attitudes and behaviours".

It appears that the government has all but given up on defining 'extremism' legally, but will instead build support around a 'popular' definition, the implications of which will likely be mobilised through PREVENT, other censorious counter-extremism powers – and any legislation proposed by the CCE itself.

Effectively, communities will be consulted on the terms of their own subjugation.

It is crucial that civil society and Muslim communities resist this attempt to manufacture consent around the oppressive project of counter-extremism.

Expanding the targets of counter-extremism, or diversifying it, makes PREVENT and/or counter-extremism no less unjust, and rectifies none of the deep issues about state abuses of power that occur under the guise of countering extremism.



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THE ‘PLAGUE ON BOTH HOUSES’: COUNTER-EXTREMISM, MUSLIMS AND THE FAR-RIGHT

What also stands out among the Counter Extremism Strategy, the CCE report Terms of Reference, and indeed the many individuals and their respective organisations featured on the Experts Group, is their ardent insistence that counter-extremism efforts must apply to both Muslim ‘extremists’ and the far-right.

The demand to expand counter-extremism and PREVENT beyond Muslims, and particularly to the far-right, has for some time been voiced, wrong-footedly, by more reform-minded critics of PREVENT.

Such arguments only underline the dangers inherent in reformist approaches; they end up legitimising repressive projects like PREVENT, whilst offering compensatory crumbs in return.

The insistence that efforts like PREVENT extend to the far-right is often accompanied by a logic – voiced by most members of the Experts Group – that Muslim ‘extremists’ and groups like the EDL are co-constitutive: that they are mirror images of ‘extremism’, feeding off one another to build their base – this is termed ‘reciprocal radicalisation’ or ‘cumulative extremism’.

This narrative must be confronted as a reductionist and ultimately revisionist history, which considers only the proximate causes and expression of violence growing in society today, rather than analysing the structural causes.

This paralyses society’s ability to deal with the rising far-right, and political violence more broadly. Treating the rise of the far-right as

independent of the state only reinforces the state's monopoly on force and its repressive technologies, whilst normalising the deeply problematic concept of 'extremism' itself.

The British Far-right

The EDL, forebearer of the latest fascist threat in Britain, grew out the vacuum left by the splintering and eventual collapse of the British National Party. Having been disenchanted by the 'respectable' electoral-based efforts of the BNP, the EDL signalled a return to the street movement-oriented style of earlier fascist groups like the National Front, which its successors like Britain First have adopted and taken further.

The common thread running between the rises of the National Front, BNP, EDL and other far-right groups in Britain, across various decades, is an inability by the state to properly address the material conditions from which fascism arises - Rather than tackling far-right politics head-on, there has been a history of successive governments pandering to, absorbing and adopting the policy platforms of those groups, and absorbing them into mainstream politics when it is expedient for them, whilst making a show of policing more overt fascist

violence.

In this way, governments have treated the far-right as a type of pressure group, steadily pulling the political consensus rightward. In doing so, they have legitimised it.

Whether it was Prime Ministers Margaret Thatcher speaking of Britain being "swamped by people with a different culture", Gordon Brown speaking of "British jobs for British workers", David Cameron declaring that "multiculturalism has failed" or most recently former Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson describing Muslim women who wear the Niqab as "letter-boxes" – each represented a calculated dog-whistle to the contemporary far-right.

More gravely, these calculated pronouncements were often backed up by legislative measures legitimising far-right agitation - such as immigration restrictions - and seeking to draw the right-wing audience towards those politicians' respective political projects.

However as of late, Donald Trump's victory, Brexit and the transnational organisation of the far-right have empowered the British far-right to spill out beyond the moderating influence of the current government. Cue

the desperate attempts by the political establishment to reassert their legitimacy as the 'middle ground' which they themselves have helped erode.

In short, the state cannot be trusted to deal with the issue of fascism, since they bear responsibility for its rise.

As has long been highlighted, but regularly downplayed by governments, the role of British foreign policy has been instrumental in driving political violence in Britain. In turn, the rise of the far-right has been fostered by the government's domestic policy, in particular around austerity and the deterioration of public services.

The drive to extend PREVENT and counter-extremism to both the far-right and Muslims is therefore a natural progression – it allows the state to use its latest coercive apparatus of counter-extremism to manage the consequences of both its foreign policy, and its domestic policy, without confronting its own complicity in fostering these

As Professor Marc Sageman writes in his book 'Turning to Political Violence':

“...it is impossible to analyze non-state political violence without taking into account a state's contribution to

its emergence. Political violence can be understood only in a dialectical relationship between a state and political protesters, in the context of an escalation of their conflict. This dynamic implies that the turn to political violence is not a linear process as it depends on the actions of the state, against which political protesters define themselves.”³²

This shift - what we term an equality of oppression between Muslims and the far-right - is a means to secure state power, foster a multimillion-pound counter-extremism industry, and rehabilitate the image of PREVENT and counter-extremism so that communities willingly take part in their own repression. The CCE is integral to this.



CAGE reiterates its belief in a principled opposition to PREVENT and the counter-extremism apparatus, and we continue to call for their abolition.

THE HATE CRIME AGENDA

The topic of 'hate crime', and its role in the counter-extremism project, is worthy of attention since it has been co-opted into the counter-extremism agenda.

The question of The Hate Crime agenda has exploded, particularly following the 2016 EU referendum, and has increasingly become entwined with policing more broadly, and counter-extremism in particular.

Whilst fully acknowledging the reality and urgent need to tackle violent racist and other incidents, there are problems inherent in the framing of these as 'hate crimes', which are self-defeating and lend themselves more to government interests than the interests of targeted communities.

A) Individualising incidents

The resurgence of the far-right – of which increased 'hate crime' is a symptom – is a distinct political phenomenon that must

be addressed on its own terms. Framing incidents - whether politically or juridically - as individualised 'hate crimes' instead break this phenomenon down into discrete, depoliticised instances that are divorced from the wider political context.

This means that structural causes of racism and Islamophobia are sidelined, as is the role of the state in whipping these up - instead, blame is apportioned to individual aggressors, often the public.

B) Demobilising community resistance

Whereas in the past, rises in street racism and the far right were met with independent grassroots mobilisation and self defence formations, the 'hate crime' apparatus reroutes this into policing; it becomes a law and order solution.

This effectively normalises police presence and engagement within communities

already brutalised by state violence, and demobilises community responses to oppression.

C) Policing

Given the nature of policing, prosecutions of hate crime are inevitably skewed against easy targets: the downwardly racialised and/or working class.

Meanwhile, the powerful, politicians and media players stoking up the climate that has facilitated the rise of the far-right never find themselves on the wrong side of hate crime legislation.

D) Game of Funding

Hate crime has emerged as an industry – with groups vying for state funding for monitoring projects and political clout. This sets the stage for organisations to compete for a monopoly over the hate crime ‘scene’.

The depoliticisation of the far-right mentioned above, and its subsequent collapsing into the field of ‘extremism’, has meant that common ground is increasingly found between counter-extremism advocates on the one hand, and liberal anti-racists and anti-hate crime advocates on the

other.

As will be shown later, this is expressed through liberals’ support for counter-extremism as a means to combat the far-right. It is also evident in the way that demands to combat ‘trolling’, online abuse and/or ‘fake news’ dovetail with government measures to regulate and censor the online space, to its benefit.

Recently, Labour MP Lucy Powell put forward a bill in Parliament effectively calling for greater regulation of Facebook groups³¹ – articulating her case by claiming the risk of ‘radicalisation’ presented by such forums.

THE ISLAMOPHOBIA BIAS IN THE CCE

What is striking about the majority of the members of the CCE is their links to well-known Islamophobic organisations and individuals, and the efforts of some of them to alter or challenge fundamental principles and aspects of Islamic belief.

This means that the very existence of the CCE is tied to the greater project of manufacturing a state compliant and fundamentally compromised version of Islam that will allow governments around the world to continue to escape accountability for the many abuses of the rule of law and human dignity taking place daily under the banner of the 'War on Terror'.

These efforts can be traced back to the ubiquitous and disabling RAND report entitled 'Building Moderate Muslim

Networks'³³, which breaks the global Muslim community into groups and provides the blueprint for maintaining neo-conservative hegemony.

This is done through nurturing conflict between these groups by supporting some (whom the US identified as the 'moderates') while criminalising others (the 'extremists' or 'Salafi-jihadists'), with the end goal being the weakening and subjugation of the entire Muslim community.

This is not just a concern for Muslims. This modus operandi has been used in different contexts of oppression in the past, and it can be replicated against any group or belief system that challenges the dominant one in the future. It involves collaborating even with those who appear

to oppose neo-conservatism, but whose deeper personal and political interests are piqued through manufacturing a fear-based misunderstanding of Islam.

Key in this current effort is getting Muslims themselves to buy into the language and narratives perpetuated by RAND and the resultant Islamophobic lobby.

Organisations in the UK that have carried this mission forward in various forms include most prominently, the Henry Jackson Society, the Policy Exchange, the Quilliam Foundation, the Tony Blair Institute for Global Change and other individuals - many of whom hold state influence or positions on the CCE, or who have placed themselves on the frontline of local PREVENT and global CVE (Countering Violent Extremism) networks.

The co-option or subjugation of Islam and other ideologies that present a threat or challenge is done through the lens of 'security' and is couched in sensible sounding [two words] policies whose real purpose is shrouded in terms such as 'safeguarding' and 'counter extremism'.

This report shows that the CCE is key in this effort, since its undercurrent is

fundamentally Islamophobic - as is evident by the dominant composition of the Expert Group.

THE CCE'S EXPERT

The groups represented on the Expert Group span hard-right neoconservatives and liberal antiracists, government ideologues and equality thinktanks. On appearance this seems to be a 'broad church', yet nearly all of them are connected to state counter-extremism and are therefore invested in implementing and cementing its faulty and damaging narratives.

That such a range of interests can become implicated in the deeply repressive counter-extremism nexus reflects its constant reinvention over the years - especially but not limited to the frequent rebrands of PREVENT, as well as the programme mapped out by the Counter Extremism Strategy.

PREVENT has been marketed in many guises, as a tool of 'community cohesion' and of 'safeguarding', a means of combating 'Islamist terrorism' and of tackling far-right 'hate crime'. In doing so, PREVENT has normalised its presence and co-opted more

stakeholders within its orbit.

The CCE therefore represents a convergence of the many strains of counter-extremism in Britain, in its political lead Sara Khan, its Expert Group of advisors, and in its supplementary activities - Hannah Stuart of the neoconservative Policy Exchange and formerly of the Islamophobic Henry Jackson Society³⁴⁻³⁵ being recently seconded to the Commission³⁶.

The selection of this board of 'experts' is both a reflection of where British counter-extremism is currently, and where it intends to go – and for this reason a closer look at the Expert Group that is at its centre is both necessary and timely.

This report will focus on the following individuals:

Sir David Anderson KBE QC, former Independent Reviewer of Terrorism Legislation

Emman El-Badawy, Head of Research (Co-Existence), Tony Blair Institute for Global Change

Jamie Bartlett, author and Director, Centre for the Analysis of Social Media at Demos

Professor Chetan Bhatt, Director, Centre for the Study of Human Rights, LSE

Dame Louise Casey DBE CB, Led a review into opportunity and integration.

Sasha Havlicek, Chief Executive, Institute of Strategic Dialogue

Dr Azeem Ibrahim, author and Research Professor at the Strategic Studies Institute

Sunder Katwala, Director, British Future

Nick Lowles MBE, Chief Executive, Hope Not Hate

Katie Morris, Former Head of Europe and Central Asia, Article 19

Fiyaz Mughal OBE FCMI, founder and director of Faith Matters and founder of Tell Mama

Pragna Patel, Director, Southall Black Sisters

Hilary Pilkington, Professor of Sociology, University of Manchester

Sir Mark Rowley KB QPM, former Assistant Commissioner, Metropolitan Police

Peter Tatchell, Human rights campaigner



FIYAZ MUGHAL OBE FCMI

*Founder and director of Faith Matters
and Founder of Tell MAMA*

Fiyaz Mughal is a former politician and has been involved in counter-extremism initiatives for many years. Following the 7/7 bombings in 2005 he worked as part of the Extremism Task Force Working Group set up by Tony Blair.

He served as a member³⁷ of the Supporting regional and local initiatives and community actions Working Group, and went on to pursue counter-extremism through his organisation Faith Matters and its project Tell Mama.

Similar to the approach of the Counter Extremism Strategy, Mughal's approach to counter-extremism is to pit 'Islamist extremism' and Islamophobic 'hate crime' as mirror image extremes that spiral off one another.

Mughal's organisation Faith Matters was founded as an interfaith organisation in early 2006, shortly after the Extremism

Task Force released their report³⁸. Faith Matters' company objectives³⁹ mirror the recommendations of the report⁴⁰, namely around interfaith, capacity building in faith communities and community cohesion.

Earlier in his career, Mughal was also a local councillor for the Liberal Democrats and he advised Party leaders on 'extremism', faith communities and integration⁴¹ for a number of years.

Early on in its life, Faith Matters received extensive funding^{42 43 44 45} from the Department for Community and Local Government (DCLG). Whilst claiming that neither Faith Matters nor its project Tell MAMA receive PREVENT funding^{46 47} Faith Matters has recently received funding under the Building a *Stronger Britain Together*⁴⁸ programme under the Counter Extremism Strategy 2015.

As explained earlier, the distinction between

PREVENT and the Counter Extremism Strategy is hollow at best, and the fact remains that Faith Matters have taken counter-extremism funding.

Tell MAMA was founded by Mughal as a project under Faith Matters in 2012, with the Liberal Democrats in government. It received a start-up fund of £395,500 under the DCLG⁴⁹ and a further £214,000 announced by Nick Clegg⁵⁰, whilst then-Deputy Leader Simon Hughes spoke at its launch event⁵¹ and is listed as Faith Matter's President⁵². Building Our Futures Together was a project launched by Faith Matters after Lee Rigby's killing and funded by Armed Forces Community Covenant Grant Scheme, to bridge communities with the British Army^{53 54}.

Faith Matters has since more actively promoted itself as an 'anti-extremist' organisation, with Mughal enthusiastically⁵⁵ promoting the early versions of PREVENT. On social media they have professed making referrals to PREVENT^{56 57} and reaffirmed the value of PREVENT in their eyes⁵⁸. They denounce calls to scrap PREVENT as "naive and politically immature"⁵⁹, and their limited criticisms of PREVENT only extend as far as instances of clear anti-Muslim overreach⁶⁰, and to bemoan its move away from being 'community-led'.

Mughal has been on record cheerleading ex-PM David Cameron's efforts to ramp up counter-extremism⁶¹, and has demanded that the government go further⁶².

As of 2017, Tell MAMA counted among its advisors numerous police figures and many PREVENT and counter extremism-associated individuals. These include regional PREVENT coordinator Hifsa Haroon-Iqbal⁶³, founder of the Women Against Radicalisation Network Henna Rai⁶⁴, and Vidhya Ramalingam⁶⁵, co-founder of the Moonshot CVE counter-extremism enterprise.

The Patrons of Faith Matters include crossbench peer Carlile of Berriew⁶⁶, who as Independent Reviewer of Terrorism Legislation from 2001-2011 waved through⁶⁷ vast swathes of counter-terror legislation by the Labour and Coalition governments. He has since spoken and hosted a number of events^{68 69 70} by the Henry Jackson Society while also serving as a patron of the lawfare organisation UK Lawyers for Israel⁷¹.

A month before the announcement of the CCE's Experts Group, fellow Expert Azeem Ibrahim was added as a patron⁷² of Faith Matters.

Recent statements and behaviour by

Mughal and Tell MAMA suggest that they may become more openly hostile towards the Muslim communities and Muslim organisations they claim to defend, in an apparent effort to cosy up to power and establish themselves as the “legitimate authority” on Muslims.

Seemingly taking the lead from the more aggressive tone of the Conservative government, Mughal/Tell MAMA began berating Muslims for having a “victimisation narrative”⁷³ and blaming them for antisemitism⁷⁴ - they have also disseminated discriminatory tropes, singling out Muslims who attend pro-Palestine demos “walking in clothing that was reminiscent of villages in Pakistan”⁷⁵; narratives that are steeped in racism and classism.

Mughal has also played up the good Muslim/bad Muslim divide⁷⁶, appealing for support from the government against the ‘extremist’ organisations⁷⁷ that oppose figures like himself.

He has attacked groups like CAGE and MEND, declaring that the government “need to have a spine in challenging these groups”⁷⁸, as well attacking the Islamic Human Rights Commission on highlighting the link between Zionism and

Islamophobia⁷⁹.

Mughal therefore seems to reflect the deep cynicism of British counter-extremism - manipulating an apparently benevolent project (tackling ‘hate crime’ against Muslims) as a Trojan Horse for programmes that at the core target and securitise Muslims and Muslim civic space.

With his long history on the counter-extremism scene, Mughal serves as one of the establishment figures on the CCE Experts Group, and we will likely see efforts from the CCE to package intolerant counter-extremism in liberal guise through him.

“Will we finally see a robust challenge to Islamist groups or will they be allowed to undermine trust between our police, the Government and our State, thereby making us more vulnerable? For far too long they have run amok framing themselves as David against the Goliath of Government. The reality is that Goliath has been asleep for far too long. Now it must be shaken from its slumber.”⁸²



SIR MARK ROWLEY KB QPM

*Former Assistant Commissioner,
Metropolitan Police*

Mark Rowley was formerly Assistant Commissioner at the Metropolitan Police, alongside being its National Lead for Counter Terrorism Policing, and Chair of the National Police Chiefs' Council Counter-Terrorism Coordination Committee. He retired from policing in early 2018.

During his time as Counter Terror Head between 2014-18, he oversaw policing operations around the Manchester Arena and London attacks of 2017.

Rowley represents the establishment face of the Experts Group, bringing seniority and heavy political weight to the CCE but further eroding any pretensions of its 'independence' or distance from the state.

Rowley has robustly defended the PREVENT programme. He has continuously promoted the need for public¹³⁶ support and referrals to ensure PREVENT's success, and in August

2016 he was quoted¹³⁷ as announcing that the programme was turning 'two people a day' away from extremism.

According to government statistics on PREVENT¹³⁸ released for the year preceding his statement, 7631 referrals were made, with 381 of those resulting in action through Channel - a rate of 5% of 'worthwhile' referrals, and only 14% discussed at Channel panels at all.

Unsurprisingly for someone on the practising end of PREVENT, the remaining 95% of 'false positive' referrals are deemed justifiable in pursuit of those 5% potential 'extremists' (in the pre-criminal space). The fear and anxiety that those 95% false-positives experienced at having been referred to counter-terrorism policing is also not worthy of pause, in the eyes of Rowley.

In February 2018, shortly before stepping

down, he held a lecture hosted by the right-wing think-tank Policy Exchange, titled 'Extremism and Terrorism: the need for a whole society response'¹³⁹. In it, he outlined his call for a full-spectrum response to the "twin threats" of extremism and terrorism – and though trying to distance himself from the 'conveyor belt' model, he stresses that the fight between the two threats are inseparable.

In doing so, he placed MEND and CAGE on par with far-right groups like the EDL and Britain First, as groups who share an 'extremist' strategy of stoking grievances and isolating communities, setting the scene for terrorists to exploit them. This is effectively a broader re-articulation of the conveyor belt model, and scarcely different from the standard government line, in addition to being an underhanded attack on Muslim organisations.

Alongside this, Rowley praised key figures in the institutionalisation of counter-extremism and Islamophobia, such as ex-Charity Commission head William Shawcross, Ofsted Chief Amanda Spielman, Louise Casey and CCE Commissioner Sara Khan¹⁴⁰.

With regards to the 'whole society response' of the lecture title, this included efforts

across multiple sectors, including: Policing, Private Sector, Social Policy/Integration/Education, Safeguarding, the mainstream and social media and from among communities.

Effectively, he advocates a blanket, closed society securitisation for the public sector and broader society that functions on a fear-based paradigm where further draconian legislation can be introduced.

The Experts Groups of the CCE represents precisely this – a convergence of forces across sectors that can help theorise upon and develop a full-spectrum counter-extremism apparatus. Rowley's position on the Experts Group can help secure his vision.



...my key premise is that the acute threat from terrorism will only be tackled when the whole of society can respond to the chronic threat that we face from extremism”¹⁴¹

- Mark Rowley



EMMAN EL-BADAWY

*Head of Research (Co-Existence),
Tony Blair Institute for Global Change*

Emman El-Badawy currently works as the Head of Research in the 'Co-Existence' branch at the Tony Blair Institute for Global Change (TBI). She also goes by the name Emma.

Prior to the TBI, she worked at its predecessor organisation the Tony Blair Faith Foundation as part of its Centre on Religion & Geopolitics, alongside Ed Husain of counter-extremist organisation Quilliam Foundation²⁰⁷.

Before this, El Badawy herself was also Civil Society Project Officer at Quilliam²⁰⁸. She has also been drawn upon as a BBC 'Expert Voice' on topics including 'Political Islam and Islamist extremism' and 'terrorism and Islamist networks'²⁰⁹ and she interned²¹⁰ at the Egyptian thinktank International Center for Future and Strategic Studies which focuses

on 'extremism' in Egypt²¹¹. El-Badawy has presented her research to the UK Home Office, the Foreign Office and the British Council and had her research briefed to the Pentagon and the United Nations²¹².

The Tony Blair Institute for Global Change, also known as the Tony Blair Institute, was formed in 2016 as part of a merger between Tony Blair's previous organisations the Tony Blair Governance Initiative and the Tony Blair Faith Foundation²¹³. Tony Blair takes an active role in its affairs, dedicating 'at least 80% of his time' to the Institute, according to its financial statements²¹⁴.

Funders of the Institute have included a number of governments, including the US State Department. It was also recently forced to admit having received circa £9,000,000 in donations from an organisation managed by

a Saudi Arabian government minister.²⁵

The aim of the Co-Existence branch of TBI that El-Badawy helps head is concerned with Countering 'extremism' through 'tackling the ideology behind violence, not just the violence itself'²¹⁶ – chiefly that of 'Islamist extremism'.

Through both the TBI and the previous Faith Foundation, El-Badawy has been involved in producing research on the supposed ideological and theological drivers of political violence. These include the 2015 report (under the Tony Blair Faith Foundation) 'Inside the Jihadi Mind: Understanding Ideology and Propaganda' and the 2016 'Milestones to Militancy: What the lives of 100 jihadis tell us about a global movement'.

This emphasis on tackling the 'ideology' of 'extremism', as opposed to the material conditions that give rise to political violence, puts TBI very much on frequency with PREVENT and British counter-extremism more broadly. This is the rationale used to operate PREVENT in the 'pre-crime' space and justify coercive state apparatus to shut down types of expression.

'Non-violent Islamist propaganda' is also the subject of El-Badawy's current British

Academy-funded research in collaboration with John Bew²¹⁷. Bew is a member of the right-wing, pro-war lobby group Policy Exchange, where he is head of their Britain in the World programme²¹⁸, launched by the Government's Secretary of State for Defence in March 2016. He also served as the CEO of the Israel-linked²¹⁹ International Centre for the Study of Radicalisation (ICSR) at King's College London.

El-Badawy's previous work with major players in the counter-extremism field, such as Quilliam, and her current presence as a representative of an organisation like the TBI, with such intimate connections with governments and despots globally, also highlight the 'revolving door' of the counter-extremism industry. This also highlights the way in which a closed, cross-pollinating network of thinktanks, academics and politicians are able to organise in and wield influence over state programmes like counter-extremism to support their political inclinations.

El-Badawy's research and expertise with regards to the 'ideology' of 'extremism' fits in very well with the prevailing logic of counter-extremism that the CCE will mobilise around, and she can effectively serve as the intellectual wing of the Expert Group.



SASHA HAVLICEK

Chief Executive of the Institute for Strategic Dialogue

Sasha Havlicek is the founding CEO for the Institute of Strategic Dialogue (ISD), a counter-extremism think-tank. She is also Executive Director of the Counterextremism.org project run by ISD, and has been CEO of the Trialogue Educational Trust, Executive Director of the Club of Three and co-chair of the EU Radical Awareness Network internet working group.

ISD is involved in an extensive number of counter-extremism initiatives globally, and developed partnerships with a range of communications and tech companies - including Facebook, Google and Twitter¹⁸⁰ - and governments across Europe and the US, and well as UK state departments such as the Office for Security & Counter-terrorism.

ISD's counter-extremism projects span social media-based solutions to online extremism, youth and grassroots movement

building, education programmes and media projects, and network for policy planners around countering radicalisation and urban resilience.

They have also worked collaboratively on external projects, such as a pilot programme for Facebook¹⁸¹ that sought to 'deradicalise extremist' users by employing fake users to contact and engage them over Facebook Messenger. As part of their counter-extremism online intervention programmes, ISD have worked with the Centre for the Analysis of Social Media at Demos, directed by fellow CCE Expert, Jamie Bartlett.

ISD, Club of Three and the Trialogue Educational Trust, which Havlicek has held senior positions in, are all inter-related projects of the late Lord Weidenfeld, based around the shared project of European geo-strategic collaboration and defence of

European values.

ISD retains a close relationship with Weidenfeld's charity The Weidenfeld-Hoffman Trust, with which it exchanges funding¹⁸².

As of 2016, ISD operates all the counter-extremism work of this trifecta of projects. Weidenfeld was a well-connected political networker¹⁸³, and was former political advisor¹⁸⁴ for the first President of Israel Chaim Weizmann as well as being President of the All Party Parliamentary Group on Britain-Israel¹⁸⁵. He believed that "even the so-called moderate Muslims have this goal in mind to Islamise Europe...when it comes to the entirety of Islam...they must make it finally clear where they stand in relation to our civilisation."¹⁸⁶

In addition to being well connected politically, ISD has been a hub for many figures on the counter-extremism scene.

Havlicek co-chaired the EU Radical Awareness Network internet working group for a number of years. Rashad Ali , early staff member at Quilliam Foundation¹⁸⁸ is a Resident Senior Fellow¹⁸⁹ , whilst former Quilliam Senior Researcher Julia Ebner serves as ISD Research Fellow. Dilwar

Hussain of the Islam reform organisation New Horizons in British Islam has been a Senior Programme Advisor to ISD and is currently a Fellow ¹⁹⁰, and their project and programme managers include former PREVENT practitioners.

In addition to funding from private projects globally, ISD has also received funding by the Building a Stronger Britain Together¹⁹¹ counter-extremist programme.

Havlicek brings a high level of professional counter-extremism expertise to the CCE as well as connections to the political class. ISD and Havlicek have undertaken extensive work into online counter-extremism, which has rapidly emerging as a new frontier for counter-extremism and will likely be a priority for the CCE.



JAMIE BARTLETT

Author and Director of the Centre for the Analysis of Social Media at Demos

Jamie Bartlett is Director of the Centre for the Analysis of Social Media at the policy think-tank Demos. He was previously Head of Demos' Violence and Extremism Programme, Demos until 2012.

Whilst being associated with Tony Blair's New Labour early in its life, Demos describes itself as 'authentically cross-party'¹⁵⁷, and has worked with and hosted a range of political parties, figures and government departments on projects.

It also has extensive experience in research and policy recommendations around counter-terrorism and counter-extremism.

Its 2005 research report *Joining Forces*¹⁵⁸ on national security, for example, called for the need to 'engage citizens as 'unlikely counter-terrorists'. In 2006, then-Home Secretary

John Reid spoke approvingly¹⁵⁹ of the report's recommendations at a Demos event, and announced the government's move to joined up a collaborative counter-terrorism approach.

Demos has undertaken a number of research projects on counter-extremism. For example in 2007 it received £85,000 from the Department of Communities and Local Government¹⁶⁰ for a project on Tackling Extremism, and over £104,000 from the Economic and Social Research Council for a project on Radicalisation between 2007¹⁶¹ and 2008¹⁶², as well as a funding for workshops in mosques for a further Tackling Extremism project between 2008-10. It has engaged the topic internationally as well, receiving funding from Public Safety Canada on a project on Radicalisation between 2008-10¹⁶³

¹⁶⁴ ¹⁶⁵.

The culmination of these projects was a number¹⁶⁶ of reports¹⁶⁷ co-written by Bartlett on the counter-extremism agenda, which critiqued the implementation of the Labour government's PREVENT programme. The reports recommended a number of reforms including narrowing and focusing the scope of the programme, decoupling it from community cohesion and moving to a 'liberal republican approach' to countering non-violent extremist ideas, which 'relies on forceful counter-arguments against extremist ideas, including from Muslim communities and individuals'.¹⁶⁸

Bartlett has maintained this philosophical outlook when critiquing later versions of PREVENT, and has opposed¹⁶⁹ the Coalition government's turn to excluding 'non-violent extremists'¹⁷⁰ as partners in PREVENT.

In his recent book *Radicals*, he embraced the potential of 'radical', fringe politics as being important in driving ideology and society forward. He also correctly identified the danger of PREVENT, and its related architecture of counter-extremism, as being used to target future 'radical' ideas that can be productive for society. He also placed the role of PREVENT in '[spearheading] a decade-long laser focus on British Muslims, creating a self-perpetuating obsession...that

did not exist before 2005'¹⁷¹ as well as the self-censorship it fosters¹⁷².

Bartlett's agreeable insights run aground on his unwillingness to see these potential issues as being built-in inevitabilities of PREVENT, by accepting the state narrative of PREVENT at face-value and critiquing it on this basis.

He generously attributes a well-meaningness¹⁷³ ¹⁷⁴ to the government over its approach to PREVENT - as being designed to keep its people safe - and generally puts his concerns down to an unintentional mission creep with PREVENT. Conversely, we understand PREVENT as a politically constituted project from inception, intentionally building towards a securitised, closed society.

The danger he warns of PREVENT being expanded to other 'radical' ideas that deviate from the state consensus is also not merely a concern for the future, and CAGE have shown¹⁷⁵ how PREVENT has been used actively to repress dissent in the here and now, whilst forming a cradle-to-grave police state¹⁷⁶.

This perspective, and misunderstanding of the fundamental nature of PREVENT and

counter-extremism as a tool of governance, leads Bartlett to conclude that if PREVENT can be used to foster free-thinking, 'PREVENT can be the friend of liberty'¹⁷⁷.

Through the Centre for the Analysis of Social Media, Bartlett has undertaken projects and authored reports on extremism in the online space - and investigating the effectiveness of grassroots 'counterspeech' tactics¹⁷⁸ to combat "extremist" messaging. He has also spoken of the dangers new technology can present to democracy.

With Bartlett's extensive experience, including field research, into 'radicalisation', his work on social media extremism would likely be his most useful asset for the purpose of the CCE.

This is due to an increasing interest across the political sphere on combating extremism and/or 'hate speech' online - as referenced in the Counter Extremism Strategy.

The issue of countering online extremism has been an object of RICU activity¹⁷⁹ in recent years, and concerns over online 'hate speech' have dovetailed with government attempts to regulate and censor cyber space.

Barlett is likely to serve as a more critical

voice on the CCE Experts Group than his colleagues, but ultimately his presence on it serves the interests of the CCE in consolidating a whole-society approach to counter-extremism. It remains to be seen whether his proximity to the more hardline figures in counter-extremism represented on the Experts Group will sour his optimistic view of PREVENT.



DAME LOUISE CASEY DBE CB,

Led a review into opportunity and integration.

Louise Casey is a former government official with an 18-year career in various roles in the Civil Service, at the service of several governments.

In October, Casey temporarily stepped down from her role on the Expert Group¹⁴² and was drafted in to advise a review of the implementation of PREVENT in venues¹⁴³.

Most recently, Casey led a review into integration and opportunity released in late 2016, commonly known as the 'Casey Review'¹⁴⁴.

Under government policy, Integration now forms one of the three planks of the wider counter-terrorism apparatus - alongside Counter-Terrorism including PREVENT, and Countering Extremism including the CCE¹⁴⁵ - all of which interconnect at various points.

Framed by Casey as a blunt and hard-hitting investigation bringing up difficult-but-necessary questions about integration, the Casey Review was instead criticised for its focus on Muslims¹⁴⁶ and migrants. It was also lambasted for effectively taking a deficit model approach to Muslims, migrant communities and integration, and articulating integration concerns around the issue of extremism and British Values.

In explaining the disadvantage and lack of opportunity afforded to Muslim and migrant communities, the report¹⁴⁷ placed disproportionate blame on the affected communities, and the apparent pathologies within the culture of those communities - including "regressive religious ideologies" - as opposed to considering or exploring structural causes of deprivation, such as state racism.

The Review warned of the risks presented by home-schooling, unregulated faith schooling and Sharia marriage arbitration, among others, to deepening inequality and/or fostering 'extremism'.

Casey also took the stance that the government had been too afraid to point out the internal issues within these communities for fear of offending them or being painted as racist or Islamophobic. She took this further by stating bluntly that "political correctness has made us more vulnerable to extremists"¹⁴⁸.

The accusations levelled by Casey were vastly out of step with the reality - the Conservative governments have cultivated an aggressive Muscular Liberalism approach, which had by then long been imposing rigid 'British Values' upon Muslim and other communities, and attacking them as 'extremist' for falling foul of these. A whole host of social engineering practices have sprung from the government's counter-extremism strategy for a number of years, which CAGE have long documented.

She also argued against the notion¹⁴⁹ that integration is a 'two-way street' and called for more robust promotion of British Values¹⁵⁰ and the 'British way of life' for migrants,

including demanding that new migrants take an 'oath of allegiance'.

The Integrated Communities Strategy Green Paper¹⁵¹ released in 2018, partly in response to the Casey Review, picked up on and expanded the range of these practises. It included proposals for the stricter regulation of out of school education and home schooling, and further policing of 'British Values' in schools.

Casey has also passionately defended PREVENT, and criticised officials for not defending it better themselves, saying that "I think we've been too quick to allow PREVENT to be associated with expressions like toxic brand."¹⁵²

With her experience in the corridors of power, Casey represents another political heavyweight on the CCE Experts Group. Her strident calls for imposing British Values and combatting 'regressive' religious and cultural practices in Muslim, migrant and/or minority communities to tackle extremism lend themselves well to the social engineering aspects of the counter-'extremism' agenda.

The fact that she views the aggressive Muscular Liberalism of the government as meek and insufficient foreshadows an even

more hardline lobby on this front from the CCE than we have witnessed currently.



SUNDER KATWALA

Director of British Future

Sunder Katwala is the Director of British Future, a think-tank whose objectives include “[identifying] messages about creating an inclusive Britain and constructive responses to common anxieties about integration, identity, migration and opportunity”.

Between 2003 and 2011 Sunder was the General Secretary of the Fabian Society¹²³, an influential think-tank affiliated to the Labour party, and now commonly associated with its centre to right-wing MPs. He also served as an advisor to Citizens UK’s report ‘Missing Muslims - Unlocking British Muslim Potential for the Benefit of All’¹²⁴.

The work of British Future primarily concerns itself with developing and cultivating an inclusive ‘British’ - or at times, English - identity and civic inclusion, which it perceives as a solution to divisions in society - whether racism, Brexit or ‘extremism’¹²⁵.

Katwala’s background lends itself well to the British government’s ongoing project of constructing ‘British Values’ and identity - which in their hands serves as a vehicle of social engineering. The enforcement of British Values forms a key pillar of the Prevent duty in schools and further education for example, and has served as both a carrot and a stick for Muslims (and other communities); it gives the impression of an inclusive collective society, whilst punishing those that fall outside of it.

In terms of ‘extremism’, Katwala and British Future conceptualises it in line with the idea of reciprocal radicalisation - as a self-reinforcing clash of extremes with the far-right on one end, and ‘Islamists’ on the other¹²⁶: an ultimately superficial analysis that absolves the state. By promoting civic inclusion, British Future believes that society can be de-polarised.

With regards to the Prevent duty on schools

for example, Katwala has promoted the idea that the duty should be equalised as part of 'safeguarding' responsibilities, 'protecting our youth from grooming extremists on the far right or religious cults, as well as from Islamist extremists'¹²⁷.

As Katwala and British Futures have described it, 'inclusion' can be achieved by progression within civic institutions like the "police, in the armed forces and in the intelligence services"¹²⁸ and promoting shared histories, by highlighting the role of Muslim soldiers fighting on behalf of colonial Britain during World War I¹²⁹¹³⁰.

On the point of Muslim soldiers in WWI, British Future initiated a project in 2015 called 'Unknown and Untold'¹³¹ for which they co-hosted an event with the Ministry of Defence and the Armed Forces Muslim Forum, and a garden party discussing the idea of an 'English Islam'.

The project was run alongside the organisation New Horizons in British Islam which promotes a 'reform' in Islam, and is known for hosting its annual 'British Islam Conference' regularly featuring speakers from the Quilliam Foundation, PREVENT practitioners and now-CCE Commissioner Sara Khan¹³².

That same year, Qari Asim, of the RICU-sponsored ImamsOnline¹³³, joined as trustee of British Future. He is also trustee of Hope not Hate, also represented on the CCE Experts Group.

Ultimately, British Future's ostensibly well-meaning aims on creating an inclusive identity cannot be divorced from the context of British counter-extremism, the weaponisation of 'British Values', and the clear desire to create a state-sanctioned Islam.

Katwala's role on the CCE Experts Group will likely be in service of this mission.



NICK LOWLES

Director, Hope not Hate

Nick Lowles is the founder of Hope Not Hate (HnH), which defines itself as an anti-racist, anti-fascist group. It has also joined the 'anti-extremist' camp, since it perceives these agendas as being consistent - and claims that its mission is to "[seek] to challenge and defeat the politics of hate and extremism within local communities".

Hope not Hate has an existing relationship with CCE commissioner Sara Khan, having hosted her at a conference as far back as 2013⁸³, and published a contribution from her in their 'State of Hate' annual report in 2017⁸⁴ - a piece that targeted Muslim community organisations and individuals under the slippery labels of 'Salafi Islamist' and 'extremist'.

HnH arrives at their pro-counter-extremist stance through a very state-centric anti-fascism, which views the 'extremes' of the

far-right and 'Islamism' at the fringe, with the role of the state being to defend and protect the acceptable middle ground.

HnH exemplify the 'plague on both their houses' approach mentioned earlier in this report, and adheres to the notion of reciprocal radicalisation.

In line with the approach outlined in the Counter Extremism Strategy, this narrative enables groups like HnH to ignore the hand of governments in creating the conditions for political violence and social polarisation - by whipping up the far-right through structural Islamophobia and xenophobia at home, and generating grievances in other communities by carrying out a damaging and destabilising foreign policy abroad - while securitising communities more broadly in an attempt to silence even legitimate opposition to these policies.

Furthermore, in giving license to the state to combat 'extremism' they ignore the fundamentally oppressive nature of counter-extremism programmes themselves.

In 2014, HnH co-launched⁸⁵ their campaign See It Report It^{86 87}, encouraging and guiding people to report 'online extremism' on social media. The campaign was co-supported by the RICU⁸⁸-supported projects⁸⁹ Imams Online and Upstanding Neighbourhoods, as well as JAN Trust and Active Change Foundation, two well-known PREVENT beneficiaries of past.

That year they also launched their Generation Jihad blog⁹⁰, as "a forum to monitor, expose and understand militant jihadism and extreme Islamism".

Whilst Lowles has claimed⁹¹ that Hope not Hate has never received PREVENT funding, under its former charity arm 'Searchlight Educational Trust' it received funding⁹² from the Department of Communities and Local Government in order to build capacity against the English Defence League as part of their 'Building Communities' project. This relationship casts doubt on the ability of Hope not Hate to hold the government to account and suggests a proximity to state counter-extremism due to the nature of the

project.

This lack of appreciation for the wider context that contributes to the 'state of hate' is glaringly obvious in an article written by Hope not Hate's research director Matthew Collins in the New Statesman⁹³. He absolves both Theresa May and Nigel Farage of the responsibility of mainstreaming far right narratives because neither "have called for the extermination of immigrants, asylum seekers and fellow politicians".

The trustees of Hope Not Hate include Qari Asim of the RICU-supported project ImamsOnline and formerly Ruth Smeeth, now MP, who worked for pro-Israel lobbying organisation BICOM⁹⁴(Britain Israel Communications and Research Centre).

Nick Lowles' place on the CCE Experts Board is effectively to serve as cover for the 'liberal wing' of counter-extremism, a stance that betrays a deep naivete as to the true function and purpose of state counter-extremism.



PRAGNA PATEL

Director, Southall Black Sisters

Pragna Patel is the Director of Southall Black Sisters, an advocacy and campaigning group against gender-based violence. She was also co-founder of the now-defunct group Women Against Fundamentalism.

Southall Black Sisters (SBS) is defined by its staunch secularism, and its outright opposition to religious accommodation within the law - most vocally to Sharia arbitration courts and other such normative Islamic practices. It is also against political expressions of religion, in particular Islam, but also Hindutva politics, which it views as antithetical to the rights of women.

Their aggressive secularism and anti-'fundamentalism' has led to SBS supporting intolerant practices of social conditioning against Muslim communities with regards to bans on Sharia arbitration⁹⁵ and gender

separation at Muslim schools⁹⁶.

These positions have brought them into collaboration with groups like CCE Lead Sara Khan's Inspire, who provide 'progressive' cover. Patel's position on the CCE is likely to deepen the range of social engineering practices and more openly connect these with the counter-extremism apparatus.

SBS are highly critical of policies of state multiculturalism, particularly under the past Labour government - a commonly-held position. But in doing so, they allege that these policies have allowed 'religious fundamentalists' to gain access to the halls of power and impose religious doctrine upon the law, at the expense of women's rights.

They accuse Muslim organisations, such as the MCB⁹⁷, of organising an 'extremist' and

'fundamentalist' infiltration of the state apparatus through demands for religious accommodation - something described by Patel as 'Sharia-fication by stealth'⁹⁸. This mimics the conspiracy theories of the far-right, meaning they find uneasy but common ground with neo-conservatives when it comes to their orientation towards Islam.

Moreover they accuse the government of bending to the will of Muslim organisations. In doing so they attribute a massively overstated level of influence to Muslim organisations, and ignore the aggressive 'muscular liberalism' that has characterised government policy for the majority of this decade. Under this doctrine, government has roundly dismissed all but the most compliant Muslim organisations, whilst shifting the boundaries of 'extremism' to weaponise policy against others.

More recently, SBS' work has brought them into active alliance with individuals campaigning for social engineering practices against the Muslim community. These include their campaigns to outlaw gender separated seating⁹⁹ at University events, and against the Law Society's guidance on Sharia-compliant wills¹⁰⁰. Most notably, in 2017 their challenge against gender separation at

Al-Hijrah¹⁰¹ Islamic primary school saw them campaign alongside now-CCE Commissioner Sara Khan, and Ofsted head Amanda Spielman, who has supported hijab bans in school¹⁰².

SBS' singular-minded attack on religious self-organisation has brought them from a position critical of the state, to actively collaborating with architects of state oppression against minoritised communities. And in their campaign against 'extremist infiltrations' of the state, they have lent support to the encroaching dominance of 'muscular liberalism' by the state.

Through Patel's place on the CCE Experts Group, we can likely expect more social engineering measures promoted by the CCE.



PETER TATCHELL

Human Rights Campaigner

Peter Tatchell is a human rights activist, particularly known for his LGBT advocacy through groups like the Gay Liberation Front and OutRage!.

The linchpins of Tatchell's politics are a commitment to liberalism and secularism, and as part of his LGBT activism he has railed against what he terms religious homophobia. In recent years he has particularly strongly criticised 'Islamists', whilst promoting so-called 'liberal Muslims'²³¹ – which for him includes individuals like the Council of Ex-Muslims of Britain²³², LGBT Muslims²³³ and figures like Sara Khan²³⁴.

This approach dovetails with that of the Good Muslim/Bad Muslim dichotomy pushed by government, in playing sections of the Muslim community off against others, and pushing for a 'reformist' Islam that lays the groundwork for invasive counter-extremist measures in Muslim communities.

Similar to Southall Black Sisters (SBS), also represented on the Expert Group, Tatchell's commitment to secularism has brought him round from a position of being critical of the state, to actively supporting a project like the CCE, which is geared towards expanding state power.

The inability of Tatchell and SBS to grasp how state racism has been reconfigured in a major way into modern state Islamophobia, has led them into uncomfortable alliances with hard right-wing secularists in pursuit of liberal values. In the course of tackling 'Islamism' Tatchell has for example promoted the Henry Jackson Society project 'Student Rights' in their campaign against 'Islamist' speakers on university campuses^{235 236}, as well the Quilliam Foundation report on 'radicalisation' on campuses²³⁷, whilst also publishing essays promoting right-wing narratives around the so-called 'Trojan Horse' plot.

Tatchell has a prior relationship with CCE Lead Sara Khan, whose essay he published on his website, promoting a 'battle' within the Muslim community between liberal Muslims and extremists²³⁹.

Tatchell had made himself known as an active proponent for 'free speech', and has campaigned against - albeit often erroneously labelled²⁴⁰ - instances of 'No Platforming on campuses'²⁴¹.

He also opposed the introduction of Extremism Disruption Orders in the proposed Counter Extremism Bill²⁴² which, as mentioned earlier, received exceptionally broad criticism, and on this basis Sara Khan has promoted Tatchell's credentials in holding government to account on counter-extremism.²⁴³

This support for free speech however often falls short in the case of Muslim speakers on campuses, against whom he has campaigned when he deems them sufficiently 'extreme'²⁴⁴. It has also been suggested that Tatchell has used the threat of litigation to stifle criticism of his activism.²⁴⁵

²⁴⁶

Tatchell's presence on the CCE should be

seen in relation to individuals like Pragna Patel of SBS and Louise Casey, in pushing through a values-based 'reformation' agenda underpinned by secular norms, that can be used against Muslims - all the while hiding under the veneer of being pro-human rights.



PROFESSOR CHETAN BHATT

Director, Centre for the Study of Human Rights, LSE

Chetan Bhatt is a Professor of Sociology at the London School of Economics (LSE). Previously he worked at Goldsmiths College, and the University of Essex, and Southampton, and he also chairs the Fellowships Program Board of the Open Society Foundations.

Bhatt's fields of interest include human rights, right-wing religious groups, political violence and 'extremism'.

Bhatt is not particularly connected to the counter-extremism apparatus, unlike many of his colleagues on the CCE Experts Group.

His entry to counter-extremism is motivated by his strong secularism, and the threat to human rights he reads in the rise of organised religious groups. He has particularly addressed the rise of Hindutva politics, but also 'Salafi-jihadis'.

Bhatt has criticised¹³⁴ the presence of what he terms 'extremist books' in the prison system, including Milestones by Sayyid Qutb, The Lawful and Prohibited in Islam by Sheikh Yusuf al-Qardawi and the Fundamentals of Tauheed by Bilal Philips.

In the course of his secularist activism, he has worked alongside members of Southall Black Sisters, whose Director Pragna Patel also sits on the Experts Group. Bhatt signed a letter co-led by them calling for the abolition of 'Sharia courts'¹³⁵.

Bhatt's inclusion on the CCE Experts Group will likely help expand the scope of counter-extremism, and fits with the government's direction towards bringing more communities under the scope of counter-extremism matrix.



AZEEM IBRAHIM

Research Professor, Strategic Studies Institute

Azeem Ibrahim is a Research Professor at the Strategic Studies Institute, the U.S. Army's institute for research and analysis, a board member of the International Centre for the Study of Radicalisation and Political Violence (a think-tank based at King's College London), Chair of philanthropic project The Ibrahim Foundation, Executive Chairman of The Scotland Institute and a co-founder of the Scotland-based Islamic organisation The Solas Foundation. He has also served as National Security and Defence Policy Advisor to former Labour Party leader Ed Miliband¹⁰³.

In October 2018, Ibrahim left the CCE Experts Group¹⁰⁴.

With his connections to the neoconservative establishment, his focus on the supposed ideological underpinnings of political

violence, and his engagement with Islamic theology, Ibrahim represented the more 'traditional' wing of British counter-extremism post-9/11. This wing is concerned with engineering a state-compliant strand of Islam and manufacturing support for it among Muslim communities.

Ibrahim has an extensive background advising¹⁰⁵ and working with¹⁰⁶ key establishment figures and organisations across the UK, US and Israel, on issues of security and counter-terrorism. According to his biography¹⁰⁷ these have included the Pentagon and US National Security Council and architects of the 'War on Terror' like George Bush, Dick Cheney and former-PMs Tony Blair and Gordon Brown.

His work has secured him invites as far

afield as the annual Herzliya Conference¹⁰⁸ in Israel where he personally presented his publications to the Chief of the Israeli intelligence agency, Mossad.



Azeem Ibrahim presenting to Chief of Mossad whilst in Israel. (Photo from social media account)

He is an active proponent of the idea that what fundamentally underpins political violence by Muslims is a subversive theological base^{109 110} - namely 'Salafi-Jihadism' and/or 'Wahhabism'¹¹¹ - that must be combatted through the development and support of an alternative Islamic theology that is more amenable to liberal norms¹¹².

This school of thought, which CAGE and others have long argued against¹¹³, motivated the Labour government's approach to PREVENT, leading to initiatives to cultivate state-compliant strains of Islamic practice euphemistically labeled 'British Islam'.

This has often manifested in particular Muslim groups being played off against other normative Islamic groups to deeply damaging effect within Muslim communities. This happened before David Cameron's government turned to 'muscular liberalism', and the state approach to engaging Muslim organisations became even more narrow and selective.

Ibrahim announced¹¹⁴ the The Solas Foundation shortly before its founding, describing it explicitly as a means of propounding Islamic scholarship to counter 'radicalisation', and 'quietly changing young minds to cut off the attraction of radical discourses'¹¹⁵. Despite his announcement, there is no mention of Ibrahim's role on the Foundation's website - however, The Ibrahim Foundation which he chairs continues to fund it¹¹⁶.

Ibrahim is a regular writer for the websites Al Arabiya¹¹⁷ and Huffington Post¹¹⁸, and his articles highlight his hawkish tendencies, and his support of neoconservative politics.

Despite some criticism of the destruction wrought by the US invasion of Iraq, he states that “America needs to be the world’s policeman”¹¹⁹ and he supports an interventionist US foreign policy.

He has also claimed that “it is high time [Britain] brought the offence of treason back”^{120 121} whilst praising the UK government’s practice of stripping citizenship of suspected ISIS fighters as “shrewd” - despite this being a step towards extrajudicial drone assassination without due process.

A month before the announcement of the CCE’s Experts Group, he was added as a patron¹²² of the organisation Faith Matters, run by fellow CCE colleague Fiyaz Mughal.

Before his departure, Ibrahim’s role on the CCE represented the ‘old-school’ strain of counter-extremism and to this end he serves as a self-styled interlocutor between Muslims and the state. Despite no longer serving on the Experts Group, it is likely that Ibrahim will maintain a presence in the counter-extremism field.



DAVID ANDERSON

Former Independent Reviewer of Terrorism Legislation

As the Independent Reviewer of Terrorism Legislation between 2011 and 2017, David Anderson's position on the Experts Group constitutes a further link between the CCE and the mainstream counter-terror apparatus.

Despite being 'Independent Reviewer', Anderson's time was characterised, at best, as a critical friend of government¹⁹². Even after his term as Reviewer was over, he has enjoyed access to and a relationship with state departments¹⁹³ calling upon his services, whilst also being knighted and given peerage in the House of Lords¹⁹⁴.

Whilst PREVENT itself was not in his remit, he issued endorsements of the programme¹⁹⁵ remarking that it is "a well-intentioned, voluntary strategy that has achieved striking success, without a doubt"¹⁹⁶ - and suggesting only that it be reformed lightly to "better

engage" surveilled communities, and be more transparent.

Anderson was credited by current London Mayor Sadiq Khan¹⁹⁷ for his influence on debates about the Justice and Security Act 2013¹⁹⁸, which legalises the use of secret evidence. Though he voiced concerns about the use of secret evidence - a practice that CAGE has documented has been used excessively in family courts¹⁹⁹ - he also gave the procedures legitimacy by stating cautiously:

"... judges should be able to decide whether a CMP (Closed Material Procedure) was needed for dealing with secret evidence, without the answer being dictated to them by one party to the litigation"²⁰⁰.

As with much counter-terrorism legislation

and policy, Anderson's role appears to be one of a polite critic; he has voiced legitimate concerns but these concerns do not bring about much change.

Systemic failures of his former role aside, it appears that Anderson has made questionable political decisions of his own. For example he wrote the forward for the inaccurate and fear-mongering²⁰² report by the Henry Jackson Society entitled *Islamist Terrorism*²⁰³. Anderson described the report as "an impressive resource" ... of particular value to policy-makers, law enforcement".

In doing so, he cemented the link between law enforcement and right-wing policy influencers.

And, like the majority of his colleagues on the CCE, Anderson has lent open support and promotion to Sara Khan²⁰⁴⁻²⁰⁵.

Anderson's role appears to be one of legitimising counter-terrorism policy through providing the appearance of opposition and independence. The CCE itself is a manifestation of this and his presence there consistent with this.



HILARY PILKINGTON

Professor of Sociology, University of Manchester

Hilary Pilkington is Professor of Sociology at the University of Manchester. Her current research interests include youth, inclusion and exclusion, political participation, subculture, activism and 'extremism'²²⁰.

Pilkington served as an Independent Commissioner for the Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA) commission on 'Tackling Hateful Extremism and Promoting Social Cohesion Commission' initiated after the Manchester Arena attack, and is coordinator for the EU-funded Dialogue about Radicalisation and Equality (DARE) project about young people's responses and reactions to 'radicalisers'.

With regards to 'extremism', Pilkington's academic research has predominantly concerned the far-right, namely the EDL, which she has also written a book and various papers^{221 222}. According to her research

portfolio²²³, this interest is a relatively new turn and seemed to emerge out of her earlier focus on youth activism and subcultures.

She has been reasonably critical of standard approaches to counter-extremist research, and has noted how the term 'radicalisation' often "signals complicity in stigmatising particular communities – while ignoring the policies that fuel their anger and alienation"²²⁴.

Her research approach to 'extremism', including through the DARE project, is based around young people's everyday encounters with 'radicalisation messages' and how they navigate them – focussing on the "99.9% of people who hear the same messages of hate and extremism...but drop them or consciously counter them"²²⁵ rather than on the trajectory of 'radicalised' individuals. The purpose of this is towards opening up the

possibility of 'counter-extremism policies and practices [that can] be developed by communities rather than imposed as security measures from above'²²⁶.

The DARE project, which is being funded to the tune of €5million by the EU as part of its Horizon 2020 programme, is a large scale initiative to develop counter-radicalisation interventions geared towards young people and focuses on Islamist and anti-Islam(ist) 'radicalisation' to address 'both 'religious fundamentalism' and 'violence and hate crime' dimensions'²²⁷ – building around the cumulative extremism theory mentioned earlier. The project's partner includes a number of cross-European institutions, such as the University of Manchester, as well as individuals. These individuals include Kalsoom Bashir, co-Director of Sara Khan's former organisation Inspire and Bristol PREVENT lead, as well as Kelly Simcock of the European Radicalisation Awareness Network (RAN) and Vidhya Ramalingam, Director of the Moonshot CVE counter-extremism organisation²²⁸.

Since PREVENT has found itself battered by discontent and mistrust, there have been overtures by some more liberal-minded counter-extremism proponents towards more 'community based' approaches to

counter-extremism, rather than the top-down approach that has intensified since the 2011 revamp of PREVENT. The GMCA commission, on which Pilkington sat on, similarly outlined in its Shared Future report²²⁹ a proposal for embedding counter-extremism further in 'safeguarding', and connecting counter-extremism more directly with 'hate crime' and social cohesion.

However well-meaning the intention of those involved, both the GMCA commission and quite possibly the DARE project, run aground by opening the door for further securitisation – by embedding the logic and function of counter-extremism in more sectors and placing the burden of policing onto communities. The Shared Future report for example, failed to take PREVENT to task and only sought to manoeuvre around its toxicity; in other words, it tried to do the work of PREVENT outside of PREVENT, and with greater community buy-in²³⁰. Without fully deconstructing the logic of PREVENT and the basis on which much of British counter-extremism sits - with its inherently coercive nature, focus on ideology, blindness to structural factors giving rise to violence, and the self-policing that are part and parcel of PREVENT - these initiatives ultimately end up as shallow reformism that further buttress state surveillance.

Pilkington will likely offer more academic veneer to the CCE, whilst remaining rooted in the CCE's core talking points about 'cumulative extremism' and generating community goodwill for counter-extremism. Given the type of individuals represented on the Expert Group, and their vested interest in counter-extremism, there is a particular risk that Pilkington's approach and perspective on reforming counter-extremism are co-opted into the orbit of official counter-extremism.



KATIE MORRIS

Former Head of Europe and Central Asia, Article 19

Katie Morris was formerly Head of the Europe and Central Asia division of Article 19. Article 19 is an organisation that “monitors, researches, publishes, advocates, campaigns, sets standards and litigates on behalf of freedom of expression wherever it is threatened”. It operates globally, with offices in North, Southern and East African, South America and Bangladesh.

In October 2019, Morris left the CCE Experts Group¹⁵³ and Article 19, and became a Manager at the Moonshot CVE counter-extremism enterprise¹⁵⁴.

Article 19 have taken a number of commendable positions against the imposition of counter-extremism legislation¹⁵⁶ and the Countering/Preventing Violent Extremism ¹⁵⁶ (CVE & PVE) agendas, as well as the closing of civic space, both in the UK and internationally.

In this respect, Article 19 stood apart from much of the rest of the groups represented on the CCE Experts Group. It may have been that Morris’ position on the Experts Group was to intend to serve as a ‘counter-balance’ or as oversight of the human rights dimensions of counter-extremism issues raised within it. Conversely, her joining the CCE may have only precipitated her move into the counter-extremism scene more completely, as she has upon joining Moonshot CVE.

With the Experts Group overwhelmingly comprised by individuals actively implicated and invested in the counter-extremism agenda, it raises the question as to whether Article 19’s presence, through Morris, presence would have been undermined from start, and ended up acting as little more than a fig leaf for the CCE.

CONCLUSION

In this report we have presented the backgrounds of the individuals serving on the CCE's Experts Group, to highlight the intimate connection many of them have with the counter-extremism apparatus and the global Islamophobia network. In doing so we have highlighted the possible trajectories of the CCE, which lays down the foundation to identify and criminalise beliefs deemed problematic for the state in a manner that threatens the right to dissent.

Save for a few token individuals, the CCE is little more than an echo chamber for the government's attempts to securitise society and control beliefs within communities, by cushioning it within the language of counter-extremism and broadening its matrix.

It is particularly concerning that many of

the individuals on the CCE have vocally campaigned against Islamic practices such as hijab, Sharia arbitration and gender separation. This renewed confidence in openly targeting Islamic practices is shared by the government, and is likely part of the CCE's trajectory in terms of identifying and targeting "problematic" markers of belief.

Ultimately though, the CCE is greater than the sum of its parts - as we stated upon Sara Khan's announcement as Lead Commissioner, our opposition to the CCE is irrespective of the individuals involved. It is an inherently ideological project.

That project is outlined in the Counter Extremism Strategy 2015, which makes it clear that the direction of travel of counter-extremism is towards a 'full spectrum' approach, encompassing all of society. This should signal alarms bells at all levels.

Despite being at pains to separate itself from PREVENT, the CCE shares the same theoretical underpinnings and will further the work of PREVENT – the renewed focus on countering 'hate crime' and the far-right through counter-extremism is little more than an effort normalise PREVENT and counter-extremism by 'equalising oppression', and to allow the state to flex its coercive muscle on more communities.

We encourage a more critical, historically-grounded approach to combating the far-right that holds the government to account for its role in fostering it, and which doesn't rely on the very same institutions that criminalise Muslims to defend us.

It is a farce to believe that any state tool sharpened through their use against Muslims can ever work in the interests of Muslims.

Since the very concept of 'extremism' upon which this whole architecture is premised has not been statutorily defined, nor will it be for the foreseeable future, the individuals and organisations deemed worthy of intervention and sanction are thus open to subjective interpretation and targeting by the state, with no oversight or balance. This has bleak implications for freedom of belief,

association and the right to dissent.

The CCE's bid to address the issue of political violence comes coddled in impressive language and a fanfare of political and media support. But it does not address the root causes of such violence, and instead hones in on Islamic belief and practices. This means it is not an honest attempt at stopping political violence at all. Rather, it is just another instrument of control.

To this end we reiterate our position of a complete boycott of the CCE, starting with its evidence drive.

We do not believe that communities should be party to their own oppression. In helping the CCE craft a working definition of 'extremism', we would be doing just that.

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