

Prevent: A Fragmented Counter-Terrorism Strategy

A Monograph

by

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Abstract

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The events of September 11, 2001 triggered a response by the British Government to develop a coherent and actionable counter-terrorism strategy. The United Kingdom's response was a counter-terrorism strategy called CONTEST. *Prevent* is one of four sub-strategies of CONTEST and is designed to prevent people from becoming terrorists or supporting terrorism.

Now in its four tranche since its inception in 2003, *Prevent* continues to be the subject of criticism and controversy. Using a theoretical lens of systems theory, this monograph proposes that the strategy to challenge Islamic terrorism is overly reductionist and lacking a comprehensive systemic approach. This monograph concludes that, despite certain attempts to be inclusive, the *Prevent* strategy is continuing to divide the Muslim communities' support in the fight against Islamic terrorism.

Prevent's whole of government approach is important but it falls short of being truly systemic in its approach. The strategy suffers from a lack of resources, a confusing narrative that fails to address the cross pollination of Islamic extremism to Islamic terrorism, and an inability to promote progressive Muslim thought. Moreover, *Prevent* suffers from wider reactive government policies that attempt to implement new legislation without due consideration of the wider strategic impacts. These reactive tendencies continue to fracture society and fail to look at the longer term, systemic approaches needed to mitigate the threat. Evidence suggests that with the appropriate resources, a clear strategy on extremism, and more concrete application of a systems based approach, *Prevent* could deliver a greater level of societal cohesion to set the conditions for success in the fight against Islamic terrorism.

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Abbreviations

CITRU	Counter-Terrorism Internet Referral Unit
COIN	Counter-Insurgency
BIS	British Intelligence Services
DCLG	Department for Communities and Local Government
DfE	Department for Education
DfID	Department for International Development
FCO	Foreign Commonwealth Office
HT	Hizb ut-Tahrir
ISIL	Islamic State of Iraq, and the Levant
IRA	Irish Republican Army
LOE	Line of Effort
OSCT	Office for Security and Counter-Terrorism
PEO	Prevent Engagement Officer
RICU	Referral, Information, and Communication Unit
RWE	Right-Wing Extremism
UK	United Kingdom
VUCA	Volatile, Uncertain, Complex, and Ambiguous

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Introduction

If strategy is a fixed plan that set out a reliable path to an eventual goal, then it is likely to be not only disappointing but also counterproductive, conceding the advantage to others with greater flexibility and imagination.

--Lawrence Freedman, *Strategy*

Uncertainty is stalking organizations and institutions. These bastions of order, regularity, and stability are now under threat.... Deep chaos takes hold in organizations, institutions, and communities when crisis strikes... when it is beginning to be clear that what was, will be no more. The new way of the future has not yet unfolded and can barely be discerned -- and yet the past is finished.

-- Dr. Uri Merry, *Coping With Uncertainty*

Over the last two decades, what was a moderate Islamic narrative evolved into a persistent threat that grew into a radical Islamic agenda. This led to acts of violence on British soil, such as the London bombings of July 7, 2005. The more recent terror attack and beheading of Lance Corporal Lee Rigby in 2013 illustrates not only the continued threat, but the growth from leadership directed attacks, to individually inspired terrorist attacks. While the former remains a credible threat, the latter demonstrates a new level of complexity associated with the effects of radical Islam and changes in society. The recent gains by the Islamic State in the Levant (ISIL) demonstrates how a strong narrative has motivated and attracted thousands of foreign fighters; many of which have been inspired without persuasion or influence from Islamist leadership. Conservative Home Office figures currently estimate that five hundred British Jihadists have joined the group.¹ By comparison this places the total number of British citizens fighting in Iraq and Syria greater than the total number of Muslims, who have declared a faith,

¹ Speech, Home Secretary Theresa May to Royal United Services Institute, on counter-terrorism, United Kingdom Government Website, accessed January 15, 2014, <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/home-secretary-theresa-may-on-counter-terrorism>.

serving in the UK Armed Forces - a compelling narrative.² The threat from ISIL triggered a government response that raised the domestic threat level from substantial to severe.³ As a focus for the United Kingdom, the *Prevent* strategy aims to challenge this growing threat through the implementation of government strategies at the national and regional level.

Prevent is one of the four strategies of the United Kingdom's broader counter-terrorist strategy CONTEST and is the focus for this monograph – specifically the evaluating the success of addressing Islamic terrorism. (See Figure 1).⁴ The overall aim of *Prevent* is to stop people from becoming terrorists or from supporting terrorism.⁵ *Prevent*, by design, challenges all forms of terrorism and prioritizes its resourcing according to the assessed threats stipulated by the British Intelligence Services (BIS). At present, the standing 2011 revision of *Prevent* treats Al Qa'ida and the associated terrorist group of Al-Muhajiroun as the greatest threat to the United Kingdom. The inherent logic of *Prevent* however is reductionist as this broad government approach looks at the threat from Islamic terrorism by breaking down what seem to be the

² “Defence Statistics (Tri-Service) – Stated Religions,” accessed January 20, 2014, https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/315082/PUBLIC_1391420325.pdf.

³ The Government definition of “Severe” reflects indications that a terrorist attack as highly likely.

⁴ The CONTEST strategy is comprised of four discrete strategies that focuses the United Kingdom's commitment to protect United Kingdom interests, domestic and foreign, against the threat from terrorism. The four strategies that are comprised within *Contest* are: *Pursue* – to stop terrorist attacks; *Prevent* – to stop people becoming terrorists or supporting terrorism; *Protect* – to strengthen protection against an attack; and *Prepare* – to mitigate the impact of a terrorist attack.

⁵ The current UK definition of terrorism is given in the Terrorism Act 2000 (TACT 2000). In summary this defines terrorism as an action that endangers or causes serious violence to a person/people; causes serious damage to property; or seriously interferes or disrupts an electronic system. The use or threat must be designed to influence the government or to intimidate the public and is made for the purpose of advancing a political, religious or ideological cause.

individual component parts that make up the threat in order to apply more simplistic approaches to what is a complex problem. In failing to view the threat as an interrelated complex whole and seeking to identify critical emergent patterns, *Prevent* is missing critical opportunities to keep the strategy agile enough to adapt to the current environment. Despite describing some of the causes of Islamic terrorism, most notably from its association with Islamic extremism, the strategy remains weak in some areas. Its central weaknesses is its inability to provide a synthetic explanation of the phenomenon of Islamic terrorism or its seemingly increasing popularity. It also falls short in capturing the complexity and interconnections to right-wing extremism (RWE).

The British government fundamentally based the *Prevent* strategy on three cognitive frameworks that attempt to frame the problem of Islamic terrorism: social movement theory, political ideology and its relationship with Islam, and the importance of the counter-narrative to mitigate the growth of both legal and illegal extremist Islamic views.⁶

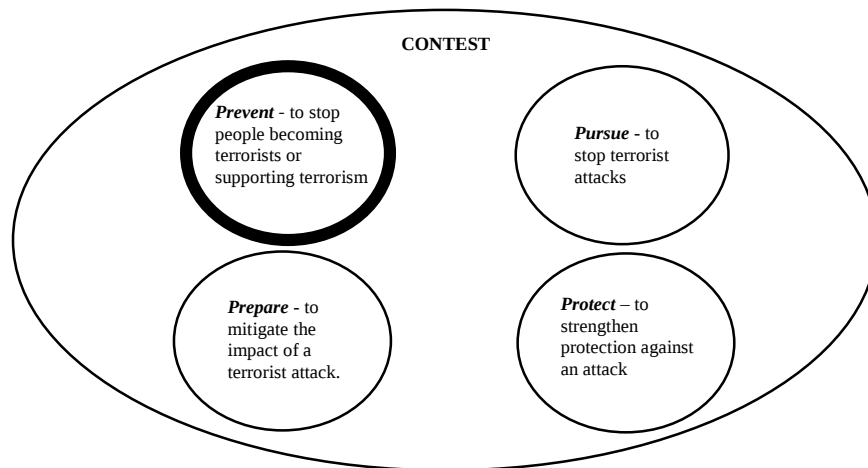


Figure 1. A graphical representation of the four strategies that make up the overarching United Kingdom Counter-Terrorism Strategy, *CONTEST*.

Source: Author.

⁶ *Prevent* Strategy, 2011, 17 (United Kingdom).

The 2011 revision of CONTEST delivered positive results along the individual *Pursue*, *Protect*, and *Prepare* strategies, while the proprietors of *Prevent* struggled to provide a fully resourced, comprehensive, and integrated approach between all government and local authority departments. Even with named department inclusion, as a discrete strategy, the centralized direction and decentralized execution of *Prevent* is under-resourced and suffers from poor oversight and control. Its discrete approach to terrorism and extremism has equally blurred the lines of separation between the departments charged with their oversight and execution. This monograph will identify the efforts in the strategy that are driving success, identify those efforts that are failing to counter Islamic terrorism, and address elements that require consideration to develop future strategies within a more comprehensive framework.

Appreciating the framework in which the strategy focuses its efforts requires the examination of definitions and an understanding of the problem the strategy seeks to resolve. *Prevent*'s early acknowledgment of the relationship between Islamic terrorism and Islamic extremism is a clear indication of the government's understanding of the correlation between these two phenomenon. The individual's journey from Islamic extremism to Islamic terrorism is interpreted and defined as a cognitive process known as radicalization; the process by which a person comes to support terrorism and forms of extremism leading to terrorism.⁷ The overarching premise of the *Prevent* strategy is to counter the transition from radicalization to the eventual execution of violence. Intervention includes the individual "lone wolf" syndrome that occurs when an individual disaggregates from any organizational membership, but is associated under the wider Islamic jihadist narrative to commit acts of terror for a in the pursuit of an Islamic caliphate. The British government defines extremism as the vocal or active opposition to

⁷ *Channel: Protecting vulnerable people from being drawn into terrorism*, October 2012 (United Kingdom), Annex A.

fundamental British values, including democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect and tolerance of different faiths and beliefs.⁸ This definition is important and it shapes the Home Office's understanding of the environment as it seeks to apply resources and funding. Prevention in the context of this monograph means reducing or eliminating the risk of individuals becoming involved in terrorism.

The ability of this monograph to assess the successes of *Prevent* therefore cannot be all encompassing as the process by which an individual integrates into an Islamic group is complex. While one can identify personal crisis as a cognitive opening for the beginning of a process of persuasion, it is far from exclusive.⁹ Therefore, the research is limited by qualitative assessments of the strategy's overall objectives. The monograph provides an analysis of the specific religious triggers for Islamic terrorism while recognizing the broader themes of Salafist Islam as an intricate link for the purposes of the *Prevent* strategy and its relationship to Islamic terrorism. The critical analysis of the strategy examines the theoretical logic as well as the key objectives of *Prevent* and assesses whether or not the government can realistically achieve these given the manner in which the government executes the strategy. Evaluating each objective against *Prevent*'s theoretical framework provides the basis for the recommendations to address the current vulnerabilities and pitfalls for future iterations. Section I of this monograph examines the historical roots of Islamic terrorism, Islamic extremism, and the contemporary nature of the threat posed to the United Kingdom. The theological and ideological framework of the strategy aids in analyzing the salient policies and key objectives *Prevent* sets to achieve. Understanding how *Prevent* defines the problem is the basis for evaluating the detail of the strategy's proposals; these

⁸ *Prevent*, Annex A.

⁹ Quintan Wiktorowicz, *Radical Islam Rising: Muslim Extremism in the West* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2005), 17.

are its stated objectives. Section II develops the theoretical analysis and analyzes the successes and failures of the overall objectives. The impact of a threat-based strategy that separates Islamic terrorism based strategies from extremism strategies (currently led by the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG)), compounds the equally distant association of *Prevent* from RWE. The acknowledgment of all three, but discrete approach to each is a failure of the systemic approach to the ‘terrorist system’ and generates the greatest level of critique. Finally, Section III provides the recommended policy changes to address gaps and vulnerabilities within the current strategy. While the current efforts identify many relevant areas of the phenomenon of Islamic terrorism, it is often the resourcing, contradictory narrative, and execution of the strategy that ultimately hampers progress.

The literature review justifies the study and provides a thorough examination of the theories, literature, and resources that the strategy uses to define its framework. However, the contemporary nature of this monograph and the high political risk associated with the opportunities for academia given the sensitivities associated with researching this subject, limited the opportunities to source a wider array of resources beyond those utilized by the strategy. The resources sourced predominately incorporate ideas from independent research groups, social movement theory experts, complex systems theory, organizational theory, counter-insurgency theory, and emerging research that attempts to explain the phenomenon of Islamic terrorism.

Quintan Wiktorowicz is an American counter-terrorism and expert on Islamic studies who used social movement theory as the analytical framework to explain why individuals are attracted to Islamic organizations. Social movement and social network theory emphasize that the movement towards Islamic Extremism is a social process that occurs with the association of certain peer groups. The process of incentives, networks, and frames are all part of a more general

process of persuasion.¹⁰ Identified within the strategy, this theoretical framework is an evolution of the identification of the some of the apparent root causes of Islamic extremism within the United Kingdom. The idea of risk is crucial in understanding the idea of persuasion and the process by which an individual accepts a greater level of risk of being persuaded through his social networks and subscription to progressive and selective incentives.¹¹

Alberto Meluccit expands on the idea of social movement theory focusing on the impact of culture in a postmodern society in complex societies. Meluccit's theory proposes that the purpose of radical movements is the promotion networks of shared meaning.¹² The Islamic extremist world of religious education underpins this shared meaning that promotes a set of values and identities that challenges cultural codes.¹³ The shared interpretation of a common community and interpretation of Islam provides the basis and common identity that enables Islamic leadership to reinforce the idea of incentive and risk – this becomes the crucial transition from extremism to terrorism while reinforcing the basic principles stipulated by Wiktorowicz. Theoretically however, this assumes that individual involvement requires a common identity derived from incentives that only physical leadership can provide. This assumption fails to account for the willingness of individual participation without the need, or incentives, spurred by the physical interaction of Islamic leadership. The attraction to the events of Iraq and Syria illustrate why this assumption is false. Far from being the all-encompassing theory to explain the individual motivations to become involved in Islamic terrorism, *Prevent* uses this theory as the

¹⁰ Wiktorowicz, 17.

¹¹ Ibid., 22.

¹² Alberto Melucci, *Challenging Codes: Collective Action in the Information Age* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 25.

¹³ Wiktorowicz, 17.

major theoretical framework to understand the problem of Islamic terrorism and its relationship to Islamic extremism. From this perspective, the theory is included in this monograph as the lens through which the strategy sets its objectives and the government resources applied to challenge it.

Organization theory provides a reference for assessing whether the Home Office is adaptable to the changes in the environment or fails to reassess and implement change.¹⁴ This theory is particularly relevant for assessing the government's ability to adapt its existing knowledge of Islamic extremism to emerging information in order to reallocate resources in unforeseen and experimental ways. Most importantly, this theory provides the lens to analyze whether the Home Office can anticipate emerging patterns that indicate a necessary change in the strategy to ensure that directives have positive results.¹⁵ An examination of whether the Home Office assesses previous assumptions will provide an indication of whether or not the current strategy is a reactive, or proactive strategy capable enough to learn from previous failures. Organization Theorists Mary Jo Hatch's theory on double-loop learning suggests that the government can improve its understanding of how to implement appropriate strategies to address Islamic terrorism by questioning its underlying assumptions, values, and risks.¹⁶

Complex systems theory is neither discussed in *Prevent* nor do its principles organize its logic or the government's approach. Complex systems theory describes an approach to examine a problem that is defined by investigating how relationships between individual parts of a system give rise to collective behavior, interaction and developed relationships within the systems

¹⁴ Mary Jo Hatch with Ann L. Cunliffe, *Organization Theory: Modern, Symbolic, and Postmodern Perspectives*, 2nd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 313.

¹⁵ James G. March, "Exploration And Exploitation In Organizational Learning," *Organization Science* 2, no. 1 (1991): 71-87.

¹⁶ *Organization Theory*, 316.

environment. In this sense, systems theory provides an explanation of how a system comprised of many parts learns and develops in order to achieve its overall purpose. Complex *adaptive* systems takes the basic principles of systems theory and introduces the nonlinearity and complexity of human social networks.¹⁷ Most importantly, it differentiates between a complex system that learns through behavioral change, and a system that *seeks* to learn.¹⁸ The obvious human dimension of Islamic terrorism driven by a central ideology, leans towards an appreciation of how complex adaptive systems theory can add weight to *Prevent*. Recognition that the Islamic system will seek to adapt as a second order effect of government efforts, sets the conditions for a favorable strategy that can anticipate change, remain agile, and harness this complex human and social threat. Such an approach would provide a theoretical lens that supports the governments understanding of the second and third effects of implementing *Prevent* related efforts. In addition, provide a more systemic approach to identify opportunities that present themselves as patterns of behavior emerge. Complex adaptive systems theory provides part of this research paper's working theory on the importance of the government's application to address future *Prevent* strategies, and the framework by which it must evaluate the environment.

Counter-Insurgency (COIN) theory is the final framework that has been used as research for an evaluation of the *Prevent* strategy. The British counter-insurgency experiences in Malaysia provide an invaluable insight into the historical lessons of employing a decentralized methodology, and the impact that this has on resourcing and command and control related

¹⁷ Robert Jervis, *System Effects: Complexity in Political and Social Life* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997), 74.

¹⁸ Robert M. Axelrod and Michael D. Cohen, *Harnessing Complexity*, Reprint ed. (New York: Basic Books, 2001), 7.

issues.¹⁹ As a fundamental part of the *Prevent* strategy, decentralized execution is a demanding process that requires robust support at the regional level. An examination of the Malaya campaign will support this paper's intent to critique resourcing related concerns of the strategy.

Having provided an oversight of the *Prevent* strategy, literature review, and methodology, Section I will begin by detailing the overall intent of *Prevent* and its understanding of the relationship between Islamic ideology and acts of violence in the name of Islam. The evolution of the strategy has a direct correlation to these more recent world events and is the basis for the government's logic in setting its three major objectives to reduce Islamic terrorism.

Section I: Understanding the Intent and the Logic Driving the Strategy

With the context of the *Prevent* strategy established, Section I provides an analysis on the historical traces of the threat from Islamic terrorism and extremism and the way in which history shaped the evolution of the *Prevent*. This section examines the prior iterations and events that shaped the current revision of the *Prevent* strategy. Using the framework of history, theory, doctrine framework, an examination of the historical trends illustrates whether the British government based the 2011 revision on sensible theological and academic research. Section I concludes by outlining the details of how the current policies evolved over time as a reaction to the current Islamic terrorist and extremist trends within the United Kingdom. The lineage of policy is crucial to evaluate steps that go beyond a binary analysis of success or failure. Furthermore, current trends indicate whether the 2011 revision is driving qualitative success or failure in the long term.

Political ideology and the relationship with Islam is one of the three major frameworks that *Prevent* uses as its basis to understand the threat of Islamic terrorism. The detail of the threat

¹⁹ John Mackinlay, *The Insurgent Archipelago* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012), 214.

is important to ascertain whether the government's strategy makes an intricate assessment of the political and religious framework in which Islamists view the world in their attempt to establish an Islamic caliphate. Islamic terrorism is an evolving threat. Therefore, it is important to examine the Salafist and religious origins in detail to understand how and why it evolves before determining appropriate measures counter Islamic terrorism.

The Evolution of a Terrorist Threat: The Origins of Salafism and its Arrival in Britain

One can trace the Salafist Islamic phenomenon through history to 1928. It was here that Hassan al-Banna established the Muslim Brotherhood as a reaction to the British imperial rule in Egypt and the demise of the Ottoman Empire. The turbulent history in Egypt influenced the evolution of the Islamic phenomenon. The early writings of al-Banna were largely driven by Egypt's most influential thinker in the 1950s, Sayyid Qutb, who condoned the violent overthrow of Muslim states in-order to restore early Islamic society.²⁰ While today distancing itself from a revolutionary stance, the Muslim Brotherhood's existence as a 'nonviolent' organization still influences and steers Islamic extremist ideology as the legitimate cause for the restoration of Islamic society. Today it is the major player in enabling the communication of the Islamic narrative throughout the modern world.

Historians have attributed Qutb's publication of *Milestones* in 1964 to the birth of Islamic extremism. Qutb's reference to the modern Muslim state captures his disdain for the influence of Western thought on modern day Muslim states. Shaykh Ali Abd al-Raziq - founder of modern Islam and his separation of politics from religion – was a full supporter of the participation of the

²⁰ "The Muslim Brotherhood in the UK," Quilliam Foundation, accessed November 30, 2014, <http://www.quilliamfoundation.org/wp/wp-content/uploads/publications/free/the-muslim-brotherhood-in-the-uk2.pdf>.

Muslim States in the international community in accordance with the modern law of nations ²¹

Abd al-Raziq's idea of modern Islam was the antithesis of Qutb's ideology. Qutb's attempts to erode the historical lessons of modern Islam were challenged using narratives such as,

With these verses from the Qur'an and with many traditions of the Prophet – peace be on him – in praise of Jihaad, and with the entire history of Islam, which is full of Jihaad, the heart of every Muslim rejects that explanation of Jihaad invented by those people whose minds have accepted defeat under unfavorable conditions and under the attacks on Islamic Jihaad by the shrewd orientalists.²²

Qutb's potent narratives chastised Western society for the demise of the Ottoman Empire and the increase in dominance of European states as a result of the Law of Nations.²³

Qutb's links to the social and political role of Islam have served as the ideological centerpiece of the Jihadist movement ever since. Most significantly, Qutb's political philosophy describes military jihad as a means of defensive and therefore justifiable action in Islam's campaign to protect itself.²⁴ This journey of defense is the path that embraces the annihilation of any elements of non-Muslim societies (*Jahiliyya*) that exist in contrary to the establishment of the sovereignty of God, and the implementation of the Divine Shari'ah in human affairs.²⁵ Qutb asserts,

Islam is not merely a belief, so that it is enough merely to preach it. Islam, which is a way of life, takes practical steps to organize a movement for freeing man. Other societies do not give it any opportunity to organize its followers according to its own method, and hence it is the duty of Islam to annihilate all such systems, as they are obstacles in the way of universal freedom.²⁶

²¹ Majid Khadduri, *War and Peace in the Law of Islam*, Reprint ed. (Baltimore: The Lawbook Exchange, Ltd., 2010), 370.

²² Sayed Qutb, *Milestones* (Lahore, Pakistan: Islamic Book Service, 2006), 49.

²³ Khadduri, 370.

²⁴ Paul Berman, *Terror And Liberalism* (New York: Norton, 2003), 98.

²⁵ Ibid., 47.

²⁶ Qutb, 56.

Qutb promoted the idea of *takfir* - in effect the process of judging Muslims, individuals, regimes, societies and states, to be apostates and infidels if they do not wholly conform to his politicized understanding and application of Islam.²⁷ He used this condemnation to justify combative *jihad* against those who failed to adhere to his ideology.²⁸

Qutb also believed that Muslim society had reverted to pre-Islamic paganism (*jahiliyya*). His ideology therefore sought to revert the process of non-Muslim dominance in the modern world. Qutb stated that he would achieve this through three stages of a revolution: proclamation (*da'wa*) of the message to the state of pagan ignorance (*jahili*); separation (*mufassalla*) from the unbelievers which Qutb too as a spiritual separation to proclaim, recruit, and organize; and the fight (*jihad*) to implement God's new society on earth, which includes the formation of an Islamic state under Shari'a before extending jihad to the entire world.²⁹ Qutb saw Islam as the complete system for justice, morality and governance.

Qutb's two-year experience in the United States led to his initial distaste for American society and his other formidable publication, "The America that I Have Seen" published in 1951. *Milestones* reinvigorated his ability to apply Western societal experiences as an amplification to his ideology.³⁰ Whilst imprisoned for the assassination attempt of the Egyptian President Nasser, it was his brother Muhammad Qutb that continued to spread the Islamist philosophy captured in

²⁷ "The Muslim Brotherhood in the UK," Quilliam Foundation, accessed November 30, 2014, <http://www.quilliamfoundation.org/wp/wp-content/uploads/publications/free/the-muslim-brotherhood-in-the-uk2.pdf>, 5.

²⁸ Ibid., 5.

²⁹ Quilliam Foundation, *The Muslim Brotherhood in the UK*, 6.

³⁰ Maajid Nawaz, *Radical: My Journey Out of Islamist Extremism* (Guildford, Connecticut: Lyons Press, 2013), 229.

Milestones. As a professor in Islamic studies in Saudi Arabia, Muhammad Qutb's most notorious students were Osama bin Laden, Ayman al-Zawahiri, and Abdullah Azzam. The latter two were early members of the Muslim Brotherhood. Al Qaeda, founded by Osama Bin Laden in the late 80s, greatly enhanced and publicized the momentum of Salafi-jihadist organizations. More recently, ISIL's narrative and doctrinal framework for the establishment of an Islamic caliphate illustrates the obvious links to the doctrine of Qutb and the Muslim Brotherhood.

In the wake of the terrorist attacks in the United States on September 9, 2011 (9/11), the United Kingdom government implemented its first documented strategy to counter domestic terrorism. Not only did the events of 9/11 spark international outrage, they identified vulnerabilities; CONTEST was the United Kingdom's initial response. Despite a century of domestic conflict with the Irish Republican Army (IRA), the British government had relatively no collective response to the rising threat of Islamic extremism. Even with trends that have been evident since 1993, particularly in light of the 1993 World Trade Center Bombing, the government did not design or implement a holistic strategy was. The events of Yugoslavia in 1992 became synonymous with a rising Islamic narrative in Europe and have been argued by some as the turning point for Islamic extremism in the United Kingdom.³¹ While not the principle cause, it provided both a narrative and opportunity for Islamic extremists to engage in combat training and military operations overseas. Bolstered with Saudi funding, young British Muslims had the opportunity to travel within three hours to engage in a war to protect fellow Muslims. With an interconnected supporting media network of basic video home system recordings, the narrative became an easy message to sell within the UK and the early patterns indicating a rise in Islamism began.

³¹ Nawaz, 58.

Though unacceptable in the Arab world, of particular note in Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Libya and Iraq, the United Kingdom's banner of free speech provides an opportunity to preach extremist Islamic views. These freedoms enabled organizations such as Hizb ut-Tahrir (HT), and the Muslim Brotherhood to vocally spread its narrative within the UK and an influx of Imams to the United Kingdom from the Arab states ensued in the eighties and nineties.³² Recent events such as the terror attack on Lance Corporal Lee Rigby, and the openly brazen media campaign relating the murders of British and American nationals by 'Jihadi John' continue to illuminate the impact and significance of domestically inspired Islamic terrorism and the spread of Islamic narratives under the cloak of British law.³³ Need4Khilafah, Salafi Media, and the Shariah Project are some of the most notable organizations that continue to espouse an Islamic extremist ideology that remains protected under the legal banner of freedom of speech.³⁴

In a population of 70 million, 2.7 million are British Muslims. For many Muslims living in a non-Muslim country, they receive little theological guidance about how to practice Islam in a Western country dominated by secular social, political, economic, and cultural traditions.³⁵ The consequences of this fact are compounded by the ethnic, linguistic, cultural, and religious

³² Ed Husain, *The Islamist: Why I Became an Islamic Fundamentalist, What I Saw Inside, and Why I Left* (New York, NY: Penguin Books, 2009), 87.

³³ Terrance McCoy, "The brutality of 'Jihadi John,' the Islamic State militant who decapitated James Foley," *The Washington Post*, last modified August 22, 2014, accessed September 10, 2014, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/news/morning-mix/wp/2014/08/22/the-sadistic-brutality-of-jihadi-john-the-islamic-state-militant-who-decapitated-james-foley/>.

³⁴ Raffaello Pantucci, "A Death in Woolwich: The Lone-Actor Terrorist Threat in the UK," *The RUSI Journal*, Volume 159, Issue 5, 2014: 22-30, accessed November 11, 2014, <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/03071847.2014.969941#.VH59pMstDIV>.

³⁵ Wiktorowicz, 87.

divisions that exist within the Muslim minorities within the United Kingdom.³⁶ While old minorities have had time to build their own cultures or share the dominant culture – such as the Tatars, Indians, Hui in China - Muslims in recently settled minorities such as the United Kingdom, have had to reinvent what defines them as being Muslim. In the absence of a common cultural or linguistic heritage, the only reference along this path for self-identity therefore becomes religious.³⁷ As time and space further separates Muslim generations from first generation family cultural and religious norms, the problem of self-identity in a non-Muslim country is exacerbated. Likewise, time erodes those historical links from the first generation minorities and often sets second and third generation Muslims on the course for a crisis. This is particularly the case for Muslims from Pakistani, Bangladeshi, and African ethnic backgrounds.³⁸

In response to the search for meaning and community, younger generations of Muslims often turn to the abstract and global *umma* in their journey for self-identity.³⁹ During the eighties

³⁶ Olivier Roy, *Globalized Islam: the Search for a New Ummah (Ceri Series in Comparative Politics and International Studies)* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), 18.

³⁷ Roy, 18.

³⁸ Ami Sedghi, “UK Census: religion by age, ethnicity and country of birth,” *The Guardian*, May 13, 2014, accessed November 28, 2014, <http://www.theguardian.com/news/datablog/2013/may/16/uk-census-religion-age-ethnicity-country-of-birth#data>.

³⁹ Munira Mirza, Abi Senthilkumaran and Zein Ja’far, “*Living Apart Together - British Muslims and the Paradox of Multiculturalism*,” Policy Exchange (London: Policy Exchange, 2007), 19; *Umma* is a common Arabic word meaning “people group”, or “nation.” The term takes on a religious connotations in the Qur’an where God is said to have sent to each umma its own messenger. The messengers given special prominence as recipients of scripture and founders of an umma are Moses, Jesus, and Muhammad. Jews are an umma based on the Torah which God gave to Moses, Christians an umma based on the Injil (gospel) which God gave to Jesus, and Muslims an umma based on the Qur’an, which God “sent down” to Muhammad.

and nineties, the British government's response to migrating populations was the introduction of national and regional policies in an attempt to integrate and recognize the increasing levels of multiculturalism. The government introduced these policies with good intent but research now indicates that the policy of multiculturalism has decidedly prevented multiethnic groups from wholly integrating into the UK.⁴⁰ Efforts to address the impact of multiculturalism led to policies that amplified the relationship between various ethnic groups, religion, and politics as the means for future community engagement.

On the basis of these policies, there became a definite shift from the traditional values of a 'color blind' society towards differential treatment based on cultural identity.⁴¹ At an Aberdeen University, army cadets were asked by the Officer Training Corps to remove their uniforms when marching past a mosque after abuse was shouted at one cadet from a car.⁴² Undoubtedly ordered as a matter of good intent, it sent two clear messages as a consequence of multiculturalism policies: British Muslims - individuals or groups - may legitimately object to being exposed to the uniforms of their country's armed forces and this objection will take precedence over the desire of cadets to wear their uniforms or the wishes of the majority to see them.⁴³ Despite bemusement by the local mosque leader who supported the British military, the actions by Scottish university army cadets in response to the verbal abuse shouted by an individual Muslim highlight the impact of the policies that multiculturalism plays on everyday society.

⁴⁰ *Living Apart Together*, 24.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 22.

⁴² The Sunday Mirror Online, "Muslim Worshippers: It's Madness; Exclusive Army To Scots Cadets: Don't Wear Uniform near Mosque in Case You Offend," Muslims, accessed February 2, 2015, <http://www.highbeam.com/doc/1G1-155702017.html>.

⁴³ *Living Apart Together*, 24.

The logic of multiculturalism also led to a shift in political culture where groups were encouraged to make demands based on their differences and cultural exclusion from the mainstream of society.⁴⁴ The response led to a merge of multiculturalism and politics as a reinforcing agenda to identify different ethnic groups as being separate from the mainstream of society. As national and regional attempts to support secularism through overt ethnic identification ensued, religion and cultural references became an extension of politics. In the haze of identification and domestic soul searching, Islamist groups managed to fill the void and exert their influences and persuasions on the younger generation as they progressed through their journey for meaning and common identity. The paranoia of cultural recognition ultimately provided Islamists with an opportunity to exploit government indecision.

Coupled with the complexities of the Muslim communities' identity crisis is the added implications of its ideological acceptance of the *umma* as the core identity in Muslim thought. In many contexts, the British Muslim's loyalty to the *umma* overrides loyalty to the nation-state.⁴⁵ As a majority secular state, the *umma* ideology is the antithesis of the majority of British society.⁴⁶ A cultural lack of understanding from the rest of society often adds to the lack of appreciation of the minority of Muslim groups within the United Kingdom. When the additional sub-universes (communities) of different ethnic backgrounds, cultural diversity, and language are recognized, it becomes easier to appreciate why a separation from the rest of the United Kingdom's society is inevitable.⁴⁷ It is more concerning that certain esoteric sub-universes exist

⁴⁴*Living Apart Together*, 24.

⁴⁵ Patrick Sookhdeo, *Global Jihad: the Future in the Face of Militant Islam*, New ed. (Virginia: Isaac Publishing, Inc., 2007), 36.

⁴⁶ Sedghi, *UK Census*.

⁴⁷ Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge* (Garden City: Anchor, 1967), 8.

in secret--in the form of Islamic extremist organizations within the wider Muslim communities. Not only do these numerous sub-universes create multiple perspectives on society, it increases the inaccessibility of the major groups of society and the various Muslim communities.⁴⁸

The understanding of the *umma* in particular provides a deeper understanding of the Muslim perspective and insight into a misinterpretation of 'being British,' which is not always apparent. Regardless of the solutions at this stage, an understanding of the threat and its associated cultural and religious underpinnings is a fundamental part of addressing the risk that Islamic terrorism and extremism poses. Defining the evolution of the threat may appear elongated, but the root causes shape the strategy's evolution and its stated objectives to meet the theological, ideological and cultural nuances that are associated with Islamic terrorism. Appreciating the historical evolution of the threat aids in determining a more thorough assessment of the strategy.

The Evolution of *Prevent*

Initially published in 2003, *Prevent* was the Home Office response to the threat from domestic and international terrorism. Now on its fourth iteration, *Prevent* is, at least in part, reflective of an iterative process by the government to adjust strategies according to the environment. The latest revision of *Prevent* identifies a number of assumptions and working theories in its attempt to develop a suitable mechanism to address Islamic terrorism. This section identifies the success of these assumptions, working theories, and strategies.

The aim of the *Prevent* strategy is to stop people from becoming terrorists or supporting terrorism.⁴⁹ It addresses all forms of terrorism but prioritizes resources and efforts according to

⁴⁸ Berger and Luckmann, 87.

⁴⁹ *Prevent*, 6.

the threat they pose to the United Kingdom's national security. The 2011 revision stipulates that the current threat emanates from Islamic inspired groups such as Al Qa'ida.⁵⁰ In implementation, the Home Office centrally manages *Prevent* but the strategy is decentralized for execution at the regional level.

The *Prevent* strategy adheres to the following three principles: respond to the ideological challenge of terrorism and the threat faced from those who promote it; prevent people from being drawn into terrorism and ensure that they are given appropriate advice and support; and work with a wide range of sectors and institutions, including education, faith, health and criminal justice, where there are risks of radicalization. *Prevent's* purpose is to enlist the support of people within the United Kingdom to reach the smaller minority who may be drawn into terrorism, often through extremist views.⁵¹

Prevent remains a key component of the overall CONTEST counter-terrorism strategy with its focus on counter-terrorism prevention. Protected by Article 10 of European Convention on Human Rights, criminal law cannot address extremist views. The responsibility to challenge the extremist mindset falls under the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG). The DCLG also manages the integration and cohesion strategy to counter extremism at the local authority level while the execution of *Prevent* falls to the Office for Security and Counter-Terrorism (OSCT).

Acknowledged by the strategy, the government sees extremist views as interconnected elements to Islamic terrorism. *Prevent* identifies the transition from one to the other as a means with which to intervene to prevent people moving from extremist groups, where views may be

⁵⁰ *Prevent*, 25.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 40.

violent or non-violent, into terrorist related activity.⁵² As previously noted through an examination of Qutb's writings, Islamic terrorism draws on the earlier Islamist extremist ideologies which seek to remove existing governments in the Muslim majority world. These ideologies suggest using violence where necessary to establish what their proponents consider to be genuine Islamic states under a single Islamic caliphate.⁵³ The recent crisis in Iraq and Syria exemplifies this issue. The government recognizes that this element of overseas activity is interconnected with the domestic strategy of *Prevent*, but shortfalls in the government's overall ability to synthesize its impact continue to exemplify an issue that focuses on domestic solutions without the appropriate level of consideration for how the two are intimately interconnected. As a four year old strategy, *Prevent* has stagnated and must be reexamined if it is to continue in this evolutionary construct; particularly in-light of the contemporary nature of Islamic terrorism as it seen today in the world's media.

Objective One: Challenging the ideology that promotes terrorism and those who promote it

Prevent's underlying and most significant assumption is that all terrorist groups have an ideology and that the promotion of that ideology, often through the internet, facilitates radicalization and recruitment into terrorist organizations. Countering that ideology and disrupting the ability of terrorists to promote it is a fundamental part of *Prevent* which means the government must openly debate extremist ideas which form a part of the terrorist narrative. As a causal systemic link to terrorism, challenging the ideological logic that Islamic extremists subscribe to requires theological argument to aid in the counter-narrative fight. Theological argument provides leverage by allowing an individual to ascertain religious norms and expose extremist distortion. Open debate throughout society about extremist views reinforces an

⁵² *Prevent*, 23.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 15.

alternative perspective to individuals who are susceptible to single narratives while supporting freedom of speech and public trust in the government's strategies. When personal opinion equates to a breach of the law, this would also mean arrest and law enforcement.

Ideology is a central factor in the radicalization process. As such, *Prevent* espouses the idea that people who accept and are motivated by an ideology stating that violence is an acceptable course of action are more likely to engage in terrorist related activity. The support for violence provides further divergence from legal extremist opinion towards those that err on the side of recruitment and illegal narratives that condone, or actively support, the use of terror related activities. Connecting ideology and theology is a proposition that helps separate ideological and political narratives from religion. Identifying and isolating domestic and foreign ideologues is an intricate part of this process.

As a capability, the internet has extended the operational reach of terrorist and extremist groups alike - supporting not only the planning to conduct terror operations but recruitment and radicalization. *Prevent* accepts and recognizes the importance to continue the challenge of the ideological fight through all means of communication available. *Prevent*, in reaction, supports facilitating and supporting the creation of a wide range of efforts to challenge terrorist ideology. In particular, it supports websites, blogs, and social networking sites from the wider community including theologians, scholars, and independent organizations whose own experiences and qualifications make them more suitable to comment.⁵⁴ *Prevent* sees itself as the mechanism to enable the delivery of the counter-narrative, rather than be the sole author. In light of the public relations and information age capabilities, this is both a relevant and necessary action point in the *Prevent* strategy. Dubbed the *media mujahdeen*, the information and social media phenomenon

⁵⁴ *Prevent*, 45.

has proved to be one of ISIL's major assets as a means for recruitment and promotion of its narrative. Despite being susceptible to electronic exploitation by BIS operations, it provides a global recruitment base and ability for groups such as ISIL to communicate its narrative.

Nassim Talib's theory of anti-fragility provides a framework to explain how some entities can actually benefit from adversity; they do not simply resist shock or volatility, they actually get better when faced with disorder, risk and uncertainty.⁵⁵ ISIL reflects anti-fragile behavior through the use of media swarming. This relatively new phenomenon has arguably proved to be the organizations center of gravity as it seeks alternative and robust ways to project its narrative.⁵⁶ From an abstract point of view, swarming is the collective motion of a large number of self-propelled entities; it is an emergent behavior arising from simple rules that individuals follow without centralized coordination. Media swarming in the Islamic context has meant that individual support for Salafist ideology can now be espoused to, and supported globally, through everyday social media systems without the need for physical interaction or guidance. At 90,000 tweets per day, ISIL has demonstrated its strength to utilize social media as the predominant feature of its recruiting techniques and ability to communicate.⁵⁷ In the face of the information

⁵⁵ Nassim Nicholas Taleb, *Antifragile: Things That Gain from Disorder (Incerto)*, Reprint ed. (New York: Random House Trade Paperbacks, 2014), prologue; Anti-fragile theory proposes that when an entity is exposed to volatility, disorder, stressors, risk and uncertainty, it grows in strength. The theory provides a better understanding of fragility to provide a more systemic and broad guide to nonpredictive decision making under uncertainty. Understanding anti-fragile theory would aid in the approach to challenge the complexities of the information age. Brute force tactics to close every twitter account or website utilized by terrorist organizations plays into the anti-fragile nature of the Islamic narrative; manipulation through appropriate counter-narratives, or astute ruses as Heracles did with Hydra, provides simpler approaches to complex problems that grow and adjust to the stresses exerted on them.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 44.

⁵⁷ New York Times, "U.S. Intensifies Effort to Blunt ISIS' Message," accessed February 22, 2015, http://mobile.nytimes.com/2015/02/17/world/middleeast/us-intensifies-effort-to-blunt-isis-message.html?referrer=&_r=0.

age, the complexities associated with countering this *media swarming* tactic is an evolving problem that is compounding the realistic reactions by the government. The current British response has been the establishment of the Research, Information, and Communications Unit (RICU) to coordinate government internet functions. RICU has included a coordinated response to other departments to form a cohesive narrative in challenging the technological threat. Additional efforts focused on overseas activity by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) and Department for International Development (DfID) to address deprivation, human rights issues, and governance in Muslim-majority countries.⁵⁸ However, the overseas efforts are limited and do not meet the challenges that anti-fragile behavior poses within a system of social networking sites.

Since 2001, the government's overall activity with regard to this first objective has been centered on communications, the community challenge, theology, and disrupting the propagandist's domain. Noting the concerns of perception and complexities of religion in the whole, *Prevent's* theory of action supports third party activity rather than the sole implementation of direct government responses. The recognition of the anti-fragility of social networks in the information age, is an astute appreciation that has led to the emphasis on countering the Islamic narrative through the amplification of a wider source of theological and public opinion via technical means.⁵⁹

Objective Two: Protecting vulnerable people

Incorporating social movement theory, *Prevent* works on the assumption that radicalization is a process, not an event. As a process therefore, the government understands that cognitive openings and opportunities exist to intervene and prevent terrorist-related activity from

⁵⁸ Taleb, 48.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

drawing in vulnerable people.⁶⁰ While law enforcement is crucial in any intervention of terrorist activity, *Prevent*'s intent is still to facilitate and pre-empt this decisive journey that ultimately ends in arrest and prosecution. The theory of phenomenon that addresses the radicalization processes, demands that the strategy intervenes at the earlier stages of an individual's journey. The supporting program of *Channel* is an existing multi-agency strategy to specifically identify and provide support to people at risk of radicalization. It relies on local level leadership and uses existing collaboration between local authorities, the police, statutory partners - such as the education sector, social services, children's and youth services and offender management services - and the local community.⁶¹ The statutory partners assess individual vulnerability by employing three discreet steps: identification; risk assessment and referral; and support. Multi-agency panels then provide suitable packages based on the needs of the individual. These preventative steps address an individual's previous cognitive openings that at risk for exploitation by Islamic or terror related organizations.⁶²

Channel relies on the leadership of effective local authority and a complete integration of the supporting regional departments and independent organizations to address specific individual needs such as housing, health awareness, anger management, and theological advice. *Channel*'s reliance on a network of support underpins its ability to support those vulnerable to radicalization. The various government coordination reflects a partial understanding of a necessary strategy to operate across multiple efforts that are likely to be fully, or partly involved in the *process of persuasion* as an individual progressively moves from moderate, to extreme Islamic activity.

⁶⁰ *Prevent*, 55.

⁶¹ *Channel*, 7.

⁶² Wiktorowicz, 92.

Channel is recognized as partially successful as a consequence of a concentration on symptoms and not the root causes that leads an individual to move along the process of persuasion.

Objective Three: Supporting sectors and institutions

The final objective of *Prevent* is to identify and support priority areas that are deemed as essential to providing a holistic approach to preventing people from becoming terrorists. The government's theory of action identifies education, faith, health, criminal justice, and charities as those areas that require specific programs to address the challenges of radicalization. A significant portion of faith schools make up the growing number of privately funded or independent schools within the United Kingdom. Most generate their own curriculum but the law requires all schools to teach a broad and balanced curriculum to ensure that students are offered a balanced presentation of opposing political and religious views.⁶³ Failure to adhere to Independent School Standards results in de-registration and ultimately, closure. The same principle applies for publically funded schools, of which one third are linked to a specific faith group. The establishment of the Preventing Extremism Unit (PEU) within the department for education (DfE), is now implemented as the additional resource to conduct effective financial, and non-financial 'due diligence' to provide the appropriate level of scrutiny over privately funded schools.⁶⁴

Higher education proves to be an area ripe for action. More than 30 percent of people convicted for Al Qa'ida terrorist related offenses attended higher education institutions. While socio-economic causes for radicalization remain valid, the prosecution trends demonstrate additional complex reasons for individuals to engage in terrorist related activity. These trends

⁶³ Education Act 1996 as regards to maintained schools. These safeguards are reflected in Free School Funding Agreements.

⁶⁴ *Prevent*, 70.

often reflect unquantifiable motivations of individuals who are educated, middle class professionals with no socio-economic limitations. In its strategy, the government understands the value of balancing debate as a necessary as part of the freedom of speech legislation and liberal views held by the United Kingdom, but it highlights the importance of the duty of those higher education institutions to counter the exploitation of resources and students by extremist organizations.

Faith institutions and organizations are undoubtedly not only a relevant, but critical aspect in *Prevent*. This monograph has already described the relationship between the ideological and theological connections that the governments makes between Islamic terrorist organizations and extremist organizations. *Prevent* identifies faith institutions as the prominent sector to drive this challenge against the theological justification for committing acts of terror and spreading a narrative of violence in the name of Islam.⁶⁵

As a more rudimentary avenue to identifying individuals who may be susceptible to radicalization, *Prevent* illustrates the importance of utilizing the health sector as a means for health care professionals to recognize signs of those deemed vulnerable to radicalization. Based on the proportion of patients seen, this quantitative and qualitative use of the health sector as a means of intervention; the logic follows the same intervention policies that captures domestic violence as the justification for recommending further referral or support.⁶⁶ The logic focuses on individuals who are likely to confide in medical professionals on matters relating to personal crisis or life events that have triggered mental health concerns.

⁶⁵ *Prevent*, 81.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 80.

Prevent understands that the justice and prison system present both an opportunity and a risk. While these institutions have the potential to separate convicted Islamists from the terrorist organizations and networks with which they were associated, they also provide them with opportunities for radicalizing vulnerable people who are already in a compromised position.⁶⁷ Thus, the strategy aims to provide the appropriate training to prison staff as a technique for applying *Channel* related support at the earliest opportunity while isolating those Islamic fundamentalists deemed active in recruitment.

For all sectors of the government that are engaged through this third objective, the internet poses a significant threat as well as a challenge to dealing with Islamic terrorism and the radicalization of individuals. As a major leveraging point for Islamic extremist and terrorist organizations, the internet provides rapid and accessible gateways in their attempt to spread their ideological narrative. Even as a strength for communication and recruitment, it can also provide opportunities for exploitation by organizations such as the RICU in the counter-narrative fight. The government established the Counter-Terrorism Internet Referral Unit (CITRU) and designed it to investigate internet-based content, which may be illegal under United Kingdom law.⁶⁸ The CITRU investigative requirement requires commercial support both domestically, and more importantly internationally, due to the technological complexities of foreign host servers.

The whole of government focus to achieve objective three illustrates the need to instill a cohesive approach to achieve unity of effort across all government departments. This section highlighted the overarching objectives and broad intent of the *Prevent* strategy and learning tendencies of the government's ability to adjust from previous failures. The summary of key

⁶⁷ Andrew Silke, ed., *Prisons, Terrorism and Extremism: Critical Issues in Management, Radicalisation and Reform (Political Violence)* (Oxon: Routledge, 2014), 10.

⁶⁸ *Prevent*, 78.

objectives illustrates a number of points that the strategy recognizes or that the author has identified as key requirements for a successful strategy to be implemented: *Prevent* has a decentralized execution policy and is utterly reliant on local level leadership; the discrete approach to Islamic extremism and Islamic terrorism demands consistency and delicate management to reduce the impact of associating freedom of speech with counter-terrorism related activity; the government needs to embrace the information age to counter the Islamic narrative and pattern of anti-fragile behavior; and finally, there is an emphasis on a whole of government approach. The reality of the execution of *Prevent* however provides insight into whether the United Kingdom can be successfully implement this centralized driven strategy across the nation. Readers should understand that the government designed the *Prevent* strategy to be inclusive and to appreciate the broad areas associated with Islamic terrorism. The measures of success, however, lie in the execution of the strategy to determine the actual systemic approach and success of *Prevent*.

Section II – Analysis of the Systemic or Reductionist Approaches of *Prevent*

The successes and failures of *Prevent* have been the subject of scrutiny since its inception. This section provides a qualitative analysis of the current successes and failures of *Prevent* based on the systemic approaches and the government appreciation of second and third order effects. The findings that follow lead to the proposals in the final section that address the shortfalls in the current strategy.

A Confusing Delineation between Terrorism and Extremism

The DCLG holds the overall responsibility for the policy, programs, and coordination of extremism related efforts. As the lead government department, the DCLG has failed to deliver the necessary strategy to mitigate all forms of extremism. The only stated government objective is the continued reference to violent and non-violent extremism within *Prevent*; a strategy that

subscribes to an overt indication that Human Rights legislation and freedom of speech is potentially subject to counter-terrorism measures.⁶⁹ As previously stated, the justice and legal framework of British law often categorizes extremist views as ‘grey’ area. The narrative espousing to the implementation of Shari’a law is within the legal parameters of free speech, but there remains a sliding scale with regard to the intent, be it in support of Qutb’s ideological framework to reestablish an Islamic caliphate - with the assumed subscription through violent means - or simply as a cultural preference.

Not all requests for Shari’a law subscribe to a broad acceptance or support for terror. In this sense, *Prevent* takes a sensible and logical approach in distancing itself from broader extremist initiatives. However, the lack of DCLG strategic direction provides an open door opportunity for *Prevent* strategies to intervene in extremism activity. At face value, this is logical and indicative of a systemic appreciation of the complexities associated with Islamic extremism and terrorism, but the lack of DCLG strategy compounds the relationship, and therefore action between the two. The language used seems to cause a significant amount of tension between counter-terrorism prevention strategies and the DCLG led initiatives for integration and cohesion under the extremist banner as stated in *Prevent*.⁷⁰ An independent university report reflects the confusing language that delineates responsibility concluding that confusion, and lack of understanding reigned.⁷¹ The chief executive of a Muslim community organization noted

⁶⁹ Legislation.gov.uk, “Human Rights Act 1998, Section 13,” accessed December 6, 2014, <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1998/42/crossheading/other-rights-and-proceedings>; European Convention on Human Rights, “Article 10, Page 10,” accessed December 6, 2014, http://www.echr.coe.int/Documents/Convention_ENG.pdf.

⁷⁰ *Prevent*, 6.

⁷¹ Tufyal Choudhury, and Helen Fenwick, *Equality and Human Rights Commission Research report 72: The impact of counter-terrorism measures on Muslim communities* (Durham: Durham University Press, 2011), 54.

About 3-4 years ago I was travelling to Pakistan on one of the FCO delegations. I was with a government official who was involved in Prevent and told them I thought the strategy would probably fall flat on its face. The nature of it is very negative. If you are trying to engage with the communities why not just call it engage; rather than prevent. Prevent means I'm doing something wrong and you are going to stop me from doing that. Community cohesion and Prevent are completely two different agendas; two different areas of policy. I don't think you will achieve one with the other. Although there might be some overlap... If you are trying to engage then call it engage and look at other successful methods of engagement of community programmes that focus on engagement....but if you are looking to Prevent then don't look at community grassroots organisations to engage at that level and then fulfil your Prevent objectives.⁷²

The 2006 Terrorism Act articulately describes the relationship between incitement and actual acts of terror. Despite illustrating that the two are inextricably linked, the impact of allowing counter-terrorism strategies to be muddled with engagement activities quickly ostracizes the same communities that the government is attempting to garner support from.⁷³

The use of the words extremism and terrorism masks the true cause of Islamist violence. The government needs to articulate clinical descriptions of terrorism and extremism to reduce further confusion. The use of the term violent extremism is neither helpful nor accurate - violence in the name of any religion is simply terrorism and not violent extremism; even with religious ideology as the basis for action. If the government wants to challenge each discretely or ideally systemically, it must state the causation through articulate language: Islamic terrorism; Irish republican terrorism or English nationalism terrorism. Countering violent extremism is so broad it results in improper apportionment of resources and the isolation of community groups.⁷⁴

⁷² *Equality and Human Rights Commission report 72*, 54.

⁷³ Terrorism Act 2006 (United Kingdom), Section 1.

⁷⁴ Stephen Coughlin, *Catastrophic Failure: Blindfolding America in the Face of Jihad* (Washington D.C: Center for Security Policy Press, 2015), 559.

Whole of Government Approach: A Partial Appreciation

A consistent approach throughout the *Prevent* strategy is ensuring the methodology and lines of effort encompasses multiple government departments that reflect those aspects of society that are effected by, or play a part in, the journey of extremism and radicalization. The multiple sectors described in Section I are incorporated throughout the wider sixteen government departments, intelligence agencies, and various police forces across the UK, including the National Offender Management Service, education department, justice department, social services, and religious institutions. Within a secular state, religious institutions enable social mobility and community cohesion for minority ethnic groups.⁷⁵ As a comprehensive approach therefore, the strategy identifies that while certain integration efforts are successful for certain demographics, the efforts cannot be the ‘one stop shop’ for all individual motivations that lead into the non-violent, or violent levels of terrorism. Multiple avenues of approach therefore reflect a detailed level of analysis and assessment on the causes of motivation that lead to the willingness of individuals to participate in either legal, or illegal organizations that feed the ideological narrative of terrorism, or the falsely hijacked theological justifications that result in a breach of the UK Terrorism Act (violent or non-violent).

Quintan Wiktorowicz’s study on the cause of individual participation in the banned Al-Muhajiroun organization focuses on shared mechanisms of contention rather than the uniqueness of Islam.⁷⁶ Wiktorowicz focuses on incentive attractions--social networks as part of a wider social movement theory and framing which captures the role of ideas, culture, and cognition -- as the theory behind the provision of cognitive structures for comprehending the

⁷⁵ L. Platt, 'The Intergenerational Social Mobility Of Minority Ethnic Groups', *Sociology* 39, no. 3 (2005): 445-461.

⁷⁶ Wiktorowicz, 14.

surrounding environment.⁷⁷ Wiktorowicz determines these incentives are broader processes of persuasion linking networks of shared meaning as the basis of common identity that frequently involves high risk activism in the name of God.⁷⁸ The takeaway is that *Prevent* identifies social movement theory as one of the causes for the varying levels of attraction into extremist activity. Cognizant that this can occur at any point in an individual's life, the government's central premise is that all main government departments have a role in the identification and education of these cognitive openings throughout a vulnerable person's life.

Under-Resourced Local Authority Autonomy

The government predicates the execution of *Prevent* on the assumption that regional and local authorities are capable of implementation directed *Prevent* efforts. While the OSCT coordinates and directs the national government strategy on counter-terrorism efforts, the responsibility of delivery falls to the regional councils within the UK. The regional authorities that are outside of English borders fall to the devolved governments of Scotland, Northern Ireland and the Welsh assembly. At face value, the concept of decentralized control is positive and accounts for the government's appreciation of the local dynamics that play an intricate part of the system to combat Islamic terrorism and extremism. The decentralized approach illustrates Emile Simpson's theory on conflict in Afghanistan that explains domestic politics in a kaleidoscopic lens of self-interest and influences.⁷⁹ The decentralized approach recognizes the local kaleidoscopic regional differences and is a positive approach to overcome overly limiting centralized direction. The earlier publications of *Prevent* overlooked local dynamics, but the 2011

⁷⁷ Wiktorowicz, 15-16.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 17.

⁷⁹ Emile Simpson, *War from the Ground Up: Twenty-First Century Combat as Politics (Crises in World Politics)* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 5.

revision was more akin to Simpson's theory that focused on regional political nuances. Demographics no longer simply became the baseline for action. The decentralized approach reflects an understanding by the OSCT that top down strategies fail to appreciate the information, intelligence, and perceptions from the grass roots level. In theory, this principle is the basis for an effective strategy. However, decentralizing implementation requires support at the local level to synthesize and provide direction to the various regional departments. Staff members who are dual hatted in role and have little to no experience or training in delivering *Prevent* strategies, often lead the decentralized implementation at the regional level. Regional scrutiny reveals that local policies often for unpublished or are inaccessible which is indicative of an inability of regional authorities to support the national intent.⁸⁰ When coupled with the limited recent funding of Prevent Engagement Officers (PEO) as the bridge between the OSCT and regional departments, the overall messaging and delivery of this decentralized approach indicates poor coordination, resourcing, and a lack of support at the national level to understand the impact and practical requirements for decentralized execution.

A Perception of Securitization and not Prevention

One of the key concerns of the Muslim communities and other opponents of the *Prevent* strategy is over the impact that the current emphasis of the strategy has in terms of strengthening the existing narrative of securitization within the Muslim communities. When coupled with a foreign policy that has consistently engaged in Muslim countries, the securitization of domestic soil became an integral part of addressing the Global War on terror.⁸¹ Any integral part of any

⁸⁰ Of the twenty-five vulnerable City Councils, assessed through website searches by the author, less than 15 percent published information on regional *Prevent* strategies or departmental board meetings.

⁸¹ Noman Benotman, "*Muslim Communities: Between Integration and Securitization*," The Quilliam Foundation, accessed November 27, 2014, <http://www.quilliamfoundation.org/wp/wp-content/uploads/publications/free/muslim-communities-between-integration-and-securitization.pdf>.

counter-terrorism strategy is the identification that the community is the corner stone for any counter-terrorism policy.⁸² Successful integration and cooperation between the local authorities, police, and Muslim communities requires procedural justice that demonstrates respect and integrity.⁸³ The perceived association of *Prevent* with community initiatives has degraded the ability of the government to achieve its strategic intent. Not only is association a problem, but the lack of cohesion at the regional level generates gaps often filled by police initiatives reinforcing the perception of a strategy of securitization. The spiral of policy confusion at the local level frustrates any opportunity to meet *Prevents* first principle that stipulates reliance on public support and the willingness of the Muslim communities to actively, and voluntarily engage in the terrorist strategy.

Paddy Hillyard's 1993 analysis of the impact of the 1973 Prevention Terrorism Act (PTA) was this it spurred anti-Irish racism and the perception of a *suspect community*. His conclusions resonate with many of the current concerns about *Prevent* focusing on Muslim community groups that have been directly affected by legislation. Hillyard examines the sociological and political impacts of the examination and detention powers at airports ports; arrest, search and detention powers; interrogation procedures; and exclusion orders.⁸⁴ Hillyard's interpretation of a *suspect community* is indicative of many of the associated problems that *Prevent* triggered in its efforts to challenge Islamic terrorism. Hillyard's analysis of the impact of the broad government efforts to prevent Irish related terrorism concludes with an assessment that

⁸² Basia Spalek, *Counter-Terrorism* (Houndsmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 29.

⁸³ *Equality and Human Rights Commission Research report 72*, 16.

⁸⁴ Paddy Hillyard, *Suspect Community: People's Experience of the Prevention of Terrorism Acts in Britain* (London: Pluto Press, 1993), 12.

the government singled out all Catholic communities as the cause for the threat and by default became the concentration of government initiatives to prevent Irish related terrorism.

...a sub-group of the population that is singled out for state attention as being 'problematic'. Specifically in terms of policing, individuals may be targeted, not necessarily as a result of suspected wrong doing, but simply because of their presumed membership to that sub-group. Race, ethnicity, religion, class, gender, language, accent, dress, political ideology or any combination of these factors may serve to delineate the sub-group.⁸⁵

Police utilize PTAs to gather information and intelligence rather than applying traditional evidence and legislation enforcement tools. Similarly, the current perception of Muslim communities today is that the government's Islamic terrorism prevention requires them to single out the Muslim population to challenge the threat. As previously noted, extremist organizations and notion of Islam first reinforces the core identity of the *umma* followed by nationality. The continuation and emphasis on the Muslim community feeds the suspect community narrative further exacerbating any attempt by the government to gain community trust and support. Muslim community focus reinforces the overtones of self-identity and religion as the new nationality for many individuals who this strategy effects. When coupled with cognitive openings, vulnerabilities, or personal crisis, new pathways for social interaction often lead to networks of shared meaning that are associated with Islamic extremist and terrorist groups.

Arun Kundnani, an academic specializing in race and cultural relations, frames participants in the 'battle of minds' between Muslims within the United Kingdom as either moderates, extremists, or potential recruits, and no-longer as citizens.⁸⁶ Despite criticism of its association with Islamist organizations such as the Muslim Brotherhood, and misrepresentation of

⁸⁵ Hillyard, 15.

⁸⁶ Arun Kundnani, *Spooked! How Not to Prevent Terrorism* (London: Institute of Race Relations, 2009), 40.

the intricate wider Muslim communities and organizations, the Muslim Council of Britain (MCB) appears to be the largest Muslim umbrella organization within the UK. This organization is significant because any narrative espoused by the MCB carries weight to the wider audience listening to the holistic ‘unified voice’ of the various Muslim communities.

Even with a faded relationship with the UK government, the MCB continues to criticize the current *Prevent* strategy and its association with securitizing integration policies. As the perceived unified voice for the Muslim communities, the public perception is that any statement made by the MCB is the reference opinion of whole Muslim communities. According to the MCB,

The Muslim Council of Britain rejects this attempt to use the politics of fear and insinuation to curb the intellectual and spiritual life of our *ummah*. And the MCB will not align itself with any programme that seeks to shape the future of our ummah on the basis of outside imperatives. Some look at Woolwich and can only see the horrible attack and the threat of its possible repetition, and focus their search for lessons in the questions about extremism and radicalisation. And they narrowly their focus and interventions to the Muslim community and their investment in security into counter terrorism.⁸⁷

As the de facto body for public comment by the government and media alike, the government’s approach to the MCB adds weight to the argument that the government fails to appreciate the systemic impact of such behavior. In fact, 94 percent of Muslims do not believe that the MCB represents the views of the wider Muslim community.⁸⁸ Liberal and Islam reformists such as Ehsan Masood continue to call for contemporary revisions and interpretations of Islam that reflect

⁸⁷ The Muslim Council of Britain, “Secretary General Calls for Fresh Thinking on Extremism at MCB AGM 2013,” accessed November 15, 2014, <http://www.mcb.org.uk/secretary-general-calls-for-fresh-thinking-on-extremism-at-mcb-agm-2013/>.

⁸⁸ The Gatestone Institute, “UK: Isolating Britain's Phony Moderates Leaders of the Muslim Community,” accessed February 22, 2015, <http://www.gatestoneinstitute.org/5170/britain-phony-muslim-moderates>.

spiritual and moral norms that override coercive political and social interpretations.⁸⁹ Even with good intent, the continued pattern of government behavior is isolating wider reformist groups in its reductionist approach. Reformist narratives are often met with contempt and a narrowed opportunity to spread a wider narrative that seeks to address fundamental issues such as education reformation of Islam and its interconnections to extremist activity. The lack of systemic understanding is counterintuitive to *Prevent*'s overall objectives and emphasis on challenging the ideological basis for Islamic thought.

This section identified some of the successes and failures of *Prevent*. The findings suggest that the principles of the strategy remain grounded in logic and theoretical understanding, but its setbacks can be traced to a crossover between terrorism related and funded activities, and community strategies of engagement. The major trends identified illustrate a lack of resources and issues associated with a devolution of responsibility. Local authorities are expected to execute the strategy as a dual role of responsibility but are under resourced and strategically lacking any form of guidance on how to conduct *Prevent* related activities. The shortfalls in the strategy amplify significant layers of contradiction between the DCLG's attempts to tackle extremism and *Prevent*'s counter-terrorism objectives. Regional police forces often fill the gaps in engagement but the government has failed to produce an anti-extremist strategy or a coherent definition of the difference between violent extremism and terrorism. Thus, the DCLG is significantly left wanting and the gaps in the strategy are, by default, reinforced through local police activity. Misguided actions by local police constabularies results in perception by Muslim communities that engagement efforts are in fact one of securitization. The aggregate of the strategy's missteps results in the general public associating whole Muslim communities with

⁸⁹ Sookhdeo, *Faith, Power and Territory*, 80.

counter-terrorism activities. Despite an apparent systemic approach indicated by the inclusion policy of a wide range of government departments, there is an inherent flaw in the strategy and a reductionist execution resulting from the government's failure to understand the impact of a poorly controlled strategy at the local authority and grass roots level.

The final section discuss the aforementioned problems in depth and recommends solutions that use complex systems theory as the foundation. Using complex systems theory, the Home Office and regional authorities can identify emergent trends for future iterations of *Prevent*.

Section III – Recommendations for a Future Strategy

The fourth revision of *Prevent* is a clear indication that the UK government is at least partially capable of adjusting its strategies in response to feedback from the perceived successes and failures of *Prevent*. The Home Office has demonstrated its ability to learn – partially - from historical failures and events. Section II identified that *Prevent* fell short in applying a systemic approach in its attempt to counter-Islamic terrorism. Under-resourcing at the local level, a confusing application of extremism versus counter-terrorism efforts, and a lasting perception of an isolated, securitized Muslim community provides the underlying framework to recommend suitable changes for a more systemic future strategy. This section offers an analysis of the opportunities that exist as a result of the patterns that have emerged through the current *Prevent* strategy successes and failures.

A Coherent, Centralized Strategy for Extremism

Part of the criticism of *Prevent* is its confusing approach to dealing with Islamic extremism and Islamic terrorism. Despite a directive by the government for the DCLG to lead, and issue a counter-extremist strategy, the department has yet to produce any tangible work to

provide coherent direction to counter the problem of Islamic extremism.⁹⁰ The interim solution has caused *Prevent* counter-terrorism initiatives to encroach into extremism orientated efforts that the government should treat as engagement, and not terrorism objectives.

It was not until the murder of Drummer Lee Rigby in 2013 that the British Prime Minister acknowledged societal concerns about the threat of Islamic terrorism and Islamic extremism on UK soil. The result was the establishment of an Extremism Task Force (ETF).⁹¹ This task force was charged to provide practical solutions to extremism rather than “get bogged down in theoretical debates.”⁹² Though practical, this narrative is the antithesis of an understanding of the nature of the problem associated with Islamic extremism. It illustrates the reductionist mindset in the government’s effort to generate practical approaches to counter the problem Islamist extremism in the UK. The ETF’s intent is several fold aiming to disrupt extremism through education; monitor organizations that espouse extremist ideas; and serve as a resource provider to counter the extremist narrative. In addition, the ETF intends to isolate and close extremist internet sites - supported by the RICU – and serve as a community integrator to evaluate local authority implementation measures of the *Prevent* and *Channel* strategies.⁹³

⁹⁰ The Quilliam Foundation, “A clear and Consistent Counter-Extremism Strategy,” last modified June 4, 2013, accessed December 2, 2014, <http://www.quilliamfoundation.org/wp/wp-content/uploads/publications/free/the-need-for-a-clear-and-consistent-counter-extremism-strategy.pdf>.

⁹¹ The BBC, “Two guilty of Lee Rigby Murder,” last modified December 19, 2013, accessed December 6, 2014, <http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-25450555>.

⁹² The Guardian, “David Cameron launches anti-terror task force to tackle extremism,” last modified May 26, 2013, accessed December 6, 2014, <http://www.theguardian.com/politics/2013/may/26/david-cameron-anti-terror-task-force>.

⁹³ Tackling extremism in the UK: A Report from the Prime Minister’s Task Force on Tackling Radicalization and Extremism, 2013, (United Kingdom).

The formation of the ETF alone is a positive move to address some of the shortfalls of the current *Prevent* strategy, but the organization remains relatively immature in its ability to change the mindset of those who consider extremism a crucial link to radicalization and terrorism. The government understands that a counter-extremism narrative is a fundamental requirement to challenge the ideological voice but it must be reinforced by the British political voice concerning illegal extremist activity.

The government must include members of the Muslim community and orient itself toward an engagement rather than merely a prevention strategy. The ETF represents a cultural and political shift after the crisis of Drummer Lee Rigby's murder, but this organization's efforts are not highly regarded by several Muslim organizations.⁹⁴ Comprised of eleven of the major governmental department heads, the ETF appears to exclude any permanent representation from any of the number of Muslim communities within the UK.⁹⁵ Like the DCLG, the ETF does not have a strategy to provide guidance to challenge extremism within the UK. The ETF is merely an enforcement tool for the current *Prevent* principles attempting to intercept extremist views that step into breaches of the law. *Prevent* itself clearly recognizes the need to intervene in the journey of those individuals that are caught up in Islamic extremist activity, but the confusion of the ownership is reflected in the wording of the strategy.

⁹⁴ Thomas S. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, 4th ed. (Chicago: University Of Chicago Press, 2012), 22.

⁹⁵ UK Government Home Page, "Policy paper: Tackling extremism in the UK: report by the Extremism Taskforce," accessed December 9, 2014, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/tackling-extremism-in-the-uk-report-by-the-extremism-taskforce>.

As such,

We remain absolutely committed to protecting freedom of speech in this country. But preventing terrorism will mean challenging extremist (and non-violent) ideas that are also part of a terrorist ideology. *Prevent* will also mean intervening to stop people moving from extremist groups or from extremism into terrorist-related activity.⁹⁶

Policy and programmes to deal with extremism and with extremist organisations more widely are not part of *Prevent* and will be coordinated from the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG).⁹⁷

According to open source government publications, the only published directive for the ETF stipulates that the task force is designed to “identify any areas where our current approach was lacking and to agree to practical steps to fight against all forms of extremism.” This added complexity to achieving what should be a well-defined endstate for both the counter-terrorism and extremist strategies.⁹⁸ The implementation of the ETF proposals use language and phrases such as, “The Task Force has agreed to “...This language illustrates the additional confusion between which organization actually has the lead for developing the strategy and delivering extremist related issues; the DCLG or the ETF.”⁹⁹ The indication of a cultural and political shift is promising, but it nonetheless remains a simple means of command and control to oversee the current *Prevent* activity.

Undoubtedly a positive move towards addressing extremism, the future strategy needs to consider the problematic nature of ideas such as the ETF. Not only does the term ‘task force’ have security and military connotations, the ETF is nothing more than an advisory body. Furthermore, *Prevent* needs to completely disengage itself from any efforts to tackle extremism.

⁹⁶ *Prevent*, 6.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

⁹⁸ *Tackling extremism in the UK*, 1.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 3.

The government's acknowledgment of the relationship between Islamic terrorism and extremism is rooted in an application of Islamic law, but the ways in which this relationship is addressed should not continue to alienate the majority of the British Muslim population who are disassociated with any form of extremism or radicalization. The DCLG already has the lead for extremist related activity. As such, it must produce a tangible strategy on all forms of extremism to detangle the association of community engagement with *Prevent* counter-terrorism activity. More importantly, the government must clearly define and understand the implications of using generic terms such as violent or non-violent extremism. If the ETF is truly about conducting a wide range of community engagements in an attempt to provide logical theological arguments against those with non-conformist views, then the government needs to state its objectives to reflect its actual purpose.

Resource Lessons from History; Malaya Counter-Insurgency

Comparing *Prevent* with counter-insurgency operations sheds light on the energy behind the Islamic movement within the UK. Both organizational and individual action drive terrorism, but an ideology that fuses together religion, violence and politics underpin terrorist activities and form a coherent singular narrative.¹⁰⁰ The energy and a social movement of the few associated with terrorism is more reflective of an insurgency than of individual terrorist actions. The surge of over five-hundred British citizens fighting in Syria and Iraq is evidence of this phenomenon. Community support, practically or rhetorically, reinforces social movement theory that networks of shared meaning drive terrorist activity. Politically unacceptable, this comparison to a counter-insurgency conflict will provide a more comprehensive theory of how to appropriately resource regional councils to counteract the Islamic threat.

¹⁰⁰ John Mackinlay, *The Insurgent Archipelago* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012), 215.

In a Malayan context, the comparison to The District Officer's Security Executive meetings have an uncanny resemblance to the loosely convened meetings at the local authority level between the police and civilian departments throughout the UK.¹⁰¹ The techniques of local autonomy in Malaysia reflect a similar dichotomy that the OSCT and DCLG face today. The *Prevent* strategy of decentralized control and emphasis on local implementation is reminiscent of previous COIN operations, but the lack of emphasis on command and control is not. As a political aspiration, *Prevent* aims to affect the dynamics of an ideological mindset. In the local authority construct, the idea of command and control is underestimated as a crucial part to *Prevent*'s success. Gaps in *Prevent*'s delivery are often filled by the regional police departments. Their activities encroach into concepts that are political and not primarily criminal in origin or intent. As a result, they degrade the effectiveness of what becomes a perceived securitized strategy.¹⁰² If the ways in which *Prevent* outlines are to materialize, then the appropriate means and allocation of resources need to be reflective of the resources needed to achieve the desired conditions for success. The employment of PEOs is genuine in intent, but it does not match the requirement of a local level, political coordination to drive a complex, inter-departmental strategy forward.

Systemic Thinking Using Complex Adaptive Systems Theory

Complex adaptive systems theory provides a cognitive framework that enables the designers of strategy to consider the 'system' of Islamic terrorism, extremism, culture and reactions by the wider groups within society. By utilizing mental models that examine the whole, and not the individual parts of the problem, the OSCT and DCLG could gain a greater appreciation of the patterns and impact that government action is likely to have at the local,

¹⁰¹ Mackinlay, 217.

¹⁰² Ibid., 218.

national and international level. The application of the theory should in no way imply or otherwise create the impression that the problem of Islamic terrorism is too complex to otherwise consider. Rather complex adaptive systems theory adds value by providing a systematic approach to identify potential impacts of government strategy and reveal patterns providing the government an opportunity to adjust its strategy.

Understanding the problem in context as complex and adaptive should guide the designers of future strategy towards ideas that are adaptable and appreciative of the non-linear nature of Islamic terrorism. If a complex adaptive system is a large collection of diverse parts that are intimately interconnected, Islamic terrorism is a diverse system made up of individual, group, organizational, cultural, and religious interconnections.¹⁰³ Not only does complex adaptive systems theory account for parts and interconnections, it recognizes that small events can have dramatic effects and seemingly large events can have no discernable impact at all.¹⁰⁴ At the national level, this recognition would appreciate that seemingly small changes can result in major unintended shifts in the Islamic and Muslim community systems. Policy makers need to be cautious therefore of the apparent minor and inconsequential changes implemented; every detail counts.

The strong interactions between individuals affected by Islamic extremism illustrate the need to view the problem as a complex system of individuals and groups. Framing the problem in this sense allows the designers of strategy to consider how the Islamic narrative and exploitations of individual and group persuasion are interdependent and not discrete parts. The complex

¹⁰³ Roy J. Eidelson, "Complex Adaptive Systems In The Behavioral And Social Sciences," *Review of General Psychology* 1.1 (1997): 48, accessed March 7, 2015, <http://www.eidelsonconsulting.com/papers/cas.pdf>.

¹⁰⁴ Eidelson, 62.

systems approach should also include the recognition that for every government action, the Islamic system will adjust as it seeks to maintain a state of equilibrium. Patterns arise from the interaction between these agents and the coherent behavior of the system as a whole develops from the interactions of competition and cooperation between individuals and groups.¹⁰⁵

A lack of regional resources apportioned to support the execution of *Prevent* at the local level illustrates a failure by the government to look at the second and third order effects of the strategy. The decentralized approach is positive, but the lack of resources illustrates a simplistic lens through which the government views the delivery of the strategy. It is apparent that the major assumption that the Home Office is working towards is that local authorities have the means and a deep appreciation of how to implement *Prevent*. By attempting to intervene in Islamic terrorism, the strategy takes a reductionist standpoint; in other words, it seeks to break down the implementation of strategy into individual parts at the various regional levels without appreciating the impact that failure to deliver will have on the strategy as a whole. The evolution from previous iterations of *Prevent* is indicative of progress, but regardless, the strategy remains incapable of reacting to the emerging trends of the Islamist system as it reacts to world events and the domestic policies exerted on it. The previous government reliance on the MCB demonstrates the impact that reductionist strategies have had on the isolation of the wider reformist groups.¹⁰⁶ An appreciation of complexity theory would support not only understanding, but the ability of the government to design a strategy that is adaptable to the changing environment. Specifically,

¹⁰⁵ Kiersten B. Johnson, "The Development of Progressive and Sustainable Human Complex Adaptive Systems: Institutions, Organizations, and Communities," last modified 1999, accessed March 7, 2015, <http://www.unc.edu/~wfarrell/SOWO%20874/Readings/humancomplexsystems.html>.

¹⁰⁶ Robert M. Axelrod and Michael D. Cohen, *Harnessing Complexity*, Reprint ed. (New York: Basic Books, 2001), 15.

implementing mechanisms to amplify or dampen elements of *Prevent* according to the emergent properties that are observed as a consequence of government efforts.¹⁰⁷

Despite describing a framework that addresses all forms of terrorism, *Prevent* prioritizes its focus on the most significant threats assessed by the BIS. At present, that threat is Al-Qai'da.¹⁰⁸ This acknowledgement of threat prioritization fails to account for the effect of RWE as a consequence of the Islamic narrative.¹⁰⁹ The discrete recognition of RWE alone is not enough to appreciate the systemic interconnections between Islamic terrorism and RWE activity. The recent events and patterns that indicate an intensification of the Islamist narrative, particularly as a result of the conflict in Iraq and Syria, has spurred RWE.¹¹⁰ Strategy must be cautious of prioritization without realizing the impact that a discrete approach can have to both forms of threat. Exclusion of one manifests a perception that the government is tacitly willing not to apportion resources against another. Lack of parity in resourcing compounds the issue of a community that is securitize in nature.

Complex adaptive systems theory would provides a cognitive leap for the Home Office and provide better understanding of the implications of its design of future iterations of *Prevent*. The latest proposed policies are reactionary to the recent events in the Middle East and appear to discount second and third order effects. The adaption of complex adaptive systems theory could aid in the identification of new patterns in the nature of the threat and the threat population as

¹⁰⁷ Axelrod and Cohen, 31.

¹⁰⁸ *Prevent* Strategy, 2011, 6 (United Kingdom).

¹⁰⁹ The Huffington Post, "ISIS and Rotherham Fuelling One of The Worst Periods of Right-Wing Extremism," last modified September 18, 2014, accessed December 10, 2014, http://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/2014/08/29/edl-tommy-robinson-britain-first_n_5736294.html.

¹¹⁰ Robert Jervis, *System Effects* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1997), 125.

Islamists maneuver to preempt government intervention against their violent and non-violent ways, and ends.¹¹¹

Though not endorsed by the UK Parliament at the present, recent proposals by the Home Office seek to exclude British citizens who have sought Jihad in Iraq and Syria on a twenty-four month exclusion ban from re-entry to the UK.¹¹² The reaction to such proposals has already triggered concern by some Muslim communities and initiated a response narrative that suggests that its endorsement would act as a mobilizing narrative for extremist organizations.¹¹³ By accepting the relationship between RWE, foreign policy, and reactionary domestic policy changes, the Home Office will be more capable of taking a more systemic approach in its approach to the threat. Ultimately, the lack of awareness of complex adaptive systems theory, and the inability of the Home Office to realize that government action will trigger a change in the Islamists system is indicative of a strategy that is ill postured to meet its purpose.¹¹⁴ The current British political system that uses decentralized, local autonomy represents an effective systems approach. Not only does it ensure that nuances can be managed locally, it recognizes the negative impact of rigid centralized direction.¹¹⁵ A systems approach would allow the government to

¹¹¹ Jervis, 125.

¹¹² RUSI, “Home Secretary Theresa May on the Terrorist Threat,” last modified November 24, 2014, accessed December 10, 2014, <https://www.rusi.org/events/ref:E54732C1AD61A8#.VIjxeMstDIU>.

¹¹³ BBC, “Mother betrayed by her son’s terror sentence,” last modified, December 7, 2014, accessed December 10, 2014, <http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-30368103>.

¹¹⁴ Jervis, 258.

¹¹⁵ Paul, Cairney, “Policy Concepts in 1000 Words: Complex Systems,” last modified November 1, 2013, accessed March 7, 2014, <https://paulcairney.wordpress.com/tag/complex-systems/>.

influence the Islamic systems responsiveness to the strategy by isolating certain parts in-order to facilitate subsequent action.¹¹⁶

The complex nature of the recent conflict in Iraq and Syria has demonstrated that there is a plethora of motivations that drive individual participation, and as a result a myriad of organizations that British citizens are fighting for. Not all can be assumed to be fighting for ISIL; many have taken up arms to fight the Assad regime in groups such as the western backed Free Syrian Army. The concern over returning jihadists to the UK has spurred various opinions on how to challenge the perceived threat. Dubbed by RUSI as the four levels of extremists, the think tank attempts to make sense and explain the impact of the individual motivations to fight overseas.¹¹⁷ The broad assessment from the current emergent patterns of those returning, is that while some individuals do more than likely pose a threat as credible transnational global jihadists, many have fought to protect fellow Muslims under the ideology of the *umma*, and many have been naively led through effective PR campaigns. Many jihadists will attempt to influence others to support and fight for the Islamist ideology, while others will have deep regret and will attempt to dissuade support for the conflict.¹¹⁸ A systemic approach would appreciate the patterns of thought and behavior of a potential rival system and the implications of individual motivations and organizations, they fight for. It would also allow for anticipating where action might be taken which would exploit the opportunities to intervene and reduce the growing threat of Islamic terrorism. *Channel* does provide a window of opportunity, but if the local authorities remain

¹¹⁶ Patrick Sookhdeo and Katharine Cornell Gorka, *Fighting The Ideological War* (McLean, VA: Isaac Publishing, 2012), 41; *System Effects*, 261.

¹¹⁷ RUSI, “*The Four Types of Returning Jihadi*,” last modified Jul 8, 2014, accessed December 10, 2014, <https://www.rusi.org/analysis/commentary/ref:C53BBDE309A3F2/#.VH6BMMstDIU>.

¹¹⁸ *The Four Types of Returning Jihadi*.

under resourced, and returning jihadists attempting dissuade others are muted, then any patterns observed are negated through the continuing focus on individual action and generic prosecutions, rather than a systemic view that appreciates the complex nature of overseas conflict and the impact this has on British citizens.

Future strategy needs to prepare itself for these nuances with the expectation that complex problems require complex strategies. The continuous application of a generic approach is short term and flawed. It will more than likely compound the domestic turmoil that already exists under the perception of a strategy that is using integration as a means for securitization. The analysis of *Prevent* illustrates a number of gaps in the strategies current attempt at a systemic approach. Despite providing an inclusive policy of relevant agencies, it fails to account for the second and third order effects between Islamic terrorists, extremists, the Muslim community, RWE, and the wider British population.¹¹⁹

The Progressive Muslim

In light of the contradictory efforts in the strategy, most notably the desire to amplify moderate Islamic views which have previously been hampered by government and media reliance on the MCB for public comment, the final suggestion for future strategy is the reinforcement of more liberal Islam reformists such as those espoused to by Ehsan Masood. Masood's reflective examination of Islamic history wording identifies Islamic societies that were receptive to hearing and discussing new ideas, even if they do not always agree with them.¹²⁰ In the history, theory, doctrine framework, Masood drives forward the notion that society must rewrite the questions from generation to generation in order to maintain currency with the world as it evolves;

¹¹⁹ *Harnessing Complexity*, 4-7.

¹²⁰ Ehsan Masood, *Science And Islam* (London: Icon Books, 2009), 216.

particularly if society uses religious interpretation of the past, for the purpose of the present with a view to managing the future.¹²¹ The presence of ISIL, in this context, reflects the exact justification for Masood's call for the re-writing of historical questions within the contemporary environment and in response to the increase of political ideology in the name of Islam. Understanding the importance of promoting reform within the Muslim world is a complex problem that breaks the boundaries of a domestic counter-terrorism strategy. However, it is a fundamental tool in the essential requirement to challenge, isolate and neutralize the extremist and terrorist narrative.¹²² A continuation of the *Channel* strategy that has supported former extremists capable of reintegration, lends itself to a potent capability. Reintegration is not by any suggestion a generic solution suitable for all individuals involved in Islamist activity, many will rightly be prosecuted for illegal activity, but with careful assessment and the full capability of *Channel* to enable re-humanization, there is an opportunity to increase prevention activity within the UK. The results of the Quilliam Foundation and its former Islamist founders acting as an independent think tank in the counter-Islamic narrative, demonstrate how effective this can be if amplified with the appropriate level of resources.

The recommendations for the iterations of *Prevent* are based on a number of trends identified in Section II. The most prominent recommendation thus presented being the decentralization and lack of oversight of local authority autonomy that requires the appropriate resourcing and delivery of the DCLG strategy to counter-extremism. Finally, the importance of a more theoretical systems framework will help illuminate the consequences of *Prevent* and wider government initiatives. Defined systemically, the Islamist system and the extremist narrative can

¹²¹ John Lewis Gaddis, *The Landscape Of History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 11.

¹²² *Fighting The Ideological War*, 39.

potentially be isolated, and the cognitive openings for reformist Islamic ideas presented as the means and way to progress the theological links in the twenty-first century.

Conclusion: Greater Resources, Systemic Thinking, Engagement

The intent of this monograph was to examine the success and failures of United Kingdom's counter-terrorism strategy, *Prevent*, in order to assess suitable recommendations for future iterations. *Prevent* argued that in order to challenge the threat from Islamic terrorism, it needed to challenge the ideology that promotes terrorism and those who promote it, protect vulnerable people and support sectors and institutions that play an intricate part in people's everyday lives as a mechanism to reach out to those affected by the threat. Even with a decentralized approach, the lack of resources at the regional level across all government departments illustrated the superficial attempt by the strategy to be inclusive and systemic. A muddled narrative between the efforts to counter the association between Islamic extremism has fueled the perception of a securitized strategy that is attempting to garner trust and leverage from the Muslim community. The recent support of the mother of Syrian jihadist Yusuf Sarwar who warned and then cooperated with the local authorities highlights some of the issues of securitization. The mother notified authorities of her son's decision to fight overseas which resulted in a twelve-year imprisonment for Yusuf Sarwar.¹²³ The strategy aims to continue to dismantle progress by linking community cooperation to judicial prosecutions and security operations. More often than not this has occurred through the employment of counter-terrorism related funding activity and examples of cooperation that has resulted in prosecution of family members. Systemic thinking would appreciate the wider impacts of RWE and provide the

¹²³ BBC, "Mother betrayed by her son's terror sentence," last modified, December 7, 2014, accessed December 10, 2014, <http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-30368103>.

appropriate resources to all challenge threats equally in order to reduce the perception of separate Muslim communities from the rest of society within the UK.

In order to provide a qualitative assessment of the objectives and understanding of the theoretical logic of *Prevent*, Section I presented the evolution and historical context of Islamic terrorism, its relationship to Islamic extremism, and finally the overarching framework and objectives currently written within the strategy. The first objective of *Prevent* is to respond to the ideological challenge of terrorism. Accepted by the strategy as a 'grey area,' the *Prevent* sets a clear and distinct line of responsibility between the government efforts to challenge extremism through the DCLG, and *Prevent*, which remains focused on specific counter-terrorism related activity. Objective two sets the framework for how the strategy intends to prevent vulnerable people from being drawn into terrorism, and where possible, through the provision of advice and support. *Channel* as the supporting strategy predominantly drives this effort and is seen as the lynch pin in re-humanizing those effected and capable of reintegration as a result of radicalization. Objective three describes the importance of a whole of government approach that captures all sectors of national and regional government departments. What emerged from this analysis is that the most obvious challenge *Prevent* has in achieving its goals is its failure to recognize Islamic extremism as a factor in the process of radicalization and how a subsequent, or consequential, misemployment of efforts to challenge extremism can create a division between the Muslim communities and society.

The second section discussed the successes and failures of the *Prevent* strategy. The ill-defined responsibilities between the counter-terrorism strategy and extremist direction is the most significant. While the strategy continues to highlight the relationship between the two, the obvious perception from Muslim communities drives a narrative of counter-terrorism strategies that are driving integration measures within communities. The analysis of *Prevent* repeatedly

identified securitization as the narrative outcome as a consequence of the strategy in application. The concept of decentralized control is positive, but the means and ways in which local authorities are resourced remains scant. The whole of government approach and integration of the major governmental departments provides a clear vision but, again, becomes superficial as a consequence of a top down driven strategy that recognizes the importance of local driven strategies, without the appropriate means to provide consistency in messaging and execution.

Given the nature and sources of weakness in the existing strategy, the final section of this monograph provided alternative proposals for a way to reduce the current fragmented nature of the current *Prevent* strategy. The delivery of a DCLG extremism strategy is fundamental to disaggregate counter-terrorism related activity from engagement efforts. The introduction of a more robust command and control structure would rapidly de-conflict those tensions between the national strategy and regional implementation efforts and gaps that exist as a result of under resourcing and the over extension and expectation of local authority staff. Incorporation of complex systems theory could be a critical factor in providing the government with greater levels of relevance through, and the possibility of evolution in the current and proposed policies. The discrete approaches to racism, RWE, and the complexity associated with the current phenomenon of foreign fighters being attracted to the Middle East, are all examples of the failure to appreciate the interconnections of each of these parts and the impact of the feedback that they have on one another, government strategies, and current world events. Finally, those who are developing future strategy need to reevaluate how to deliver a counter-ideological narrative. The increase of resources and on-line activity by the CITRU hampers the publication of multiple Islamic sources, but it still remains a temporary solution. The need for progressive Muslim thought is under significant duress from traditionalist Imams. Only through the adequate support of physical resources and a narrative from the wider, and younger, generations of moderate Muslims can the

longer term ideological, and theological changes be instilled into the Muslim and common societal psyche.

Government indecision, and its reliance on a generic, reductionist approach has left the British government with *Prevent* - an outdated strategy that is now four years old and woefully in need of a greater appreciation of society and understanding of the impact of such reductionist approaches. It is evident that *Prevent* has been a fixed strategy that sets out a reliable, but inflexible path to a goal that has now become disappointing and counterproductive. It has conceded the advantage to the Islamic terrorist who has a greater level of flexibility and imagination in the pursuit of their objectives.¹²⁴ And, despite the good intentions of attempts to be systemic through the whole of government approach, the Home Office has ultimately delivered a reductionist strategy that fails to place the United Kingdom in a position of advantage over the Islamic terrorism fight. As the UK reacts to daily events, it becomes evident that tactical actions are driving strategy and the urgency of the moment has trumped the need to take a more strategic view.¹²⁵ If maintaining a position of relative advantage over Islamic terrorism is the government's true political aim, it must implement a strategy that is current, systemic, and adaptable. The Government must be seen to react to the threats posed to its population; this is after all an inherent part of the social contract between the state and the individual reinforcing its legitimacy. Not only does the Government need to revisit the *Prevent* strategy with haste, it needs to consider the organizational structures and political decisions that shape it. Multiculturalism policies have elevated the status of religious and ethnic groups within wider society and in turn, spurred community divisions. The longer the government continues to emphasize particular communities,

¹²⁴ Lawrence Freedman, *Strategy: a History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 610.

¹²⁵ Coughlin, 560.

the longer it will complicate Islamic terrorism in the short term. Distant solutions will ultimately require a deeper, systemic appreciation of the impact that reactionary strategies and legislation will have on society as whole. If engagement is the key to maintain a position of relative advantage, then future strategy should allow the different cultures within the United Kingdom to flourish without specified funding lines to coerce favored support. Future iterations of *Prevent* need to consider the wider implications of the language it uses and the effects of the perception that this generates in society as a whole. Parity in emphasis would not only garnish a greater level of community trust for all forms of terrorism, but it would deemphasize the need of the current trends that allow Islamophobia to bridge religion to political representation.

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