

# Citizenship education for all – engaging with extremism

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themes of the article is described at <http://www.insted.co.uk/sensitive-issues.html>.

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## Introduction and summary

A cartoon shows the prime minister (Gordon Brown) and the home secretary (Jacqui Smith) walking along the backstreets of an urban area somewhere in northern England. (*New Humanist*, vol. 124 issue 3, May/June 2009.) Each is pushing a wheelbarrow loaded with bags of money. It is early summer 2009 and apparently they are about to distribute the contents of their barrows with the minimum of care and deliberation.

In preparation for their arrival, and presumably with a view to being in receipt of their largesse, a local resident is hastily changing the sign outside his house. Until a few minutes ago it said 'Community Youth Centre'. It is now about to say 'Post-Jihadi, Counter-Martyrdom, Therapeutic, De-radicalisation Workshop'. Meanwhile another local resident, standing outside another building, one that is still called Community Youth Centre, looks on in dismay.

Is this other resident dismayed by the irresponsibility, short-termism and ignorance of the politicians? Or is it the cynical opportunism of his rival co-religionist that disturbs him? Or is he ruefully reflecting on his own slowness to take advantage of a new funding stream? It is not clear.



The cartoon is a comment – savagely well-focused or cynically over-the-top, according to your point of view – on the government’s current programmes to prevent violent extremism (PVE). Several of the programmes are directly or indirectly relevant to readers of *Race Equality Teaching*. This article reviews a range of arguments about PVE over the last few years, and considers implications for the education system. Should teachers and other educators refuse pointblank to have anything to do with PVE, on the grounds that its underlying assumptions are deeply problematic and that it is likely in practice, even on its own terms, to do more harm than good? Or are there reasons for engaging with PVE positively? If the latter, how should schools proceed? These are the key questions with which the article is concerned.

After this introduction, the article has two parts. The first and longer considers criticisms of PVE. The cartoon cited above touched on some of these, but not on all. The second part of the article considers how schools might proceed if they are minded to give PVE serious and sustained attention.

## **Background**

Before the article gets under way, it is relevant to recall the historical context and two recent government publications.

To an extent, the history goes back decades, at least as far as the 3,500 or more deaths caused by Ireland-related violence between 1969 and 1998. Approaches to counter-terrorism began to be revised, however, after September 2001, and even more so after the London bombs in July 2005 (‘home-grown terrorism’). The PVE agenda in Britain, as currently conceived and pursued, began to take shape in autumn 2005.

As of summer 2009, the most substantial government publication on PVE is *Pursue, Prevent, Protect, Prepare*, subtitled *The United Kingdom’s strategy for countering international terrorism*. It was published on 24 March 2009 and is known colloquially in government circles and amongst campaigners and officials as Contest 2. It runs to over 170 A4 pages, has more than 200 detailed and informative footnotes, is attractively and expensively designed and formatted, and contains a lengthy and well-written executive summary. It costs £34.55.<sup>1</sup>

As indicated by the document’s title, the government’s overall strategy has four arms or, in different metaphors, four streams, prongs, pillars or strands – ‘pursue’, ‘prevent’, ‘protect’ and ‘prepare’. It is the second of these, prevent (often spelled in the current context with capitals, PREVENT) that is the principal subject-matter of this article. More specifically, as already mentioned, the article is about the role of schools within the PREVENT strand of the overall agenda.

*Pursue, Prevent, Protect, Prepare* may appear at first sight thoughtful, reasonable and well-argued. However, such a judgement is possible only if one is not familiar with the series of government documents on the same theme that preceded it, including certain unpublished but leaked drafts;<sup>2</sup> not familiar with the rationale for PVE expounded by certain thinktanks;<sup>3</sup> not familiar with how PVE strategies have in practice been implemented by the police, security services and justice system in Britain and across

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<sup>1</sup> Home Office (2009) *Pursue, Prevent, Protect, Prepare: the United Kingdom’s strategy for countering international terrorism*, Home Office

<sup>2</sup> Dodd, Vikram (2009) Anti-terror code would alienate most Muslims, *The Guardian*, 17 February

<sup>3</sup> Kundnani, Arun (2008) How thinktanks are shaping the political agenda on Muslims in Britain, *Institute of Race Relations*, 2 September

Europe;<sup>4</sup> and not familiar with criticisms of how PVE funds have been misused by local authorities and the voluntary sector (see below).

With particular regard to education, the principal government publication is a booklet entitled *Learning Together to be Safe*, subtitled *A toolkit to help schools contribute to the prevention of violent extremism*, published by the DCSF on 8 October 2008. Copies have been widely distributed throughout the country and there is supporting information and more detailed advice on the Teachernet website.<sup>5</sup> The toolkit locates PVE within the broad context of citizenship education:

Exploring ideas, developing a sense of identity and forming views are a normal part of growing up. Schools can support young people in this, providing a safe environment for discussing controversial issues, and helping young people understand how they can influence and participate in decision-making.

The educational objectives set out in the toolkit are unexceptionable at the level of abstract principle. The danger in practice, however, is that they are too closely associated with the wider PVE agenda to have the capacity to win the trust and commitment of teachers, parents and communities, and of young people themselves.

### **Criticisms and concerns**

Concerns about PVE have been expressed by a range of organisations and individuals, both Muslim and non-Muslim. The PVE agenda, it is alleged:

- reflects and legitimises a mindset which sees all Muslims as much the same, regardless of their ethnicity, nationality, social class, life experience, geographical location and political outlook, and regardless of how observant and religiously-oriented they are, or are not, and which in addition sees all Muslims as a threat, namely all as potential terrorists, or as potential supporters of terrorism
- may therefore encourage, or anyway not discourage, hate crimes against people perceived to be Muslims and their property; discrimination in employment and workplace practices; inertia and insensitivity towards Muslims in public services; casual rudeness in public places ('the unkindness of strangers'); negative and ignorant stereotypes of Muslims in the media; and electoral support for political parties which explicitly or with dog-whistles play on fears about the creeping 'islamification' of Britain
- distracts attention, resources and energy from the provision of services, support and opportunities which *all* young people need, regardless of their faith background or ethnicity, if they are to develop as active citizens, locally, nationally and internationally
- fosters or exacerbates tensions and rivalries between different Muslim groups and organisations; encourages simplistic distinctions between deserving ('moderate') Muslims and undeserving ('extremist'); uses patronage, favouritism and grants to divide and rule; and operates through a colonial-type system dependent on so-called community leaders

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<sup>4</sup> Fekete, Liz (2009) The parallel world of Europe's anti-terror regimen, *Institute of Race Relations: European Race Bulletin*, 28 May

<sup>5</sup> Department for Children, Schools and Families (2008) *Learning Together to be Safe: a toolkit to help schools contribute to the prevention of violent extremism*, London: DCSF

- de-professionalises teachers and youth workers, as also staff in other public services, by co-opting them into surveillance on behalf of the police and security services and undermining relationships of trust
- makes little or no use of insights, wisdom and moral teachings and exemplars in Islamic traditions of education and learning, and in the writings and reflections of scholars and researchers of Muslim heritage concerned with issues of citizenship, identity, pluralism, youth culture and globalisation
- popularises words which remain undefined, and therefore mean, if they mean anything at all, different things to different people – such words include ‘extremism’. ‘radicalisation’, ‘resilience’, ‘Islamism’ and ‘fundamentalism’
- devolves responsibility for implementing PVE to local authorities and other public bodies without checking whether they have relevant expertise, experience, capacity and contacts, and with inadequate accountability and transparency
- obstructs implementation of the letter and spirit of equalities legislation, including in particular race equality legislation, and of expectations and statutory requirements relating to community cohesion
- does not even mention Islamophobia and anti-Muslim racism, let alone discuss anti-Muslim hostility in public institutions and the media as likely to affect disaffection, alienation and anger amongst young Muslims
- is most unlikely to achieve its own aims of preventing violent extremism by winning the hearts and minds of Muslim individuals, communities and organisations.

Not all these allegations are made with equal force by all critics. Nor do all critics write and speak in the same vein and register of language, or from the same background experience, or with the same political affiliations. So far, the criticisms have been published through journalism, pamphlets and the blogosphere, not in books from academia or articles in learned journals. Publications consulted for this article are listed in its bibliography. A flavour of some of them is provided in the following paragraphs. The authors and sources are named in alphabetical order.

### **An-Nisa**

An-Nisa Society is an organisation based in London with extensive experience of working for the welfare of Muslim families.<sup>6</sup> Founded in 1985, it has engaged in influential campaigns over the years to challenge institutional Islamophobia in public services and amongst race equality professionals. ‘The government’s approach to dealing with terrorism by targeting the whole Muslim community as potential terrorists,’ writes Khalida Khan, one of its directors, ‘... is flawed and fraught with perils. We believe that rather than creating community cohesion and eliminating terrorism it has the potential to create discord and inflame community tensions.’ She continues:

The most glaring concerns of the Prevent strategy are the targeting of the whole Muslim community as potential terrorists, the fusion of counter terrorism with community cohesion and community development initiatives, and the mainstreaming of Prevent in the core services of local councils. The strategy has a heavy surveillance focus, which has considerable risks involved and is morally dubious ... The strategy is confusing and unclear. It aims, for example, to strengthen the ‘capacity’ of Muslims to resist violent extremism and to build ‘resilience’. Whatever that means is open to differing

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<sup>6</sup> An-Nisa Society (2009) *An-Nisa Society’s initial response to Contest 2’s Prevent Strategy*, April (see also Khalida Khan below)

understandings. At one level, the euphemistic and vague terminology serves the purpose of getting the strategy past the Muslim community with little protest. The loose definitions also leave the strategy open to interpretation at the risk of being counter-productive. It gives officers substantial leeway in implementation with no accountability to Muslims, who are the subject of it.<sup>7</sup>

### **Karima Hamdan**

Karima Hamdan writes widely in the blogosphere. In an article entitled *Contest 2 and the Great White Whale* (28 March 2009) she suggests that Muslims and Islam are seen in modern Britain rather in the same way that the whale Moby Dick was seen by Captain Ahab in Herman Melville's novel (1851) – namely, as a symbol or epitome of 'malevolence, viciousness and iniquity'. She suggests further that the concept of moral panic is crucially relevant:

Where does the image of the dysfunctional, marginalised and resentful Muslim minority come from? In two words - moral panic ... Problems occur when a perpetually morally indignant press is associated with a weak government which only appears to stand for whichever populist measure will guarantee its re-election. This appears to be the case in today's Britain and Contest 2 is evidence of this. The government seems to have ceased to seek out real solutions to the problems it faces and opted to legislate their way through a moral panic ... Contest 2 has the potential of becoming a socially divisive document that seeks to marginalise normal Muslims with its fatally flawed dual approach to tackling terrorism by attacking Islam. The worry is that if Muslims were not isolated, cynical and abandoned at the launch of Contest 2 they may well become so by the time Contest 3 is rolled off its moorings.<sup>8</sup>

### **Sadiq Khan**

Sadiq Khan is MP for Tooting and in June 2009 was appointed Minister of State for Transport. He is the author of *Fairness not Favours*, published by the Fabian Society in 2008. In a newspaper article about this he writes:

I challenge British Muslims to accept that, as strongly as they feel about Iraq or counter-terrorism measures, poverty and inequality have the biggest impact on the lives of the majority of British Muslims and do the most to prevent potential being fulfilled. Even if your passion is foreign policy, your ability to help people thousands of miles away is made much greater if you are an active citizen and player at home in the UK. British Muslims will know they have understood the challenges facing them when they realise that childcare should matter more than Kashmir. And they will know the Labour party finally understands them when they hear politicians say that addressing the problems of British Muslims is about fairness, and not favours or fear.<sup>9</sup>

### **New Humanist**

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<sup>7</sup> Khan, Khalida (2009) *Preventing Violent Extremism (PVE) & PREVENT: a response from the Muslim community*, An-Nisa Society, February

<sup>8</sup> Hamdan, Karima (2009) [Contest 2 and the great white whale](http://www.ummahpulse.com), [www.ummahpulse.com](http://www.ummahpulse.com), 28 March

<sup>9</sup> Khan, Sadiq (2008) *Fairness, not favours, for Muslims*, *The Guardian*, 17 September <http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2008/sep/17/religion.islam>

In an article in summer 2009, illustrated with the cartoon described at the start of this article, the editor of *New Humanist* quotes from a range of interviews he conducted with people who have firsthand experience of how PVE has been working in practice.<sup>10</sup> Extracts from the interviews include the following.

PVE is not a well thought-out agenda. They think they can buy off Muslims and the problem will go away. So people have backed off, and they have the right to do that. If a large chunk of a community refuses to dialogue with you on an initiative aimed at that community, then that initiative isn't working. (*Anjum Anwar, dialogue development officer at Blackburn Cathedral*)

'People have started to feel that Contest and PVE were from the beginning taking Muslims step by step towards denouncing their faith. At first it was about only targeting extremists, but the definition of that has broadened so much that any activity you do could be taken as extremism. Of course you need to spend money on security, but taking a blanket approach towards every member of the Muslim community is wrong, a fallacy and a waste of resources. Because you are delivering something to people who really don't know anything about extremism or terrorism.' (*Abdul Hamid Quereshi, chair of Lancashire Council of Mosques*)

'This carte blanche painting of the community as potential terrorists has to be removed completely from the scene," she said. "It is a ridiculous premise. The actions of four individuals on 7/7 have come to define two million people. Now everything Muslim-related is extremism-related. So if I'm sick, or my child isn't surviving childbirth, that in some way will be extremism-related? If you're a Muslim organisation looking for funding, it has to be about extremism.' (*Bano Murtuja, consultant*)

### **Scotland Against Criminalising Communities (SACC )**

SACC was set up in March 2003 in response to fears that minority communities in Scotland were being victimised to create a climate of fear and to provide a justification for the invasion of Iraq, and policies of threat and aggression elsewhere in the world. In a statement about the government's *Contest* programme, issued on 12 June 2009, it said that 'Contest isn't just a crime-prevention strategy'. It continued:

It's a deadly mix of spin, psychological warfare, social engineering and intelligence-gathering. The Government says that Contest includes a "commitment to human rights and the rule of law." But Contest uses and promotes laws that strip us of fundamental human rights. Contest links domestic policy to the Government's wars of aggression in the Middle East ... Under the guise of tackling 'terrorism', Contest stifles the capacity of the Muslim community to mount an effective political challenge to British foreign policy or to work with the wider British community in opposition to war.

### **Salma Yaqoob**

Salma Yaqoob is a councillor for Birmingham Sparkbrook. She is also head of the Birmingham Stop the War Coalition and a spokesperson for Birmingham Central Mosque. In an article in *The Muslim News* (28 November 2008) she wrote critically about PVE and outlined priorities relevant to teachers and youth workers:

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<sup>10</sup> Sims, Paul (2009) Mills and minarets, *New Humanist*, vol. 124, issue 3, May/June <http://newhumanist.org.uk/2034>

Instead of trying to deny or sweep under the carpet the real impact of Government policy on the Muslim community, we need to consciously engage with it. We must create the space within the community where our young people feel free to speak openly about how they feel as young Muslims growing up in a country where their identity is constantly contested. The best antidote to the appeal of extremism is to create a model of critically engaged citizenship. That will only happen when more young Muslims engage in the political process and are confident and assertive about expressing their concerns, irrespective of whether it offends the Government or not. To that end we need more Muslim role models prepared to speak out, not stooges prepared only to do their masters' bidding. It is a waste of PVE funding if it is used simply to finance tokenistic, window dressing initiatives that simply reinforce Government spin and increase cynicism in the democratic process.<sup>11</sup>

### **Gary Younge**

Gary Younge is a journalist who frequently writes about government policies towards British Muslims and towards the Islamic world. Following the publication of *Pursue, Prevent, Protect, Prepare* he suggested the ideal Muslim, from the government's point of view, is 'patriotic, pious, peaceful and patient' and commented that 'Labour's anti-terror strategy depends on mythical figures as elusive as WMD'. The government continues, he said:

... to approach Muslims as though their religion defines them. It rarely speaks to them as tenants, parents, students or workers; it does not dwell on problems that they share with everyone else; it does not convene high profile task forces to look at how to improve their daily lives. It summons them as Muslims, talks to them as Muslims and refers to them as Muslims - as though they could not possibly be understood as anything else...And when it does talk to them as Muslims, it demands they join a society that doesn't exist, on terms that would not be set for any other religious group.<sup>12</sup>

### **Citizenship education for all**

From the point of view of the government, PREVENT is just one strand, stream, prong, arm or pillar in the overall task of responding to international terrorism. From the point of view of schools, however, it is just one strand in the overall field of citizenship education. This is acknowledged, but not adequately emphasised, in the *Learning Together to be Safe* toolkit.

If local authorities and schools engage explicitly with PVE, it would be appropriate and valuable if they were to do these three things before making any specific plans:

- familiarise themselves with the criticisms that have been made of PVE, as outlined above, and decide their own views through reflective discussion

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<sup>11</sup> Yaqoob, Salma (2008) Government's PVE agenda is failing to tackle extremism, *The Muslim News*, 28 November  
<http://www.muslimnews.co.uk/paper/index.php?article=3795>

<sup>12</sup> Younge, Gary (2009) Where will we find the perfect Muslim for monocultural Britain? *The Guardian*, Monday 30 March  
<http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2009/mar/30/islam-muslims-labour-terrorists>



involving not only staff but also parents and other carers, and young people themselves.

- revisit their citizenship education provision and amend it accordingly, bearing in mind not only non-Muslim perspectives, as at present, but also perspectives informed by Muslim principles and experience
- draw up a brief list of principles to guide their detailed planning and be the basis for later evaluation.

The second of these tasks, that of reviewing the citizenship education on the basis of Muslim perspectives and experience, will involve drawing on the work and reflections of initiatives such as An-Nisa's *British, Muslim or Wot* project, based in London; the *Islam and Citizenship Education (ICE)* project based in Leicester; the *Nasiha Citizenship Foundation* based in Bradford; the *Oxford Muslim Pupils' Empowerment Project*, based at Cheney School, Oxford; and *Young, Muslim and Citizen*, developed by the UK Race in Europe Network (UKREN). The latter proposes five key principles:

### **1 Muslim voice**

Muslim views and voices about British citizenship should be heard and attended to in current debates.

### **2 Identity and belonging**

Each young Muslim person in modern Britain should be supported and assisted in the development of their sense of personal identity and self-esteem, and of where they belong.

### **3 Duties and responsibilities**

Young Muslim citizens of the UK should be helped to balance their various duties and responsibilities towards others and themselves.

### **4 Challenging prejudice**

There is an urgent need, if young people of Muslim heritage are to play a full part in Britain as citizens, to challenge, combat and resist Islamophobia and anti-Muslim racism.

### **5 Participation**

Young Muslim citizens should be helped to develop political literacy and participation skills, and skills in effecting change.

With regard to the first of these, it is relevant to note that Muslim voices in recent debates about Britishness and multiculturalism have not had a fair hearing. One consequence is that the debates themselves have not been sufficiently well informed. Another is that young British Muslims are in danger of supposing the debates are not of importance or interest to them, and they may in consequence be alienated by the citizenship education lessons and programmes that are provided in mainstream schools. This is particularly likely in so far as the discourse of politicians and some of the media implies that a central purpose of citizenship education is to control and regulate young Muslims rather than to empower them.

Young British Muslims, in common with all other young British people, develop their sense of identity within a range of influences, inspirations and pressures. Some of the influences are mutually compatible and they therefore reinforce each other. Others, however, are at variance with each other and in consequence young people are pulled in opposite directions. Everyone is an individual and needs support and assistance as they discover and express their individuality amongst the competing pressures they encounter. The pressures and influences young British Muslims encounter, actually or potentially, include:



- family life, and within this expectations about how young people should behave towards their elders, and expectations about gender roles
- the expectations and requirements of the mainstream education system
- the mosque and mosque-based education, as compared with mainstream schools
- new trends in Islamic theology and spirituality, particularly as developed in Europe and the United States
- street culture and youth culture, including drugs and other risk-taking behaviour, and lack of deference towards tradition and authority
- currents and strands of thought loosely known as 'fundamentalism', 'political Islam', 'extremism', 'Islamism' and 'radicalisation'.

Third, Muslim literature on citizenship recognises multiple responsibilities towards fellow human beings. ('The best one of us is the one that is most helpful to others' – *Hadith*.) The most important of these are towards:

- oneself, for example one's health and well-being – physical, emotional, mental and spiritual
- one's family
- one's neighbours, contacts and colleagues – the people you meet and interact with on a day-to-day basis
- the national state where one happens to live, and in which one has citizenship rights – the state's laws, decision-making culture, expectations and customs
- other Muslims – the world-wide *Ummah*
- the world community as a whole, and issues such as climate change, war and poverty which require coordinated international action.

All of these are important, and none takes precedence over the others. There is a temptation amongst some young British Muslims, however, to acknowledge fully only some of these responsibilities – those concerning their family and the world-wide *Ummah*, for example. They may even be inclined to suppose that activities relating to their immediate neighbourhood and to wider British society are *haram*.

Fourth, there is an urgent need to challenge, combat and resist Islamophobia. Young British Muslims are growing up in a society which contains much anti-Muslim hostility, ignorance and prejudice. The hostility is expressed throughout the media, particularly the print media, and sometimes in physical violence and verbal abuse in public spaces. Young Muslims may in consequence feel that attempts they may make to be active citizens are neither invited nor welcome. Equally unfortunately their confidence and self-esteem may be damaged.

Young Muslims need to appreciate that Islam is not the cause of Islamophobia and they need moral, intellectual and emotional strength to resist and oppose it. Further, even more importantly, they need to join with others to combat, reduce and remove it. Amongst other things, this involves taking pride in their heritage; refusing to see themselves as helpless victims; and refusing to adopt an us/them view of the world in which all non-Muslims are disrespected as mere '*kafirs*', '*kuffar*' or '*kuffs*'.

Fifth, young British Muslims, as indeed all young citizens, need to develop skills in discussion, debate and deliberation; listening respectfully and with an open mind to others; weighing up options; acting cooperatively with others to make their views

known; and achieving change. Such skills need to be accompanied by relevant knowledge about decision-making structures in the wider world. This cluster of skills and knowledge is sometimes known as political literacy. Skills of deliberation and communication are developed, most obviously, through involvement in practical projects. They can also be developed, however, through the use of activities and exercises in educational settings – activities and exercises which require active talking and listening in small groups.

Clearly, these five principles are relevant, suitably modified in their phrasings here and there, for all pupils, not for Muslim pupils only. It is also relevant to note and emphasise that these principles add to and complement, but are in no way inconsistent with, the approaches recommended in *Learning Together to be Safe*. They are in effect expounded with greater detail in the writings of, amongst others, Louise Archer,<sup>13</sup> Tufyal Choudhury,<sup>14</sup> Maurice Coles,<sup>15</sup> Philip Lewis,<sup>16</sup> Rabia Malik and her co-authors<sup>17</sup> and Olivier Roy.<sup>18</sup> There are exact references in the bibliography at the end of this article.

### **Concluding note**

None of the critics of PVE referred to in this article doubt that there are real dangers around violent extremism in modern societies, or that schools have positive contributions to make. Being positive, however, involves being proactive and professional, not just prudent and preventative. The cartoon with which this article began was critical of schemes and approaches that are poorly planned, socially irresponsible, intellectually vacuous and profoundly anti-Muslim.

Schools have to protest against superficiality and prejudice, to promote deep understanding of complex issues, to provide resources and opportunities to enable their pupils to play full parts as citizens locally, nationally and globally, and to produce outcomes that are fair for all. Yes: protest, promote, provide, produce for all, not just prevent for some.

### **Postscript**

Most of the criticisms of Prevent cited in this article were in due course endorsed by the House of Commons Communities and Local Government Committee in its report entitled *Preventing Violent Extremism: sixth report of session 2009–10*, March 2010, <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200910/cmselect/cmcomloc/65/65.pdf>.

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<sup>13</sup> Archer, Louise (2003) *Race, Masculinity and Schooling: Muslim boys and education*, Maidenhead: Open University Press

<sup>14</sup> Choudhury, Tufyal (2006) *The Role of Muslim Identity Politics in Radicalisation: a study in progress*, Department for Communities and Local Government

<sup>15</sup> Coles, Maurice Irfan (2008) *Every Muslim Child Matters: practical guidance for schools and children's services*, Stoke on Trent: Trentham Books

<sup>16</sup> Lewis, Philip (2007) *Young, British and Muslim*, London: Continuum Publishing

<sup>17</sup> Malik, Rabia and Aallyah Shaikh, Mustafa Suleyman, (2007) *Providing Faith and Culturally Sensitive Support Services to Young British Muslims*, Leicester: National Youth Agency

<sup>18</sup> Roy, Olivier (2008) *Al Qaeda in the West as a Youth Movement: the power of a narrative*, MICROCON Policy Working Paper 2, Institute of Development Studies at the University of Sussex  
[http://www.microconflict.eu/publications/PWP2\\_OR.pdf](http://www.microconflict.eu/publications/PWP2_OR.pdf)

In summer 2010, following the general election in May and the formation of the coalition government, it was reported in *The Guardian* (14 July) that the Prevent programme would be dismantled as part of an urgent review of counter-terrorism work. Later the same day the Home Secretary, Theresa May, stated in the House of Commons that, as set out in the Home Office structural reform plan, the government's intention was not to dismantle the programme but to 'look at the different strands of the Prevent strategy and to ensure that they are properly focused on the right aims'. She said she believed 'it is right and appropriate to separate out the part of the Prevent strategy that is about integration from the part about counter-terrorism'. She explained further that 'one problem with Prevent is that those two aspects have become intertwined in too many people's thinking, which has, sadly, led to some of the Prevent work being rejected by those whom it was intended to help' (Hansard, 14 July 2010, column 1011).

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