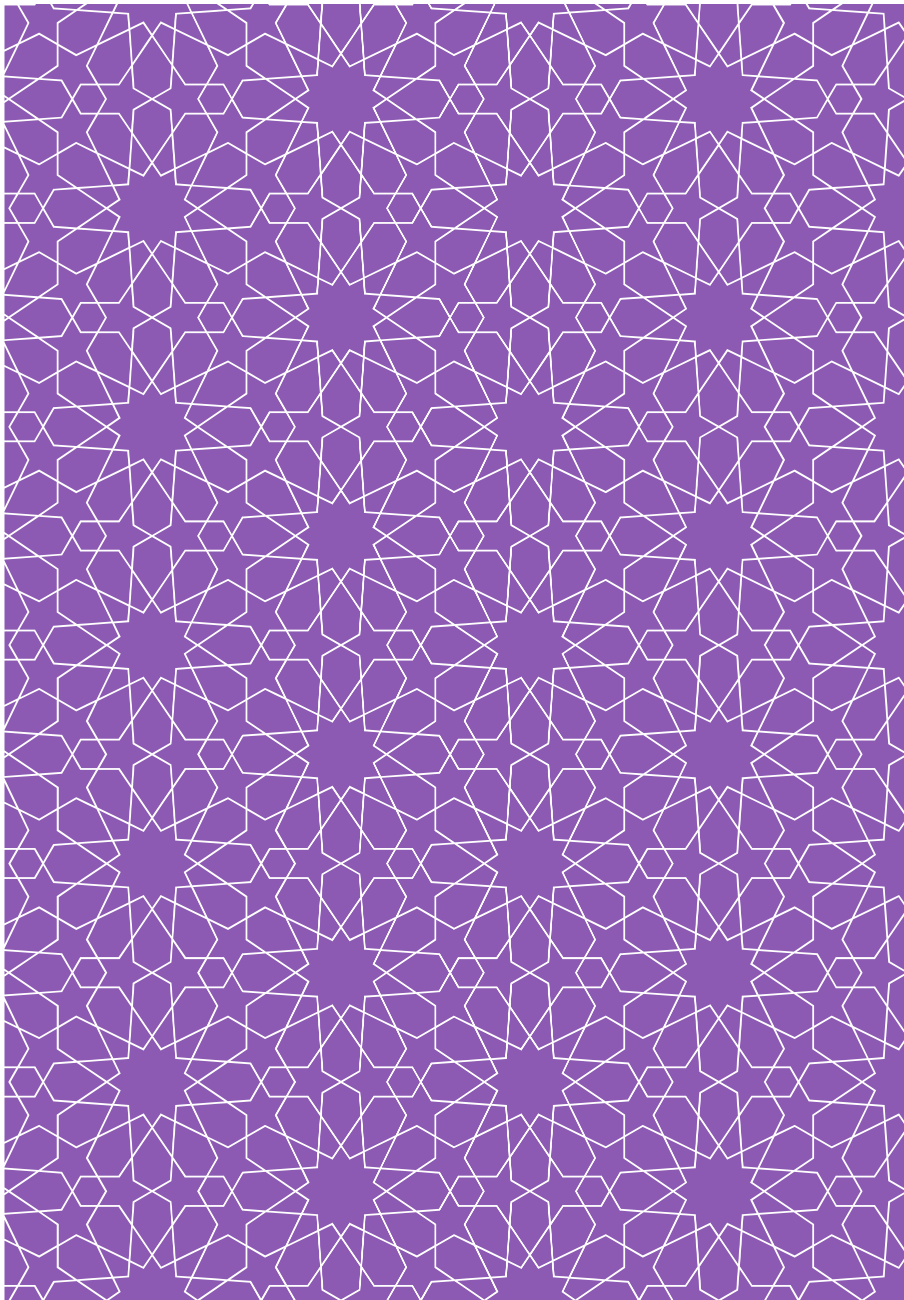
UK Think-Tanks, the War on Terror and the Radicalisation Debate

Hadi Enayat



OCCASIONAL PAPER NO. 4
NOVEMBER 2020
ISSN 2633-8890

Abdou Filali-Ansary Occasional Paper Series

In this Series we publish progressive, innovative research to generate discussion and contribute to the advancement of knowledge. The papers represent work from affiliated faculty, fellows, researchers, and doctoral students across a wide range of research areas, demonstrating both the depth and breadth of research being undertaken at the Institute. We also offer the opportunity for our Masters students who have won the best thesis award to publish an abridged version of their thesis with us. We welcome submissions from external researchers that address current AKU-ISMC research priorities.

The views expressed in the Series are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect those of AKU-ISMC. Although Occasional Papers are not formally peer reviewed, they are thoroughly researched and are reviewed by members of our research team.

© Copyright rests with the author(s).

Lead Editors:

Walid Ghali (AKU-ISMC), **Sarah Bowen Savant** (AKU-ISMC), **Jeff Tan** (AKU-ISMC)

Editorial Board:

Shahzad Bashir (Aga Khan Professor of Islamic Humanities/ Director Middle East Studies, Watson Institute, Brown University)

Zulfiqar Bhutta (Director, Centre of Excellence in Women and Child Health/ Co-Director, SickKids Centre for Global Child Health, Aga Khan University)

Amal Ghazal (Director, Centre for Comparative Muslim Studies/ Associate Professor, Simon Fraser University)

Deniz Kandiyoti (Emeritus Professor in Development Studies, SOAS)

Elmira Köchümkulova (Head of Cultural Heritage and Humanities Unit/ Associate Professor School of Arts and Sciences, University of Central Asia)

El-Nasir Lalani (Director, Centre for Regenerative Medicine and Stem Cell Research, Aga Khan University)

Susanne Olsson (Professor of the History of Religions, Stockholm University)

Nasser Rabbat (Aga Khan Professor/ Director Aga Khan Program for Islamic Architecture, Department of Architecture, MIT)

Catharina Raudvere (Professor of the History of Religions, University of Copenhagen)

Managing Editor:

Charlotte Whiting (AKU-ISMC)

Please see our submission guidelines and style guide for more information.

Contents

Abstract 3

Acknowledgements 3

1) What is a think-tank? 4

2) The rise of terrorism expertise 8

3) UK think-tanks and the war on terror 17

- A) Orthodox-conservative think-tanks 17
  - i) The Quilliam Foundation 18
  - ii) Policy Exchange 20
  - iii) The Henry Jackson Society 23
- B) Establishment think-tanks 27
  - i) The Royal United Services Institute (RUSI) 28
  - ii) Chatham House 32
- C) Alternative-Radical think-tanks 34
  - i) Demos 35
  - ii) Claystone 38

4) Conclusion 41

5) References 44

About the Author 50

Abstract:

UK Think-Tanks, the War on Terror and the Radicalisation Debate
Hadi Enayat

The paper will attempt to map the discursive and ideological *habitus* in which UK think-tanks operate in connection with the 'war on terror'. It will discuss how UK think-tanks have both shaped and been shaped by this *habitus* and the impact their work has had on counter-terrorism policy in the UK. It will begin by discussing the concept of think-tanks and their role and input into politics. It will then sketch the rise of 'terrorism' as both an academic object of study, from the mid-1970s onwards, and as an increasingly vital policy area for governments and the military-security establishment, especially after 9/11. The paper will then focus on UK think-tanks dividing them into three broad categories: conservative-orthodox think-tanks, establishment think-tanks and alternative-radical think-tanks. Based on this small but hopefully representative sample, it is argued that the think-tanks in the first category have been the most influential in official UK counter-terrorism strategy. These are think-tanks which have generally emphasised ideology—especially radical Islam—as the main driver of terrorism and deradicalisation programmes like PREVENT as the antidote to this problem. Think-tanks in the other two categories—which have emphasised other factors such as grievances, networks and group dynamics—have been less influential in terms of public policy although there is evidence that these factors have been taken more seriously by the UK intelligence services if not always by successive UK governments. In discussing these issues, it is hoped that this paper will form the foundation for a number of other forthcoming AKU-ISMC working papers on Islam, think-tanks and security in various European countries.

Acknowledgements:

I would like to thank Leif Stenberg for commissioning me to write this paper. I would also like to thank Charlotte Whiting for her meticulous editorial input. Walid Ghali and Jeff Tan also edited the paper and made useful suggestions for improving it. Finally, I'd like to thank Sami Zubaida for reading and commenting on the paper.

UK Think-Tanks, the War on Terror and the Radicalisation Debate

Hadi Enayat

Introduction

This paper will attempt to map the discursive and ideological *habitus* in which UK think-tanks operate in connection with the 'war on terror'. It will discuss how UK think-tanks have both shaped and been shaped by this *habitus* and the impact their work has had on counter-terrorism policy in the UK. It will begin by discussing the concept of think-tanks and their role and input into politics. It will then sketch the rise of 'terrorism' as both an academic object of study, from the mid-1970s onwards, and as an increasingly vital policy area for governments and the military-security establishment, especially after 9/11. The paper will then focus on UK think-tanks dividing them into three broad categories: conservative-orthodox think-tanks, establishment think-tanks and alternative-radical think-tanks. Based on this small but hopefully representative sample, it is argued that the think-tanks in the first category have been the most influential in official UK counter-terrorism strategy. These are think-tanks which have generally emphasised ideology—especially radical Islam—as the main driver of terrorism and deradicalisation programmes like PREVENT as the antidote to this problem. Think-tanks in the other two categories—which have emphasised other factors such as grievances, networks and group dynamics—have been less influential in terms of public policy although there is evidence that these factors have been taken more seriously by the UK intelligence services if not always by successive UK governments. In discussing these issues, it is hoped that this paper will form the foundation for a number of other forthcoming AKU-ISMC working papers on Islam, think-tanks and security in various European countries.

1) What is a think-tank?

The term 'think-tank' was first coined in the US during the Second World War to refer to a secure room or environment in which policy makers could meet to discuss wartime

strategy.[1] In the UK, think-tanks can be traced as far back as the early nineteenth century with the establishment in 1831 of the Royal United Services Institute for Defence and Security Studies (RUSI), considered in more detail further below, which was founded by the Duke of Wellington.[2] Today there are over 200 think-tanks in the UK most of them small in terms of staff and with relatively moderate financial resources. Think-tanks often want to influence policy, but have no formal political power. Moreover, whilst they claim to be politically neutral they often make no secret of their ideological positions.[3] Think-tanks develop policies which are intended to be considered by governments and opposition parties alike. They inform manifestos and formulate ideas well outside of what the civil service are tasked with or political parties have the time and resources to develop. They are also feeder organisations for state institutions and their employees often move seamlessly back and forth between think-tanks and government positions.[4]

But as think-tanks have grown in number and become more diverse, scholars have been unable to reach a consensus on exactly how to describe them.[5] Some think-tanks are charities and others private limited companies. Some focus on very specific areas such as defence or health while others cover a wide range of policies. This has led to the construction of various typologies to account for the range of institutions that populate the think-tank community. For example, according to Robert Weaver and James McGann's well known typology, most think-tanks are either of the 'academic' or 'advocacy' type.[6] The former type is characterised by heavy reliance on academics

[1] Abelson (2014), p. 127.

[2] Ibid., p. 135.

[3] Hartwig Pautz, 'Surprisingly, U.K. think tanks don't often communicate with elected officials', *Democratic Audit*, 2014. Retrieved 10th September 2020: http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/57676/1/democraticaudit.com-Surprisingly_UK_think_tanks_dont_often_communicate_with_elected_officials.pdf

[4] Emma Burnell 'Who funds you? Think-tanks are being tarnished by secretive right-wingers', *Politico*, 5th February 2019. Retrieved: 8th September 2020: https://www.politics.co.uk/comment-analysis/2019/02/05/who-funds-you-think-tanks-are-all-being-tarnished-by-secreti

[5] Pautz (2014), p. 346.

[6] See Weaver and McGann (2002). Note that Weaver identified a third type which he called 'contract research organizations' which are hired by government departments to carry out a very specific form

and researchers and a stress on non-partisanship and objectivity. These more 'academic' think-tanks relieve their research fellows from teaching duties; in exchange, they expect a certain public impact—columns, op-eds, talk-shows and best-sellers. The latter type identified by Weaver and McGann— 'advocacy think-tanks'—combine a strong ideological bent with explicit efforts to influence current policy debates. Their output is less academic and often consists of synthesising and repackaging existing ideas.[7] In this more ideological form think-tanks are part of what George Monbiot calls the 'infrastructure of persuasion'[8]—the material structures of ideology deployed by various political factions to try to gain hegemony over a polity or discourse.[9] The activity of think-tanks of this type may resemble that of pressure groups employing expertise to achieve their aims. These 'new partisan' think-tanks rose to prominence in the 1970s as the producers of a counter-discourse to the Keynesian consensus.[10] Indeed, during this period some of them were instrumental in shifting the 'Overton window' of British politics to the right and facilitating the establishment of a new neoliberal orthodoxy. These include the Centre for Policy Studies, the Institute for Economic Affairs and the Adam Smith Institute.[11] The British centre-left caught up with this development in the late 1980s with its own advocacy think-tanks (such as the Institute for Public Policy Research and Demos).[12] At their most influential then 'advocacy' think-tanks can frame, inform and elevate policy debates, deploying their intellectual capital to affect policy outcomes.[13] This process of framing and shifting the parameters of a debate can be dramatic but the process itself

---

of often technocratic research and are mostly non-partisan (Pautz 2014, p. 347). This type of think-tank will not feature in this paper.

[7] Pautz (2014), op. cit.

[8] George Monbiot, 'No 10 and the secretly funded lobby groups intent on undermining democracy', *The Guardian*, 1st September 2020. Retrieved 8th September 2020: https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2020/sep/01/no-10-lobby-groups-democracy-policy-exchange

[9] Sadeghi-Boroujerdi (2019), p. 21.

[10] Stone (1996), p. 17; Denham (1996).

[11] The term 'Overton window' was coined in the mid-1990s by Joseph Overton—at the time a researcher for the US based think-tank, the Mackinak Centre for Public Policy—to refer to how the acceptable range of ideas in a particular society shifts over time (Smith 2019, p. 149).

[12] Pautz (2014), p. 347.

[13] Drezner (2017), p. 130.

takes place in myriad small and subtle ways. As David Wearing puts it: 'Assumptions are established and boundaries set over a long period of time, across a wide range of individual speeches and texts, by those who have the platform and the inclination to do so'.[14] At their best, a heterogeneous array of think-tanks can offer a contrarian voice to a policy community that might be afflicted by groupthink—revealing its blind-spots and offering alternative views. In this way, a think-tank can nurture disruptive ideas that challenge the status quo and eventually become politically palatable.[15]

Fundraising is a major part of think-tank life. Researchers need to be paid and overheads need to be covered. This money must be raised and generally that involves finding sponsors for research projects, maintaining a stream of donations, and, in some cases charging for membership.[16] How does funding shape the output of think-tanks? Pressure to find funders can have a negative effect on the work of think-tanks, though reputable organisations will generally not sell their skills to provide superficial preordained research. Conversely, while funders of think-tanks are not usually doing it purely for altruistic reasons, that does not necessarily mean they expect to benefit directly from a think-tank they have supported. At the beginning of a contractual relationship a creditable think-tank will generally negotiate what a patron can and cannot expect for their money.[17] But some think-tanks are more transparent than others about their finances and recent reports about a secretive network of libertarian and free market think-tanks deliberately hiding their funding sources has confirmed all the worst stereotypes of think-tanks as essentially PR agencies for various elite interests.[18] In connection with funding and the constraints they place on think-tanks, Tom Medvetz has argued that: 'think tanks must carry out a delicate balancing act that involves signalling their cognitive autonomy to a general audience while at the same

[14] David Wearing, 'Why is the BBC presenting RUSI as objective analysts of the Middle East?', *Open Democracy*, 11th June 2015. Retrieved 12th September 2020: https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/ourbeeb/why-is-bbc-presenting-rusi-as-objective-analysts-of-middle-east/

[15] Ibid.

[16] Burnell op. cit.

[17] Ibid.

[18] Sarah Neville, 'British think-tanks less transparent about sources of funding', *The Financial Times*, 17th February 2015. Retrieved 11th September 2020: https://www.ft.com/content/ae6968c4-b5ec-11e4-b58d-00144feab7de

time signalling their heteronomy—or willingness to subordinate their production to the demands of clients—to a more restricted audience'.[19] He suggests that the comparative advantage of think-tanks has been their ability and willingness to genuflect to wealthy, powerful patrons and thus monopolise what he labels the 'interstitial field' between the academic world, the corporate sector and public policy.[20] Indeed, think-tanks can be seen as a hybrid of an academic department and a law firm.[21] However, both think-tanks as institutions and the individual analysts they employ must also cater to the demands of their clients more than even the most conciliatory academics. Universities have large endowments and/or state-funding and an additional revenue stream from tuition fees whereas think-tanks are much more reliant upon benefactors and donors to finance themselves.[22] Moreover, research at think-tanks is often also geared to serving government, causing them to become more deferential to the interests of state bureaucracies. This incentive structure suggests that think-tanks pushing for a place at the policymaking table will be less critical of powerful organisations than academics.[23] But in the face of increased cuts across the UK university sector, many individual scholars and departments actively seek out government funding and cultivate relationships with policymakers as a way of demonstrating their continued 'relevance'.[24] Meanwhile, policy elites often categorically dismiss academic scholars as 'irrelevant' or 'hostile' to UK interests in the Middle East. The consequences of excluding academic voices—particularly those critical of US policies in the region—have sometimes been dire as we shall see.[25]

2) The rise of terrorism expertise

We will now turn to looking at the rise of 'terrorism' as an object of academic study—one which has been significantly shaped by the think-tank community especially in the

[19] Medvetz (2012), p. 18.

[20] Ibid., p. 25.

[21] Drezner (2017), p. 129.

[22] Ibid., p. 130.

[23] Ibid.

[24] Negar Razavi, 'The Systematic Problem with Iran "Expertise" in Washington', *Jadalliya*, 4th September 2019. Retrieved 15th September 2020: https://www.jadaliyya.com/Details/39946

[25] Ibid.

US. At the start of the 1970s there were few, if any, terrorism experts. Recalling the state of affairs in terrorism studies at the beginning of the 1970s one expert wrote: 'There really were no general experts in the analysis of terror, only those with special academic skills (a knowledge of the Palestinian Fedayeen, or a career focused on deviant behaviour) that could be related to the problem'.[26] Moreover, before the 1970s there was a consensus amongst national security officials that legitimate grievances often underpinned political violence—then mainly referred to as 'insurgency'. This concept was largely underpinned by the notion that the way to stop political violence was to remove its causes. For example, whilst using the word 'terrorist' a US government memo from 1974 stated: 'The US government recognizes the merits of elimination of causes of terrorism, including legitimate grievances which motivate potential terrorists'.[27] Notably, in the 1950s and 1960s 'terrorists' were variously referred to as 'bandits, rebels, guerrillas, or later, urban revolutionaries or insurgents'.[28]

This was to change over the course of the 1970s as expert discourse on bombings, hijackings, 'skyjackings' and kidnappings shifted from a framework organised around 'insurgency' to one organised around 'terrorism', a shift that fundamentally transformed the understanding of political violence.[29] Lisa Stampnitzky identifies the 1972 Munich hostage crisis at the Olympics as a turning point in the shift toward use of the term 'terrorist'.[30] The advent of the use of the concept 'terrorist' completely altered the moral evaluation of these actors, who started to be seen as 'pathological evildoers'.[31] Moreover, whereas 'insurgents' were generally assumed to be rational actors, who could be countered with a similarly rational strategy of counterinsurgency and sometimes negotiation, the rationality of 'terrorists', and thus the possibilities for a rational and 'reasonable' treatment of the problem, would be constantly called into question. Furthermore, while insurgencies were generally considered to stem from

[26] Bell (1977) quoted in Stampnitzky (2013), p. 29.

[27] US government memo 'Guidelines for dealing with terrorism with international ramifications', 1974. Quoted in Stampnitzky (2013), p. 72.

[28] Tucker (1997), p. 2 quoted in Stampnitzky (2013), p. 2.

[29] Ditrych (2014), p. 56. Stampnitzky (2013), p. 18.

[30] Ditrych (2014), p. 112. Stampnitzky (2013), p. 21.

[31] Stampnitzky (2013), p. 3.

political motives, the question of whether terrorists even had political goals would come to be highly contested, with terrorists often depicted as nihilistic 'rebels without a cause'. Thus, whilst the insurgency framework at least implied the possibility that political violence might be resolved by addressing grievances and dialogue, the terrorism framework tended to rule out such a possibility from consideration.[32] Finally, whereas previously it was acknowledged that there was such a thing as 'state terrorism' by the late 1970s 'terrorism' was attributed largely to non-state actors.[33]

These discursive shifts were facilitated by a core group of terrorism scholars who emerged in the late 1970s and informally referred to themselves as the 'terrorism mafia'.[34] These included a number of key experts, some of whom remain influential today, such as David Rapoport, Martha Crenshaw, Brian Jenkins and Paul Wilkinson, Yonah Alexander, Walter Laqueur and Ariel Merari.[35] As Jenkins would write in 1979, 'there is a kind of informal, international network of scholars and government officials with interests and responsibilities in the area of terrorism. A kind of "college without a campus" has emerged'.[36] The 'mafia' consisted of a core group at the centre of the emerging terrorism studies world, who took on the project of making the field a legitimate area of study. They organised events such as conferences and seminars, places to publish such as journals and edited books and established institutions and research centres. These projects both provided mediums of communication among experts and aimed to establish the importance of the terrorism research project itself. The process of developing an expert identity, and of building the collective project of 'terrorism studies' was thus intertwined with strategies to legitimate 'terrorism' as an object of knowledge.[37] Institutionally, this process found expression with the creation of a terrorism programme at RAND (1972) headed by Brian Jenkins and funded by the US government. This was part of the US's new counter-terrorism apparatus that was meant to 'provide a broad understanding of the origins, theory, strategy and tactics of

---

[32] Ibid., p. 51.

[33] Ibid., p. 137.

[34] Ibid., p. 39.

[35] Miller and Mills (2009), p. 415.

[36] Jenkins (1983) quoted in Stampnitzky (2013), p. 42.

[37] Stampnitzky (2013), p. 43.

modern terrorism'.[38] As Ondrej Ditrych points out 'RAND was a crucial institutional site for the constitution of discursive practices of both power and knowledge in this period since it was a major recipient of government funding and a privileged provider of scientific expertise'.[39]

Despite this powerful and well-endowed institutional apparatus many terrorism experts were often untenured and minor academic figures who stumbled somewhat accidentally into the field from various other disciplines (psychology, criminology, sociology, political science, law and medicine).[40] Indeed, it has been a highly porous discipline with people from adjacent disciplines often dipping in and out. As Stampnitzky has observed, 'rather than looking like a discipline or a closed "cultural field" terrorism expertise is constructed and negotiated in an interstitial space between academia, the state, and the media'.[41] Consequently, despite the networked world of the 'terrorism mafia', Stampnitzky argues that terrorism experts have struggled to police their own subject, and many self-proclaimed experts have entered the fray.[42] As we shall see, Stampnizky's analysis is in contrast to scholars working within 'critical terrorism studies' (considered more below) who argue that the fact that many of these experts were affiliated to right-wing think-tanks, the military, or the private security sector has meant that they have become an influential 'epistemic community'—a network of 'specialists with a common world view about cause and effect relationships which relate to their domain of expertise, and common political values about the type of policies to which they should be applied'.[43]

In the 1970s 'terrorism' was largely treated as a crime to be dealt with by international law. This approach meant that international lawyers focused on particular crimes such as 'skyjacking', kidnapping and bombing.[44] But once these various crimes were discursively synthesised into the broader category of 'terrorism' the legalistic approach

[38] Quoted in Ranstorp (2009), p. 20.

[39] Ditrych (2014), p. 112.

[40] Stampnitzky (2013), p. 45.

[41] Ibid., p. 149.

[42] Ibid., p. 7.

[43] Jackson *et al* (2007), p. 8.

[44] Stampnitzky (2013), p. 233.

was undermined by the constant inability to define exactly what 'terrorism' meant.[45] Later, in the 1980s there was a shift from the criminal paradigm to treating terrorism as a kind of war. This was accompanied by a new narrative that reframed terrorism as a civilisational struggle, between 'the free-democratic West' and a network of terrorists organised by the Soviet Union.[46] This rendered legal and criminal approaches useless and a military logic came to the fore. But, in contrast to the pre-emptive logic of the 'war on terror' that would arise after the 9/11 attacks, this first war on terror was driven by logic of retaliation, in which military counterterrorism strikes were the equivalent of punishment for a crime. This reframing of terrorism as 'war' was an explicit technique of delegitimisation because 'terrorism' was defined as operating outside the laws of war and thus illegitimate in both means and ends.[47]

With the end of the Cold War a new discourse emerged in order to characterise 'Islamic terrorism'. This new discourse would ultimately coalesce under the framework of the 'new terrorism'. From this perspective religion is seen as the major cause of violence in the contemporary world and the central feature which marks off the 'old' from the 'new' terrorism—the former based on secular ideology and thus more 'rational' and amenable to compromise and the latter often seen as more dangerous because it is religious and thus based on transcendental and absolutists claims. Thus, religion is viewed as especially prone to violence because it is enormously effective in accomplishing what Kierkegaard called 'the religious suspension of the ethical'.[48] The 'new terrorism' discourse put forth the idea that terrorism in the 1990s was being committed by a new type of terrorist who was prone to committing unprecedented levels of violence due to their extreme irrationality. The tactic of suicide bombing in particular was seen as emblematic of the nihilistic and irrational mindset of this form of terrorism. Proponents of this view argued that religiously inspired terrorists are determined to cause mass casualties among civilians, are driven to sacrifice themselves in murderous suicide attacks and would be willing to employ weapons of

---

[45] Ditrych (2014), p. 56

[46] Ibid., p. 7. The key text making this claim—widely read by counterterrorism officials—was Claire Sterling (1981) *The Terror Network: The Secret War of International Terrorism.* New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston.

[47] Ditrych (2014), p. 110.

[48] Lincoln (2006), p. 138.

mass destruction. It is therefore a more murderous form of terrorism than the world has seen before.[49] Magnus Ranstorp, for example, argues that religious extremists are 'relatively unconstrained in the lethality and the indiscriminate nature of violence used', because they lack 'any moral constraints in the use of violence'.[50] Similarly, Jessica Stern asserts that 'Religious terrorist groups are more violent than their secular counterparts and are probably more likely to use weapons of mass destruction'.[51] There is no possibility of negotiation, compromise or appeasement with these new brands of terrorism; instead, eradication, deterrence and forceful counter-terrorism are the only reasonable responses.[52]

There have been some dissenting voices to these views from within the 'terrorism mafia'. For example, Martha Crenshaw has questioned the distinction between the 'old' and 'new' terrorism, arguing that it may be the *structure* rather than the *content* of a particular ideology which is more important in pushing its adherents to commit violent acts. Such structural features include utopian visions, a belief that violence/terrorism is not only necessary but morally 'right', millenarianism, dehumanisation of the enemy and the idea that the masses are suffering from 'false consciousness'. These features have been shared by both 'secular' (old) and 'religious' (new) terrorist organisations from right-wing nationalists and militant communists to present day Jihadists.

But Crenshaw's positions notwithstanding, terrorism experts were generally in agreement about the nature of the 'new terrorism'—particularly the threat of 'Islamic terrorism'.[53] This discourse derived a great many of its core assumptions and narratives from the long tradition of Orientalist scholarship on Islam and the Middle East. This literature expanded in academia as well as in popular culture in response to tumultuous events in the Middle East such as the 1972 Munich massacre, the 1979 American embassy hostage crisis in Iran, the Rushdie affair and the terrorist

[49] Jackson (2007), p. 409.

[50] Ranstorp (1996), p. 58.

[51] Stern (2000), p. 264.

[52] Jackson (2007), p. 409.

[53] Crenshaw (2011), pp. 52-66.

kidnappings and hijackings of the 1980s.[54] Even though it was challenged by an anti-Orientalist discourse largely inspired by Edward Said's book *Orientalism* (1978) it was boosted by the 9/11 attacks and subsequent war on terrorism. Importantly, Samuel Huntington's highly influential 1993 essay 'The Clash of Civilizations?', the title of which is derived from a much-cited article by Bernard Lewis entitled 'The Roots of Muslim Rage' (1990), reproduced a number of Orientalist claims for an international affairs audience and was therefore an important antecedent of the 'Islamic terrorism' discourse.[55] Huntington's thesis became an influential foreign policy paradigm even though by 9/11 he had himself grown sceptical of it. Indeed, he rejected the notion that the 9/11 attacks had confirmed his thesis, and encouraged realism and restraint.[56] If he had claimed in his original article that Islam has 'bloody borders', he now contended that Islam was not 'any more violent than any other religion'.[57] But ultimately it was Lewis's more hawkish views that were to prevail after 9/11. Indeed, unlike Huntington, Lewis disdained realism and argued that the US was no longer facing a rational actor in which the logics of realism would apply.[58] Islam, Lewis argued, had a chip on its shoulder ever since the Ottomans were defeated at the gates of Vienna in 1683; after which it watched in humiliation as the West overtook it 'militarily, economically and culturally'.[59] In his post 9/11 bestseller *What Went Wrong?* Lewis attributed the clash between 'Islam' and the 'West' to the former's failure to modernise.[60] 'I have no doubt' he told journalist Michael Hirsh, that 'September 11 was the opening salvo of the final battle'.[61] In an interview with the cable satellite network C-SPAN, shortly after the twin-towers came down, Lewis claimed

[54] Jackson (2007), p. 399.

[55] Huntington (1993), Lewis (1990).

[56] Ahmad (2014), p. 73.

[57] Lewis quoted in Michael Steinberger, 'So, are civilizations at war?', *The Observer*, 21st October 2001. Retrieved 6th September 2020: https://www.theguardian.com/world/2001/oct/21/afghanistan.religion2

[58] Ahmad (2014), p. 73.

[59] Lewis quoted in Peter Waldman, 'A Historian's Take on Islam Steers US in Terrorism Fight', *The Wall Street Journal*, 3rd February 2004. Retrieved 20th September 2020: https://www.wsj.com/articles/SB107576070484918411

[60] Lewis (2002).

[61] Michael Hirsh, 'Bernard Lewis Revisited', *Washington Monthly*, 1st November 2004. Retrieved 20th September 2020: https://washingtonmonthly.com/2004/11/01/bernard-lewis-revisited/

that 'the question people are asking is why they hate us. That's the wrong question.'— because for Lewis this hatred was 'axiomatic', 'natural' and 'centuries old'. 'The question we should be asking', he suggested, 'is why they neither fear nor respect us?'[62] A decisive show of American power was necessary to restore respect and where better to start than at the heart of the Arab world in Iraq. Lewis's ideas would assume devastating significance after 9/11 when he would gain the ear of Vice President Dick Cheney—one of the main architects of the Iraq war.[63] As we shall see, they were also to be a formative influence in the positions taken by the UK-based neoconservative think-tank, the Henry Jackson Society.

In response to the rise of terror expertise a body of Critical Terrorism Studies (CTS) has emerged to critique existing research on terrorism and its political effects. Notable practitioners working within CTS include Jeroen Gunning, Richard Jackson, Andrew Silke and Arun Kundnani. In order to promote this current of scholarship a new international, peer-reviewed academic journal called *Critical Studies on Terrorism* was established and published by Routledge in 2007.[64] Employing a Gramscian perspective, CTS scholars have argued that 'orthodox' terrorism experts (such as the 'terrorism mafia') function as 'organic intellectuals' intimately connected— institutionally, financially, politically and ideologically— with a state hegemonic project.[65] They have argued that there are a number of reasons why a critical turn within terrorism studies is necessary. One reason concerns the dominance of state-centric, problem-solving approaches within terrorism studies and the close ideological and organisational association of key researchers with state institutions— and the concomitant problems of 'embedded expertise'. Indeed, orthodox terrorism studies is criticised for its overly prescriptive focus—a reflection of its theoretical and institutional origins in counter-insurgency studies, as we have seen. An influential review described much of the field's early output as 'counterinsurgency masquerading as political science'.[66] It is also argued that much of the scholarship in orthodox terrorism studies has been somewhat superficial characterised by ahistoricity and

---

[62] Lewis quoted in Ahmad (2014), p. 74.

[63] Ahmad (2014), p. 74.

[64] Jackson *et al* (2007), p. 3.

[65] Ibid., p. 8

[66] Silke (2004), p. 58.

heavy reliance on secondary sources replicating knowledge that by and large reinforces the *status quo*. Thus, to quote O'Leary and Silke: 'much of what is written about terrorism … is written by people who have never met a terrorist, or have never actually spent significant time on the ground in the areas most affected by conflict'.[67] Scholars working within CTS also challenge the distinction between the 'old' and the 'new' terrorism, outlined above, and widen their understanding of terrorism to include state terrorism. Indeed, they highlight with concern the fact that, with only a few notable exceptions, terrorism studies as a discipline has failed to engage with the issues and practices of state terrorism,[68] which, they argue, in terms of the scale of human suffering and numbers of deaths caused, is a much more serious problem than non-state terrorism.[69] Moreover, it has been argued from within this literature that state and non-state terrorism are co-constituted— sometimes directly through state-sponsored terror and sometimes indirectly through violent interactions between state and non-state actors.[70] Finally, these scholars have tended to emphasise the political grievances which, they argue, are a major driver of terrorism.

The work of CTS scholars has been an important antidote to the excesses of some of the work produced in 'orthodox' terrorism studies. But there are also some pitfalls in the CTS approach. Indeed, in a joint article three of the leading scholars in this tradition have noted in a self-critical register that: 'If emancipation is central to the critical project, we would argue that CTS cannot remain policy-irrelevant without belying its emancipatory commitment. It has to move beyond critique and deconstruction to reconstruction and policy-relevance'.[71] This implies the responsibility to constructively engage with the challenges faced not only by targeted communities such as Muslims but also with the challenges facing counterterrorism officials with the responsibility for ensuring public security and safety.[72] Moreover, CTS has sometimes overstated the stability and homogeneity of what they call

[67] O'Leary and Silke (2006), p. 393.

[68] Andrew Silke's review reveals that only 12 out of 490 articles in the core journals examined issues of state terrorism. See Silke (2004), p. 206.

[69] On state-terrorism see Jackson *et al* (2011), chapter 8 and Halliday (2002), chapter 3.

[70] On the latter form of co-constitution see Kundnani (2014), p. 141.

[71] Jackson *et* al, (2007), p. 13.

[72] Ibid., p. 22.

'orthodox terrorism studies' which contains divergent voices not always as deferential to elite interests—Martha Crenshaw's work for example. As we shall see CTS has been a distinct influence on the 'alternative-radical' think-tanks considered further below.

3) UK think-tanks and the war on terror

We will now turn to an analysis of UK think-tanks and their positions on various aspects of the 'war on terror'. The following discussion will look at a small sample of some of the larger, well-endowed UK think-tanks (with the exception of Claystone which is very small) categorising them using the designations: orthodox-conservative think-tanks, establishment think-tanks and radical-alternative think-tanks. This has been done because the issues surrounding the war on terror such as racism, Islam, multiculturalism and the causes of 'radicalisation' do not map neatly on to the left-right spectrum in UK politics. Indeed, some of the publications considered below are written by authors who are left wing in terms of their positions on anti-racism, anti-imperialism and social justice but who have aligned themselves with Islamist-leaning think-tanks which have taken very conservative positions on issues such as gender, secularism and freedom of expression—Arun Kundnani (who has worked for Claystone) for example. Conversely, other think-tanks have taken centre-left wing positions on economic issues and harder-right positions on issues surrounding immigration and multiculturalism such as the 'post-liberal' intellectual David Goodhart—currently the director of Policy Exchange.[73]

A) Orthodox-conservative think-tanks

These are think-tanks which have generally hewn the most closely to what CTS scholars refer to as 'orthodox' terrorism studies discussed above. Think-tanks in this category include: The Quilliam Foundation, The Henry Jackson Society and Policy Exchange. Whilst there are some divergent views within these think-tanks the dominant narrative expounded by them is that the US and its allies are at war with Islamism which is waging an essentially political war against 'Western values' or the

---

[73] See David Goodhart, 'Why I left my liberal London tribe', *The Financial Times*, 16th March 2017. Retrieved 20th September 2020: https://www.ft.com/content/39a0867a-0974-11e7-ac5a-903b21361b43

Western 'way of life'. In this narrative, 'terrorists' are irrational—motivated primarily by religious dogmatism and hatred and thus implacable and unscrupulous.[74] Thus, given the nature and scale of the threat, the 'terrorists' must be met with aggressive military action abroad and repressive policies at home. Moreover, they have tended to subscribe, implicitly or explicitly, to the 'conveyor belt' theory of radicalisation: that Islamist ideology mechanically pushes a person towards violent extremism. The antidote to the totalitarian ideology of Islamism is 'de-radicalisation' programmes such as PREVENT and the promotion of more liberal and spiritual forms of Islam. These think-tanks also tend to be critical of multiculturalism as a set of policies which has encouraged separatism and division and nurtured cultures which do not respect 'British values'.

i) The Quilliam Foundation

The Quilliam Foundation was established in 2008 by Ed Hussein (author of the best-selling *The Islamist* published a year earlier) and Maajid Nawaz, both of whom had been activists in Hizb ut-Tahrir before becoming disillusioned and eventually becoming amongst the most prolific critics of Islamism in the UK. The foundation was named after Abdullah William Quilliam (1856-1932), a solicitor from Liverpool who converted to Islam and founded Britain's first mosque.

Whilst it has not explicitly endorsed the 'conveyor belt' theory of radicalisation Quilliam has been foundational in legitimising the official narrative of radicalisation and in implementing the PREVENT programme.[75] For a while Hussein and Nawaz regularly appeared in the media and on the conference circuit, arguing that political issues such as the Iraq war were not all that important in explaining terrorist attacks

[74] Miller & Mills (2009), p. 422.

[75] As one of four strands (Pursue, Prevent, Protect and Prepare) of the UK government's counterterrorism strategy, PREVENT was originally introduced in 2003. It started on a small scale but was expanded after the 7/7 bombings. But the increase in terror attacks over the next decade prompted calls for expansion of the programme. After the murder of fusilier Lee Rigby outside an army barracks in south-east London in 2013 there emerged a tougher approach to non-violent extremism. New legislation required public officials working in schools, universities, hospitals and local councils to report on individuals displaying signs of radicalisation (Cole 2009, p. 138).

in Britain. Rather, they said, the root problem was the ideology of Islamism, and the best way to prevent terrorism was for states to create a Western Islam that was quietist and devotional rather than activist and political. Speaking before a US Congress Select Committee in 2008 Nawaz said:

> There is a common misperception on the left in the U.K. whereby they only speak about grievances as a cause for radicalization. Now, I had my own grievances growing up in Essex. Many of my friends were attacked, violently assaulted by racists. My friends have been stabbed before my eyes, my white English friends, simply for associating with me. I have been falsely arrested on a number of occasions and released with an apology, and I have never been convicted of a criminal offense in any country in the world. I had my own grievances. What makes somebody, who has localized grievances, turn into somebody who identifies with a global struggle in a country that has nothing to do with him?[76]

To answer this question Nawaz went on to argue that we have to understand the way in which these grievances interact with Islamist ideology to generate a whole new set of grievances, 'which for an Islamist can be summarized in one sentence, and that is that God's law does not exist on this earth'.[77] In his statement to the committee Nawaz stated that this ideology is made up of four elements which are shared by all Islamists despite their differences in tactics: i) the notion of Islam as a comprehensive political ideology, ii) the notion of sharia as a personal code that should be applied by the state, iii) the notion of the umma as a global political rather than religious community and iv) the desire to establish a global caliphate.[78] From this perspective Nawaz argued that terrorism cannot be explained by grievances alone and that ideology is a necessary factor which acts as a lightning rod which channels and multiplies those grievances

---

[76] Maajid Nawaz, 'The roots of violent Islamic extremism and efforts to counter it'. Testimony before the US Senate's Committee on Homeland Security and Government Affairs, 10th July 2008. Retrieved 6th Sept 2020: https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/CHRG-110shrg44123/html/CHRG-110shrg44123.htm

[77] Ibid.

[78] Ibid.

into terrorism.[79] On this basis challenging the Islamist narrative became the priority for Quilliam. The foundation launched a programme of radicalisation awareness training among police officers, teachers, social workers and others and became one of the main organisations responsible for implementing the UK government's PREVENT programme.[80] In taking up this role Quilliam has faced sharp criticism from many voices from within the UK Muslim community who have seen the programme as discriminatory and counterproductive.[81]

ii) Policy Exchange

Policy Exchange (PX) has been described in *The Daily Telegraph* as 'the largest, but also the most influential think-tank on the right'[82] and more recently in *The Guardian* as 'the lobby group that Boris Johnson uses the most'.[83] It was created in 2002 by the Conservative MPs Francis Maude, Archie Norman, and Nick Boles, who later also became a Tory MP. A key figure in the formative years of PX was Michael Gove, a founding chairman of PX and the current Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster. After the 2005 London bombings Gove published a book, *Celsius 7/7*, in which he defined 'Islamism' as an ideology that is similar to fascism and included Tariq Ramadan—the reformist Islamic intellectual—as a follower. In the book he states that in the war against 'Islamism', it will be necessary for Britain to carry out assassinations of

---

[79] It should be noted that, despite the emphasis on ideology, Nawaz has acknowledged the multiple causes of terrorism—including grievances: 'In fact I believe that four elements exist in all forms of ideological recruitment: a grievance narrative, whether real or perceived; an identity crisis; a charismatic recruiter and ideological dogma' (Harris and Nawaz 2015, p. 36).

[80] Faheed Qurashi, 'The Prevent strategy and the UK "war on terror": embedding infrastructures of surveillance in Muslim communities', *Palgrave Communications*, 2018, 4:17. Retrieved 6th September 2020: https://www.nature.com/articles/s41599-017-0061-9

[81] Hilary Aked, 'Questions for Quilliam: Counter-extremism and Islamophobia', *The New Arab*, 25th December 2015. Retrieved 7th September 2020: https://english.alaraby.co.uk/english/comment/2015/12/25/questions-for-quilliam-counter-extremism-and-islamophobia. Also see Nawaz Hanif, 'Maajid Nawaz's with-us or against-us mindset is out of touch with reality', *The Guardian*, 31st January 2014. Retrieved 7th September 2020: https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2014/jan/31/maajid-nawaz-lib-dem-quilliam-jesus-muhammad-islam

[82] Pautz (2013), p. 369.

[83] Monbiot op. cit.

terrorist suspects, in order to send 'a vital signal of resolution'. More broadly, a 'temporary curtailment of liberties' will be needed to prevent Islamism from destroying western civilisation.[84] Gove's views in this book displayed a distinctly neo-conservative perspective which will be considered further below when discussing the more radical right-wing think-tank the Henry Jackson Society—with which Gove is also associated.

In January 2007, PX released a wide-ranging report on Muslims and multiculturalism, entitled *Living Apart Together*.[85] Munira Mirza, a co-author of the report, is now working as head of Prime Minister Boris Johnson's policy unit and was recently appointed as head of a commission to look at race inequality in the UK. Billed as an attempt to find 'the reasons why there has been a significant rise in Islamic fundamentalism amongst the younger generation', its answer was that multiculturalism and Britain's failure to assert the superiority of its national values had encouraged young Muslims to feel victimised and adopt anti-western views.[86] Moreover the report argued that:

> More generally, we need to revive a sense of direction, shared purpose and confidence in British society. Islamism is only one expression of a wider cultural problem of self-loathing and confusion in the West. One way to tackle this is to bring to an end the institutional attacks on national identity – the counterproductive cancellation of Christmas festivities, the neurotic bans on displays of national symbols, and the sometimes crude anti-Western bias of history lessons – which can create feelings of defensiveness and resentment.[87]

[84] Gove (2006), pp. 45, 103, 136.

[85] Munira Mirza, Abi Senthilkumaran and Zein Ja'far, *Living apart together: British Muslims and the paradox of multiculturalism*. London: Policy Exchange, 2007. Retrieved 5th September 2020: https://www.policyexchange.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/living-apart-together-jan-07.pdf

[86] Ibid., pp. 5-6.

[87] Ibid., p. 7.

The report was released to the press on the day of a speech by David Cameron attacking multiculturalism and Muslim 'extremists' who seek 'special treatment'.[88] Simultaneously, the conservative party also published a policy document suggesting that such 'separatism' was encouraged by the Muslim Council of Britain (MCB).[89] Later in the same year, PX published a report on 'extremist literature' which claimed that 'radical material' was being distributed in a quarter of Britain's mosques and called for greater regulation and intervention in order to promote a 'moderate Islam'.[90] The credibility of the report was called into question by a BBC *Newsnight* investigation which suggested that book receipts collected by PX researchers were faked.[91] In the same year the then chairman of PX Charles Moore, a former editor of *The Telegraph* and *The Spectator*, gave a speech outlining a 'possible conservative approach to the question of Islam in Britain'. In the speech he argued that the government should maintain a list of non-violent extremists—Muslim organisations which, while not actually inciting violence, 'nevertheless advocate such anti-social attitudes that they should not receive public money or official recognition'—in this category would fall any groups with links to the Muslim Brotherhood or the Jamaati-e-Islami (such as the Muslim Association of Britain and the aforementioned MCB), as well as individuals such as Tariq Ramadan.[92]

PX has also defended the UK government's PREVENT strategy arguing that the Muslim anti-PREVENT lobby which has dominated public discourse is not representative of the wider Muslim community in the UK. PX claims that these groups have deliberately mischaracterised the strategy as a racist attack on Muslims.[93] Indeed

---

[88] Arun Kundnani, 'How are think-tanks shaping the political agenda on Muslims in the UK?', *Institute for Race Relations*, 2nd September 2008. Retrieved 10th September 2020: https://www.kundnani.org/how-are-thinktanks-shaping-the-political-agenda-on-muslims-in-britain/

[89] Will Woodward, 'Tories set sights on separatist British Muslims', *The Guardian*, 30th January 2007. Retrieved 7th September 2020: https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2007/jan/30/uk.race

[90] MacEoin (2007), p. 7.

[91] Kundnani (2008), op. cit. Also see: 'Policy Exchange Dispute', BBC *Talk About Newsnight*, 29th May 2008. Retrieved 7th September 2020: https://www.bbc.co.uk/blogs/newsnight/2008/05/policy_exchange_dispute_update.html

[92] Kundnani (2008), op. cit.

[93] 'Islamist attacks on Sara Khan show importance of Extremism Commissioner', London: Policy Exchange,

PX carried out a 2016 survey which, they argue, shows that Muslim communities are generally relaxed about government intervention to tackle extremism.[94]

iii) The Henry Jackson Society

Founded in 2005, the Henry Jackson Society (HJS) is named after the interventionist US Senator Henry Jackson (1912-1983), a Democrat with strong conservative leanings. The HJS was launched online on 11 March 2005 and its current director is Alan Mendoza. It is a registered charity in England and Wales and receives financial backing from private donations and grant-making organisations which support its work. Although they do not refer to themselves as 'neoconservative', the society is steeped in neoconservative ideology largely articulated by US intellectuals such as William and Irving Kristol, Michael Lind and Charles Krauthammer. The HJS's homepage originally displayed the following message:

> The Henry Jackson Society is a non-profit organisation that seeks to promote the following principles: that liberal democracy should be spread across the world; that as the world's most powerful democracies, the United States and the European Union – under British leadership – must shape the world more actively by intervention and example; that such leadership requires political will, a commitment to universal human rights and the maintenance of a strong military with global expeditionary reach; and that too few of our leaders in Britain and the rest of Europe today are ready to play a role in the world that matches our strength and responsibilities.[95]

What is 'neo-conservativism'? One of the leading intellectuals within this movement in the US, the late Charles Krauthammer, contrasted it with three other approaches to

---

28th January 2018. Retrieved 7th September 2020: https://policyexchange.org.uk/islamist-attacks-on-sara-khan-show-importance-of-extremism-commissioner/

[94] Martyn Frampton, David Goodhart and Khalid Mahmood MP, *Unsettled Belonging: A survey of Britain's Muslim communities*. London: Policy Exchange, 2016. Retrieved 7th September 2020: https://policyexchange.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/PEXJ5037_Muslim_Communities_FINAL.pdf

[95] Quoted in Griffin *et al* (2015), p. 13

foreign policy: 'isolationism', 'liberal-internationalism', and 'realism'.[96] The first Krauthammer rejects for being 'an ideology of fear' because it promotes and reflects 'fear of trade', 'immigrants' and 'the Other'. Furthermore, Krauthammer castigates 'isolationists' because they favour 'pulling up the drawbridge to Fortress America'. The problem with 'liberal-internationalism', according to Krauthammer, is that it stresses 'multilateralism', which in turn threatens 'to blunt the pursuit of American national interests by making them subordinate to a myriad of other interests'. Finally, 'realism' is rejected because it defines 'interest' in terms of 'power', and we 'cannot live by power alone', for 'America's national interest' is 'an expression of values'.[97] Indeed, in contrast to realists, neoconservatives are radical idealists sometimes defining themselves as 'revolutionaries'. Despite Krauthammer's nod to immigration neo-conservativism in both its US and UK versions has been informed by a nativism deeply antithetical to immigration, multiculturalism and Islam. This nativism is also often combined with a strong dose of American exceptionalism especially the trope of 'manifest destiny'—the idea that the US has a duty and mission to spread freedom and democracy around the world. Thus, neoconservatives have advocated an aggressive interventionist foreign policy as key to destroying international terror networks and demonstrating a will to defeat terror through 'shock and awe'—the demonstrative effects of operations like the invasion of Iraq which would be a sanguine assertion of Western military power.[98] This draws from the 'clash of civilizations' framework described earlier deriving from the work of Bernard Lewis who argued that Bin-Laden and Saddam ultimately shared the same pathologies and that Arabs only understand the language of force.[99]

One of the most prolific voices within the HJS is the current associate director Douglas Murray a British author and political commentator. He is also a senior fellow at the Gatestone Institute and a columnist for *The Spectator*. In his first book *Neo-conservativism: Why we need it* (2005) Murray argued for the moral clarity of neo-conservativism as the most potent ideological weapon against the existential threat of 'Islamo-fascism' and argued for the invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq as benevolent

[96] Krauthammer quoted in Kerwick (2015), p. 22. Also see Fukuyama (2006), pp. 1-12.

[97] Krauthammer quoted in Kerwick (2015), p. 22.

[98] Ahmed (2014), p. 167.

[99] Waldman op. cit.

interventions which (in his view at the time of writing) were bound to succeed militarily. The real battleground, however, was one of ideas and here Murray argued that the West has been hobbled by the scourge of multiculturalism which has generated a crippling 'dictatorship of relativism' that gives the enemy a distinct advantage:

> The West is now swamped by this notion. In our domestic politics it is epitomised by the nightmares of moral equivalence and political correctness. It is also of course at the root of the barren and - as thinkers as diverse as Fukuyama and Huntington have put it - innately anti-Western creed of multiculturalism. It holds that all things are equal which would of course be fine if they were: but they are not. The good cannot be equated or judged equal to the bad, nor should the sublime be levelled alongside, or tarred by, the ridiculous.[100]

A culture which is imbued with relativism, argues Murray, can in the end find no reason to fight for its own salvation. Europe can only save itself, he asserts, if it unambiguously stands up for its values and rediscovers absolutism in the defence of these values. Armed with this philosophy Murray has consistently attacked multiculturalism and what he calls in another book 'Islamophilia' a malady which, Murray argues, afflicts metropolitan elites in the West who have treated Islam with kid gloves with disastrous consequences.[101] In a speech to the Dutch parliament in 2006 Murray asserted that in order to counteract the threat that Islam poses to the West: 'Conditions for Muslims in Europe must be made harder across the board: Europe must look like a less attractive proposition'.[102] Furthermore, he called for the banning of 'all immigration into Europe from Muslim countries', and advocated that European Muslims who 'take part in, plot, assist or condone violence against the west

[100] Douglas Murray, 'Neoconservatism: Why we need it', A talk to the Manhattan Institute, 26th October 2005. Retrieved 20th September 2020: http://www.socialaffairsunit.org.uk/blog/archives/000636.php

[101] Murray (2020).

[102] Douglas Murray, 'What are we to do about Islam?', A speech to the Pim Fortuyn Memorial Conference, 3rd March 2006. Retrieved 10th September 2020: http://web.archive.org/web/20080201133647/http:/www.socialaffairsunit.org.uk/blog/archives/000809.php

must be forcibly deported to their place of origin'. During the speech, Murray called for the extension of the 'global war on terrorism' to 'Iran, Syria, and any regime which sponsors or supports terrorism'.[103] In a 2018 piece in the US neoconservative organ *The National Review* Murray defended the far-right organisation the English Defence League (EDL) describing it as 'a street-protest movement in Britain whose aims could probably best be summarised as 'anti-Islamization'. In the same piece he called for the release of EDL's founder, Tommy Robinson who had been arrested in 2018 for breaching the peace outside the court during an ongoing grooming trial.[104]

In light of concerns that they only appealed to the hard right of the conservative party HJS tried to assert their bipartisanship. In order to appeal to a wider audience, the epithet 'neocon' was dropped and an attempt was made to broaden their appeal beyond the right wing of the political spectrum.[105] This was done with reference to the book *Anti-Totalitarianism: The Left-Wing Case for a Neo-Conservative Foreign Policy* (2005) by Oliver Kamm (a founding signatory of the HJS). In this book Kamm tries to place neo-conservativism in a wider tradition of left-wing anti-totalitarianism appealing to the foreign policy outlooks of Clement Atlee and Ernest Bevin: 'Indeed, the neoconservative stance accords with the historic values of the democratic Left, and neo-conservativism itself should be seen as a contemporary variant of traditional liberal-internationalism (though one with less stress on the role of international institutions)'.[106] Moreover, he writes: 'The terrorists of 9/11 were not making a statement about poverty and oppression. Rather, they were acting out an ideological imperative of striking at the institutions of Western civilisation: constitutional government, international commerce and a civilian-controlled military'.[107] Thus, for Kamm the intervention in Iraq 'was not strictly a "humanitarian war": it was an "anti-

---

[103] Ibid.

[104] Douglas Murray, 'Tommy Robinson Drew Attention to "Grooming Gangs." Britain has Persecuted Him', *National Review*, 31st May 2018. Retrieved 4th September 2020: https://www.nationalreview.com/2018/05/tommy-robinson-grooming-gangs-britain-persecutes-journalist/

[105] Griffin *et al* (2015), p. 20.

[106] Kamm (2006), p. 23

[107] Ibid., p. 16.

totalitarian war". It was a war in the cause of liberty.'[108] In Kamm's view of history the issues around Saddam, Iran and the Middle East are analogous to those faced during the Cold War — that opposition to totalitarianism implies the drive for regime change. To secure the collective interests of the West, to deal with the threat of terrorist attack and to defeat tyrannical regimes, you can and must impose from outside and above a form of 'democracy'.[109] For Kamm, the Iraq experience vindicates this view, and he saw the establishment of a fragile electoral democracy in Iraq as a vital achievement. Indeed, despite the chaos in Iraq after the invasion, neoconservatives like Kamm, Murray and others have continued to defend the legacy of the war by for example arguing that the Arab Spring uprisings, starting in 2011, were largely inspired by the downfall of Saddam and the establishment of electoral democracy in Iraq. This view was most forcefully articulated by Christopher Hitchens whose journey from revolutionary socialism to neo-conservativism echoed that of many of the founders of the neoconservative movement in the US—described acerbically by Irving Kristol as 'liberals mugged by reality'.[110]

B) Establishment think-tanks

These think-tanks are closer to the centre of the UK political spectrum than the previous ones. These institutions are very much part of the establishment foreign policy community. In this category are think-tanks such as Chatham House, Royal United Services Institute, The Foreign Policy Centre and the International Institute for Strategic Studies. Like the previous category we have considered, they have over the years both drawn from and contributed to the central paradigms of 'orthodox' terrorism studies. In doing so, however, they have often accommodated a more

[108] Ibid., p. 102.

[109] Ibid., p. 106.

[110] Christopher Hitchens, 'The Iraq Effect: If Saddam Hussein was still in power this year's Arab uprisings could never have happened', *Slate*, 28th March 2011. Retrieved 4th September 2020: https://slate.com/news-and-politics/2011/03/if-saddam-hussein-were-still-in-power-the-uprisings-in-egypt-tunisia-and-libya-could-never-have-happened.html. On Irving Kristol see Rupert Cornwell 'Irving Kristol: Writer and thinker known as the godfather of neoconservatism', *The Independent,* 6th January 2020. Retrieved 23rd November 2020: https://www.independent.co.uk/news/obituaries/irving-kristol-writer-and-thinker-known-as-the-godfather-of-neoconservatism-a2382651.html

divergent range of opinions than the conservative/orthodoxy discussed above. Generally speaking, they have given cautious support to central aspects of the 'war on terror' such as the invasion of Afghanistan while at the same time expressing criticism of specific aspects of it—such as the Iraq war and sometimes PREVENT.

i) The Royal United Services Institute (RUSI)

As we have seen RUSI is the oldest think-tank in the UK. It came into existence in 1831 at the instigation of the Duke of Wellington, and was originally known as the Naval and Military Library and Museum. Its mission according to its website is 'to inform, influence and enhance public debate on a safer and more stable world'.[111] RUSI serves as a source of quotes for journalists but also frequently provides content for the BBC News website. Currently, its patron is the Queen, its President is the Duke of Kent, its Senior Vice President is former CIA chief and US General David Petraeus and its Chairman is the former British Defence Secretary Lord Hutton. Moreover, its council includes an array of current and former politicians and military personnel. Despite its description of itself as 'independent', therefore, RUSI is 'very much a creature of the British state and military establishment, without which it would neither have been created nor would it exist in recognisable form today'.[112]

RUSI works closely with the International Centre for the Study of Radicalisation at Kings College London and especially its director, Peter Neumann, who is a senior associate fellow at RUSI. Much of the work on terrorism in recent years at RUSI has been produced by Rafaello Pantucci who rejects common explanations for the rise of militant Islam among British youth, such as economic exclusion and the influence of hard-line clerics. Moreover, whilst acknowledging its necessity, he has been critical of the UK government's PREVENT programme arguing that it may be exacerbating the very threat it is seeking to prevent.[113] In his work on terrorism, based on interviews, conversations, briefings, court documents and published source, Pantucci acknowledges the role of ideology but sees it as one of three inter-linked factors in

[111] 'Our values'. RUSI website: https://rusi.org/content/values

[112] Wearing op. cit.

[113] Pantucci (2010), p. 266.

understanding 'radicalisation': ideology, grievance, and mobilisation. According to Pantucci, Jihadi ideology offers a way for young immigrants (or the children of immigrants) to transcend their various ethnic identities. These youth are often afflicted by an acute identity crisis—they do not feel British yet do not really feel that they belong to any other country. Thus, the lure of the global umma as an alternative and potentially liberating identity is highly seductive because fighting for an internationalist cause offers an answer to the question, 'Who am I?'[114] This opens the door for grievances: the more Western countries become involved militarily in the Islamic world, particularly in ways that kill civilians, the more British Muslim youth see defending their foreign coreligionists as a legitimate goal. The third factor is the existence of a mobilising network of recruiters, today usually functioning online. In the UK, these recruiters espouse violent versions of either Salafi or Qutbist ideologies. Pantucci argues that behind the terrorist threat are complex social, religious and political factors which have been 'catalysed by the impact of an external ideology that created a new form of Jihadist mini-movement in Britain'.[115] Thus, whilst ideology is a vital ingredient in the 'radicalisation' process it is a *necessary* but not *sufficient* explanation for the turn to terrorist violence. As Pantucci relates:

> Three main drivers have to be in place before individuals become involved in terrorism: ideology, grievance and mobilisation. How they coalesce is dictated by random events that are difficult to forecast much as a fruit machine spinning in tandem and occasionally lining up is hard to predict. The process is one predicated upon a series of contributory factors, but there is no clear way of accurately measuring which one has a greater impact than the others. All three drivers need to be in place in order for some connection, however tenuous, to prompt an individual to turn from a disenfranchised member into an adherent of a violent cause.[116]

[114] Ibid., p. 94.

[115] Ibid., p. 7.

[116] Ibid., p. 8.

Pantucci uses this fruit-machine analogy to suggest that while all three factors (ideology, grievance and mobilisation) may be present in an individual they have to be ‘aligned’:

> There is clearly a moment or an event that occurs in a person’s mind to trigger the decision that terrorism is the path forward. This might take the form of a specific event in an individual’s life or an external one (a national foreign policy decision) which drives the individual or ‘bunch of guys’, to quote Sageman, to conclude that something must be done. In some cases, it is hard to distinguish mobilisation from the spark caused by alignment: an individual (or group) might have other radicalising elements present but it is actual contact with ‘real’ jihadis (those individuals connected to Al-Qaida or affiliated groups) that spurs the move from talk to action.[117]

In understanding ‘mobilisation’ Pantucci’s work draws heavily from the body of terrorism research which has highlighted the importance of networks. The most influential scholar working in this field is Marc Sageman who has argued that participants in the global Jihadi movements are not atomised individuals but actors linked to each other through complex webs of direct or mediated exchanges. Applying Social Network Analysis to understand the nature and dynamics of these networks Sageman argues that:

> A group of people can be viewed as a network, a collection of nodes connected through links. Some nodes are more popular and are attached to more links, connecting them to other more isolated nodes. These more connected nodes, called hubs, are important components of a terrorist network. A few highly connected hubs dominate the architecture of the global Salafi jihad.[118]

[117] Pantucci (2015), p. 15.

[118] Sageman (2011), p. 137.

The more connected a group is with others within the Jihadi movement, the more connections it has established and the greater the likelihood it functions as a 'hub'. The more isolated a group remains, the fewer the links. Unlike hierarchical networks that can be eliminated through decapitation of the leadership, a small-world network is more durable because of its dense interconnectivity. Thus, a significant number of nodes can be randomly removed without much impact on the integrity of the network. Actions such as stopping individual terrorists arbitrarily at the borders will generally not affect the network's structure leaving it largely undisturbed. Crucially, Sageman argues, it is the hubs of a small-world network that are particularly vulnerable to targeted attack. If enough hubs are destroyed, the network breaks down into isolated, non-communicating islands of nodes. Were Jihadi networks to sustain such damage, they would be incapable of mounting sophisticated large-scale operations like the 9/11 attacks and would be reduced to small attacks by 'lone-wolves' or what Sageman refers to as 'singletons'.[119] This picture of Islamic militancy as composed of nodes of personal associations coalescing to form groups that are self-radicalising, self-sustaining and self-motivating is at the heart of Pantucci's understanding of the way in which grievances can interact with an individual's sense of imagined community. The perception that others with whom one feels a common bond are being humiliated and oppressed can be a powerful driver for action according to this view. It is in the existence of a sense of community, whether that be a group of local friends or the wider umma that he believes the roots of violence can be found.

These ideas about networks and group dynamics were not taken very seriously by counter-terrorism officials immediately after 9/11 who were focusing on isolated sleeper-cells implanted from overseas by al-Qaeda and waiting for the command from Bin-Laden to attack.[120] The idea that British-born Muslims themselves could be a threat was barely imagined. But Operation Crevice in 2004 when a network of British Muslims of Pakistani origin who were planning to blow up the Ministry of Sound nightclub in London were arrested changed this attitude. Consequently, the intelligence services became more attuned to the importance of networks in

---

[119] Ibid., p. 141.

[120] Jason Burke '*Talking to the Enemy* by Scott Atran - review', *The Guardian*, 24th October 2010. Retrieved 13th September 2020: https://www.theguardian.com/books/2010/oct/24/scott-atran-talking-to-the-enemy-review

understanding 'radicalisation'. This network had been to Pakistan for training but only after they had radicalised. Moreover, there was no evidence that their radicalisation was the result of brainwashing or recruitment by a militant preacher—they had apparently self-radicalised within their own network.[121]

ii) Chatham House

Chatham House, also known as the Royal Institute of International Affairs, was founded in 1920 and is a non-profit, non-governmental organisation based in London. Its mission, according to its website, is to 'analyse and promote the understanding of major international issues and current affairs'. It is the originator of the famous Chatham House Rule.[122] Practically all Chatham House publications carry a disclaimer to the effect that it is precluded by its Charter from advocating an institutional policy. However, it seems clear from the Institute's desire to attract government officials as speakers as well as into its membership and round-table discussions that Chatham House has maintained a close relationship with the policymaking process.[123]

One of the most prolific scholars working at Chatham House is Toby Dodge, a professor in the Department of International Relations at LSE and director of its Kuwait Programme. An Iraq specialist with years of field-work in Iraq to his credit, Dodge has been one of the most outspoken critics of the Iraq war from within the UK think-tank community. In 2002 Dodge was one of 'six wise men' (him and five other academics working on the Middle East) who met with Tony Blair and warned him of the consequences of the decision to invade Iraq. The other five academics were George Joffe, Lawrence Freeman, Michael Clarke (then director of RUSI), Charles Tripp and Steven Simon. In an interview in *The Independent* Dodge recalls the meeting: 'They were expecting a short, sharp, easy campaign and that the Iraqis would be grateful'. He warned of a possible disaster: that Iraqis would fight for their country against the

---

[121] Ibid.

[122] The current version of the rule states: 'When a meeting, or part thereof, is held under the Chatham House Rule, participants are free to use the information received, but neither the identity nor the affiliation of the speaker(s), nor that of any other participant, may be revealed'. Chatham House website. Retrieved 22nd November 2020: https://www.chathamhouse.org/about-us/chatham-house-rule

[123] Parmar (2004), p. 79.

invaders rather than just celebrate the fall of their leader. He warned that a long and nasty civil war could follow. 'My aim that day was to tell them as much as I could, so that there would be no excuses and nobody saying, "I didn't know"'.[124] In an article echoing these warnings published on the Chatham House website in 2002 Dodge argued that: 'Successful military action against Iraq will require large numbers of US troops. The removal of Saddam Hussein, if possible, could cause greater regional instability than his continued rule'.[125] In 2010 Dodge argued, *contra* realist theories of International Relations which emphasise power-maximalisation and interests as the driving forces of foreign policy, that the Iraq invasion was highly ideological—an attempt to apply what he called 'kinetic neoliberalism' to Iraq. According to Dodge: 'Decision-makers are both empowered and constrained by the ideational categories they have inherited from within their own societies and through which they make sense of the world'.[126] Dodge argues that the 'ideational categories' which 'empowered and constrained' the architects of the Iraq war were a synthesis of neo-conservativism and neoliberalism—what he refers to as 'kinetic neoliberalism':

> The dominance of these major analytical categories—American exceptionalism, the imminence of major international threats and unilateralism from neo-conservatism; the universality of individual liberty, the power of free markets and the threat of state power from neo-liberalism—dominated George W. Bush's policy responses to the attacks of September 2001. Interestingly, after the State of the Union Address in January 2002, in a series of major policy speeches through the build-up to the invasion, culminating in the National Security Strategy in September, neo-liberal tropes came to dominate policy towards Iraq. At this stage neo-conservatism had little to say about how the domestic

[124] Cole Moreton, 'Iraq invasion 2003: The bloody warnings six wise men gave to Tony Blair as he prepared to launch poorly planned campaign', *The Independent*, 25th January 2015. Retrieved 5th September 2020: https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/iraq-invasion-2003-the-bloody-warnings-six-wise-men-gave-to-tony-blair-as-he-prepared-to-launch-10000839.html

[125] Toby Dodge, 'Iraq and the Bush Doctrine. Storming the Desert', Chatham House Website, 1st April 2002. Retrieved 5th September 2020:
https://www.chathamhouse.org/publications/twt/archive/view/164647

[126] Dodge (2010), p. 1271.

structures of an errant state should be reformed; at a policy level, this left prescriptions to be shaped by neo-liberalism.[127]

In 2013 Dodge wrote another piece, published on the Chatham House website, arguing that regime change, far from bringing the neoliberal vision of democracy, free markets and the rule of law to Iraq, had instead created a highly corrupt, kleptocratic and sectarian state—the perfect conditions for the rise of ISIS.[128] In another article, co-written by Becca Wasser, Dodge highlighted the decision to dismantle the Iraqi army by the US-led occupying force, combined with eight years of institutionalised corruption and sectarianism—particularly in the newly constructed army—under Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki, as particularly important in understanding the collapse of the Iraqi state and the rise of ISIS in 2014.[129]

C) Alternative-radical think-tanks

These are think-tanks which challenge aspects of or completely reject the dominant assumptions of orthodox terrorism studies. They are more closely aligned with the left wing of British politics but also sometimes with Islamist groups in the UK. They include Demos, Claystone, The Islamic Human Rights Commission, CAGE and Muslim Engagement and Development (MEND). These think-tanks draw on some of the themes in the Critical Terrorism Studies (CTS) literature discussed above. They might question the existence of a coherent organisation called 'al-Qaeda' or suggest an alternative understanding of the causes of 'terrorism' such as injustice, poverty or racism. They might also seek to portray 'terrorists' as rational actors motivated by political grievances and warn against aggressive military action or the curtailment of civil liberties.[130] They generally defend multiculturalism and emphasise racism and Islamophobia as well as UK foreign policy as the main drivers of 'radicalisation' whilst downplaying the importance of Islamist ideology. They are also highly critical of the UK government's PREVENT programme and sometimes call for its complete dismantling.

---

[127] Ibid., p. 1275.

[128] Dodge (2013).

[129] Dodge and Wasser (2014).

[130] Miller & Mills (2009), p. 422.

i) Demos

Demos is a left-wing think tank based in the UK with a cross-party political viewpoint. It was founded in 1993 by former *Marxism Today* editor Martin Jacques and Geoff Mulgan who became its first director. It specialises in social policy, developing evidence-based solutions in a range of areas—from education and skills to health and housing. Demos is the only major think-tank that has attempted an alternative approach to notions of Muslim extremism. Its research has sought to challenge the conflation of Islamism, Islamic fundamentalism and terrorism.[131] In July 2008, as part of this research project, Demos decided to host a session at the Islam Expo in London Olympia on the subject of 'The Islamist Threat: myth or reality?'.[132] In 2008 Demos published a report entitled 'Social Resilience and National Security—A British perspective' by Rachel Briggs which discussed the causes of radicalisation. It identified socio-economic deprivation as one of the drivers of terrorism, but most importantly identified grievance over Western foreign policy and the way criticism of such policies has been restricted by the government as a major source of discontent:

> The other key local factor for British Muslims is foreign policy, with many highly opposed to the war in Iraq and policy towards Israel/Palestine. But their fiercest anger is caused not so much by the detail of policy, but from the government's refusal to allow open discussion about it. In the aftermath of the London bombings in 2005, the Home Office convened a series of workshops with Muslim community leaders aimed at working together to tackle violent extremism. There was enormous goodwill towards the government immediately after the attacks, but this was squandered when Ministers refused to include foreign policy on the agenda. This silly own goal reinforced the community's sense of voicelessness, ironically at the very moment it had finally gained a seat at the table.[133]

[131] Kundnani (2008), op. cit.

[132] Ibid.

[133] Briggs (2008), p. 2.

The report also criticises the securitisation of Muslims in the UK arguing that it plays 'straight into Al Qaida's narrative of grievance and injustice as many Muslims began to suffer under the new security regime'.[134] Instead, it calls for a 'community-based' approach to counter-terrorism:

> Community-based counter-terrorism is part of a much broader trend for nonstate actors to play a greater role in national security. Governments no longer have a monopoly on security. Since the treaty of Westphalia, when the concept of the modern nation state was born, the prizes worth fighting for have always been firmly within the gift of nation-states: secrets, land, resources, people, and so on. But at the start of the 21st century, companies, non-governmental organisations and ordinary citizens have important contributions to make, too. Security is no longer something that governments can do to you or for you on your behalf; it needs to be co-created by a much wider range of actors working in a networked and interdependent way.[135]

The report argues that this approach is vital for four reasons. Firstly, communities are essential sources of information and intelligence— 'our own built-in early warning system'.[136] Secondly, communities picking up these signals are themselves best placed to act pre-emptively to divert their young people from violent extremism: the self-policing society. Third, while the state must also play a role, communities must take the lead in tackling problems that either create grievances or hinder their ability to organise, such as poverty, poor educational and employment attainment, and the paucity of effective leadership and representation.[137] Finally, the police and security service cannot act without the consent of communities they are there to protect.[138] The report claims that this 'community-based' approach had been adopted by the UK

[134] Ibid., p. 3.

[135] Ibid., p. 5.

[136] Ibid., p. 3.

[137] Ibid., p. 4.

[138] Ibid.

government and 'now forms a central plank of the UK government's own response'.[139] Examples of this community-based approach are not discussed in the report, however, nor is the PREVENT programme mentioned. It could be surmised, however, that one example of this community-based approach was the process leading to the arrest of the Jihadist preacher Abu Hamza in 2004. Hamza, an Egyptian cleric who had lost an eye and a hand fighting in Afghanistan, became Imam of the Finsbury Park Mosque in London in 1998. When his extremist beliefs became clear the board of trustees at the mosque asked him to leave but he refused and turned the mosque into 'the public face of the extremist Jihadi movement in Britain'.[140] Eventually, after evidence was found of Hamza's involvement with terrorism, he was arrested and eventually jailed in 2006, a process which was undertaken with cooperation from the local Muslim community and notably the Muslim Association of Britain who took over trusteeship of the mosque.[141] It is precisely this kind of dialogue and co-operation—especially with Islamist-leaning organisations such as the Muslim Association of Britain that Quilliam has criticised claiming that: 'The ideology of non-violent Islamists is broadly the same as that of violent Islamists; they disagree only on tactics'.[142]

The Demos report ends by discussing the problem of framing violent extremism as 'radicalisation' arguing that 'radicalism' can be a positive force and a source of social resilience which can help young Muslims resist the lure of Jihadi terrorist preachers:

> It is true that Islamism is growing in popularity amongst young Muslims, largely because Islamist groups are the only ones willing to discuss the political concerns of young people. But we must be careful to remember that Islamism is not inherently violent and if these groups offer an outlet

[139] Ibid.

[140] Daniel Sandford, 'New start for extremist mosque', BBC, 11th February 2005. Retrieved 6th September 2020: http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/4258891.stm

[141] Ibid.

[142] Vikram Dodd, 'List sent to terror chief aligns peaceful Muslim groups with terrorist ideology', *The Guardian*, 4th August 2010. Retrieved 7th September 2020: https://www.theguardian.com/uk/2010/aug/04/quilliam-foundation-list-alleged-extremism

> for frustrations they are perhaps part of the solution, rather than the problem.[143]

This theme was reiterated in another report published by Demos in 2010 entitled: 'The edge of violence: a radical approach to extremism' which states:

> The path into terrorism in the name of Islam is often described as a process of radicalisation. But to be radical is not necessarily to be violent. Violent radicals are clearly enemies of liberal democracies, but non-violent radicals might sometimes be powerful allies.[144]

Note the distinction here with the approach of groups like Quilliam, PX and HJS who have identified 'non-violent radicalism' as potentially dangerous and thus legitimately the object of state scrutiny and securitisation.[145]

ii) Claystone

Claystone is a small London-based think-tank specialising in Muslim issues. Its staff regularly give interviews on the British Muslim TV channel *5 Pillars*. Claystone representatives have also given interviews to the BBC.[146] It was very active in the mid-2000s producing a number of reports which were highly critical of the PREVENT programme. One of its most prolific researchers, Arun Kundnani, is an adjunct professor of Media, Culture, and Communication at New York University, and teaches terrorism studies at John Jay College. He has been a visiting fellow at Leiden University, The Netherlands, an Open Society fellow, and the editor of the journal *Race and Class*. Kundnani is the author of a well-received book on the war on terror entitled *The Muslims are Coming* (2014) which draws from many of the themes of Critical Terrorism Studies, discussed earlier, but also, as we shall see, from some of

---

[143] Briggs (2008), p. 8.

[144] Bartlet *et al* (2010), p. 2.

[145] Lottie Moore, 'In plain-sight: MEND, CAGE and so called "non-violent extremism"', *Quilliam*, 30th June 2017. Retrieved 13th September 2020: https://www.quilliaminternational.com/in-plain-sight/

[146] 'Claystone thinktank on BBC respond to David Cameron's speech on tackling radicalisation', BBC *News*, 20th July 2015. Retrieved 13th September 2020: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oisTYxQ7lLA

the ‘orthodox’ scholars in terrorism studies. In his book Kundnani rejects the idea that ideology is the main driver of extremism:

> Theories of radicalization that purport to describe why young Muslims become terrorists are central to counterterrorism policies on both sides of the Atlantic. But these make an unfounded assumption that ‘Islamist’ ideology is the root cause of terrorism. To do so enables a displacement of the war on terror’s antagonisms on to the plane of Muslim culture. Muslims become what Samuel Huntington described as the ‘ideal enemy’, a group that is racially and culturally distinct and ideologically hostile. The political scientist Mahmood Mamdani had earlier identified such ‘culture talk’ as the default explanation of violence when proper political analysis is neglected.[147]

In a report he wrote for Claystone in 2015 entitled ‘A decade lost: rethinking radicalisation and extremism’ Kundnani amplifies many of the themes in his book arguing that the term ‘radicalisation’ and its associated conceptual framework are products of the post-9/11 period. Indeed, before then, scholars of terrorism did not use the concept in their attempts to understand the causes of terrorism. Referencing the work of one of the key members of the ‘terrorism mafia’ mentioned earlier (Martha Crenshaw), Kundnani argues for a three-level account of the causes of terrorism, involving: i) individual motivation and belief systems, ii) decision-making and strategy within a terrorist movement, and iii) The wider political and social context with which terrorist movements interact.[148] Kundnani argues that today’s radicalisation models in effect neglect the second and third of these levels and focus all their attention on the individual level. Quoting the historian Mark Sedgwick, he calls for a critical reconstruction of conventional radicalisation models:

> The concept of radicalization emphasizes the individual and, to some extent, the ideology and the group, and significantly deemphasizes the wider circumstances—the ‘root causes’ that it became so difficult to talk

[147] Kundnani (2014), p. 10.

[148] Kundnani (2015), p. 14.

> about after 9/11, and that are still often not brought into analyses. So long as the circumstances that produce Islamist radicals' declared grievances are not taken into account, it is inevitable that the Islamist radical will often appear as a 'rebel without a cause'.[149]

Kundnani criticises dominant narratives drawn from mainstream terrorism scholars and what we have referred to in this paper as 'conservative-orthodox' think-tanks which largely ignore the political context and the internal decision-making within an insurgent social movement as largely irrelevant in explaining why terrorist violence occurs. These theories imply that, once an individual has adopted an extremist religious ideology, terrorism will result, irrespective of the political context or any calculation on the part of an organisation or social movement. Castigating the advocates of the 'new terrorism' paradigm, discussed earlier, he argues that the intellectual tools used to analyse political violence in the past are no longer used by terrorism experts with devastating consequences for counter-terrorism and for the lives of many law-abiding Muslim citizens.

Based on this analysis Kundnani calls for an end to PREVENT policy since this programme has made British citizens less safe by alienating Muslims and making the Jihadi narrative more appealing.[150] He also advises that information about risks of radicalisation should be shared with authorities only once it crosses the line to incitement to violence, financing of terrorism or an intention to commit acts of violence.[151] According to Kundnani: 'The significant government resources that have been made available to bring about a broader ideological transformation among British Muslims are more productively redirected to this purpose'.[152] Moreover, governments should 'publicly defend freedom of religion, even for individuals who choose to adopt religious beliefs deemed extremist'.[153] Indeed, Kundnani argues that deradicalisation programmes violate the principle of secularism because the state is

---

[149] Sedgwick quoted in Kundnani (2015), p. 14.

[150] Kundnani (2015), p. 3.

[151] Ibid., p. 37.

[152] Ibid., p. 38.

[153] Ibid.

effectively endorsing an official version of Islam deemed compatible with liberalism.[154] The UK government should publicly acknowledge that foreign policy decisions are a significant factor in creating political contexts within which terrorism becomes more or less likely. Finally, Kundnani calls for the creation of 'safe-spaces' for wide-ranging discussions of religious ideology, identity and foreign policy, particularly among young people who feel excluded from mainstream politics.[155] Those spaces should not be undercut by the fear that expressions of radical views will attract the attention of intelligence agencies and police counter-terrorism units.[156]

4) Conclusion

How has the UK think-tank community influenced counter-terrorism policy? After 9/11 neoconservative think-tanks like the Henry Jackson Society dominated the discourse on the causes of terrorism and the appropriate response to them on both sides of the Atlantic. For the neoconservatives, who dominated US policy-making on counter-terrorism in the early years of the 'war on terror' terrorism was seen as a product of 'Islamic culture'.[157] As we have seen, scholars like Bernard Lewis, a key advisor on the Middle East to the George W. Bush administration, argued that Islam had a cultural propensity towards totalitarian rejections of modernity. This anti-modernism ran so deep in the culture of the Middle East that only war could overturn it and inaugurate a cultural and political transformation of the region. Tony Blair apparently accepted much of this neoconservative analysis and his support for the 2003 war on Iraq rested—partly at least—on this basis.[158] By 2005, when the disastrous consequences of the Iraq war had become apparent, counter-terrorism policy-makers were looking for new theories that could help them understand how to prevent bombings carried out by European citizens, such as those that took place in Madrid in 2004 and London in 2005.[159] At this point, the concept of 'radicalisation'

[154] Kundnani (2014), p. 77.

[155] Ibid.

[156] Ibid.

[157] Kundnani (2015), p. 8.

[158] Ibid.

[159] Ibid. p. 9.

became central to the emerging models of the causes of terrorism in national security circles.

Broadly speaking this debate has been divided into two camps: 'idealists' and 'materialists'. The former—represented by think-tanks like Quilliam, PX and HJS have emphasised ideology in the form of radical Islam as the key to understanding radicalisation. In addition, as we have seen, they sometimes emphasised the divisive effects of multiculturalism and the lack of adherence to 'British values' as encouraging terrorism. The latter camp, represented more by think-tanks like RUSI, Demos and Claystone, have emphasised 'material' factors, like political grievance (mainly foreign policy and racism), social-networks and group dynamics more than ideological-religious factors. Addressing some of these grievances as well as understanding the dynamics of these networks was seen as key to countering terrorism. As we have seen, these are not mutually exclusive camps and some voices such as Pantucci and Crenshaw have argued for a holistic multi-casual explanation for the turn to violent extremism which incorporates both ideological and material factors. Indeed, it is impossible to disentangle 'material' factors such as war or racism from 'ideological' factors such as discourse, religion and narrative. The former are, partly at least, constituted by the latter: whilst material 'events' and 'experiences' clearly have autonomy from their ideological and discursive articulations, they are at the same time interpreted and given meaning through such frameworks. Jihadist ideology, for example, promotes a powerful 'narrative of blame'—that the 'West', led by the US, is engaged in a vast joined-up conspiracy to destroy 'Islam'.[160] This narrative—itself a synthesis of a brutally literalist and ahistorical reading of the foundational Islamic texts synthesised with 'Occidentalist' political propaganda—is twisted and largely divorced from reality.[161] Nevertheless, as Stephen Holmes argues, any sensible response to 9/11 should have aimed at unravelling and weakening the credibility of such a narrative. Instead, by invading Iraq, the US and its allies 'corroborated a central proposition in the Jihadist narrative of blame, namely, that Americans feel contempt

[160] Holmes (2007), p. 67.

[161] On 'Occidentalism' see Buruma and Margalit (2005). Examples of this synthesis can be found in the writings of Al-Qaeda leader Ayman Al-Zawahiri such as *Knights under the Prophet's Banner*— see Kepel and Milelli (2008).

for Muslims and ascribe little or no value to Muslim lives'.[162] The Trump Presidency and its racist language and policies towards Muslims has also strengthened this kind of narrative as have, arguably, programmes like PREVENT.

In terms of influencing government policy, the 'idealists' have largely won out in this debate and the public face of UK counter-terrorism policy continues to be the controversial PREVENT programme. Indeed, successive governments have consistently denied the causal links between UK foreign policy and radicalisation. There are some indications, however, that the intelligence services in the UK have acknowledged the role of political grievances in exacerbating the threat of international terrorism. For example, Stella Rimington, former head of MI5, in an interview with *The Guardian* in 2008 was asked about the effect of Britain's invasion of Iraq on the terrorist threat to Britain:

> Look at what those people who've been arrested or have left suicide videos say about their motivation. And most of them, as far as I'm aware, say that the war in Iraq played a significant part in persuading them that this is the right course of action to take. So, I think you can't write the war in Iraq out of history. If what we're looking at is groups of disaffected young men born in this country who turn to terrorism, then I think to ignore the effect of the war in Iraq is misleading.[163]

According to Rimington these views were widely held among the intelligence services and there is evidence that this was the official view of MI5. For example, the Director General of the Security Service, Dame Eliza Manningham-Buller, underlined this position in a speech in 2006. Whilst emphasising that the terrorist threat existed before 9/11 Manningham-Buller acknowledged the role of political grievances in exacerbating the threat:

---

[162] Ibid., p. 68. No doubt the US has intervened disastrously in the Middle East but this has not been a war on Muslims or on 'Islam'. Indeed, in previous conflicts in the not-too-distant past the US has intervened on the 'Muslim' side: the Afghan-Soviet war during the 1980s for example and in Bosnia and Kosovo during the 1990s Balkan Wars.

[163] Decca Aitkenhead, 'Free Agent', *The Guardian*, 18th October 2008. Retrieved: 13th September 2020: https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2008/oct/18/iraq-britainand911

> The extremists are motivated by a sense of grievance and injustice driven by their interpretation of the history between the West and the Muslim world … This is a powerful narrative that weaves together conflicts from across the globe, presenting the West's response to varied and complex issues, from long-standing disputes such as Israel/Palestine and Kashmir to more recent events as evidence of an across-the-board determination to undermine and humiliate Islam worldwide. Afghanistan, the Balkans, Chechnya, Iraq, Israel/Palestine, Kashmir and Lebanon are regularly cited by those who advocate terrorist violence as illustrating what they allege is Western hostility to Islam.[164]

Indeed, we have seen, think-tanks such as RUSI which are close to the military-security establishment in the UK also identify 'grievance' as one of the factors driving terrorism along with ideology and the dynamics of networks and group-dynamics in facilitating 'self-radicalisation'. It is hoped that the forthcoming papers in this series will throw more light on these debates from perspectives outside of the UK as well as on the efficacy of alternative 'deradicalisation' models which have been less divisive than the UK's PREVENT programme.

References:

Abelson, D. (2014) 'Old world, new world: the evolution and influence of foreign affairs think-tanks', *International Affairs*, 90: 1, pp. 125–142.

Ahmed, M. I. (2014) *The Road to Iraq: The Making of a Neoconservative War*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Bartlett, J., Birdwell, J. & King, M. (2010) 'A radical approach to extremism', Demos report, 2010. Retrieved 6th September 2020: https://www.demos.co.uk/files/Edge_of_Violence_-_web.pdf

[164] 'The International Terrorist Threat to the UK', Speech by the Director General of the Security Service, Dame Eliza Manningham-Buller, at Queen Mary's College, London, September 2006. Retrieved: 13th September 2020: https://www.mi5.gov.uk/ru/node/405

Bell, J. B. (1977) 'Trends on terror: The analysis of political violence', *World Politics*, 29, April, pp. 476-88.

Briggs, R. (2008) 'Social Resilience and National Security – A British Perspective', Demos Report, 2008. Retrieved 6th September 2020: https://www.demos.co.uk/files/SocialResilienceandNationalSecurity.pdf

Buruma, I. & Margalit, A. (2004) *Occidentalism: A Short History of Anti-Westernism*. London: Atlantic Books.

Cole, D. (2009) 'English Lessons: A Comparative Analysis of UK and US Responses to Terrorism', *Current Legal Problems*, 62 (1), pp. 136-167.

Crenshaw, M. (2011) *Explaining Terrorism: Causes, Processes and Consequences*. London: Routledge.

Didtrych, O. (2014) *Tracing the Discourses of Terrorism: Identity, Genealogy and the State*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Dodge, T. & Wasser, B. (2014) 'The Crisis of the Iraqi State' in T. Dodge & E. Hokayem (eds), *Middle Eastern Security: The US Pivot and the Rise of ISIS*. London: The International Institute for Strategic Studies.

Dodge, T. (2013) 'State and Society in Iraq ten years after regime change', *International Affairs*, 11 March, pp. 241-257.

Dodge, T. (2010) 'The ideological roots of failure: the application of kinetic neoliberalism to Iraq', *International Affairs*, 3 November, pp. 1269-1286.

Drezner, D. (2017) *The Ideas Industry: How pessimists, partisans and plutocrats are transforming the market-place of ideas*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Dudenhoeferal, A. (2018) 'Resisting Radicalisation: A Critical Analysis of the UK Prevent', *Journal for Deradicalisation*, Spring, No. 14, pp. 153-191.

Fukuyama, F. (2006) *After the Neocons: America at the Crossroads*. London: Profile Books.

Glees, A. & Pope, C. (2005) *When Students Turn to Terror*. London: Social Affairs Unit.

Gove, M. (2006) *Celsius 7/7: How the West's policy of appeasement has provoked yet more fundamentalist terror – and what can be done about it*. London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson.

Griffin T., Aked, H., Miller, D & Marusek, S. (2015) 'The Henry Jackson Society and the degeneration of British neoconservatism: Liberal interventionism, Islamophobia and the 'War on Terror.' Retrieved 6th September 2020: https://researchportal.bath.ac.uk/en/publications/the-henry-jackson-society-and-the-degeneration-of-british-neocons

Halliday, F. (2002) *Two Hours that Shook the World, September 11, 2001: Causes and Consequences*. London: Al-Saqi Books.

Harris, S. & Nawaz, M. (2015) *Islam and the Future of Tolerance: A Dialogue*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Holmes, S. (2007) *The Matador's Cape: America's Reckless Response to Terror*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Huntington, S. (1993) 'The Clash of Civilizations?', *Foreign Affairs*, Summer, pp. 22-49.

Jackson, R., Jarvis, L., Gunning, J. & Breen-Smyth, M. (2011) *Terrorism: A Critical Introduction*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Jackson, J., Gunning, J. & Breen-Smyth, M. (2007) 'The Case for Critical Terrorism Studies', Paper prepared for delivery at the 2007 Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association, August 30-September 2. Retrieved: 20th September 2020: https://www.aber.ac.uk/en/media/departmental/interpol/csrv/case-for-a-critical-terrorism-studies-richard-7.pdf

Jackson, J. (2007) 'Constructing Enemies: "Islamic Terrorism" in Political and Academic Discourse', *Government and Opposition*, Summer, Vol. 42, No. 3, pp. 394-426.

Jenkins, B. (1983) 'Research in terrorism: areas of consensus, areas of ignorance' in Eichelman, D., Soskis. A. & Reid, W. H., *Terrorism: Interdisciplinary Perspectives*. Washington D.C: American Psychiatric Association, pp. 153-77.

Jones, D. and Smith, M. L. R. (2007) 'Pedagogy or Pedantry: A Rejoinder to Our Critics', *International Affairs*, Vol. 83, No.1, pp. 185-6.

Kepel, G. & Milelli, J. (2008) *Al-Qaida in Its Own Words*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Ladi, S. (2000) 'Globalisation, Think-Tanks and Policy Transfer' in D. Stone (ed.), *Banking on Knowledge: The Genesis of the Global Development Network*. London: Routledge, pp. 205–222.

O'Leary, B. and Silke, A. (2006) 'Understanding and Ending Persistent Conflicts: Bridging Research and Policy', in M. Heiberg, J. Tirman and B. O'Leary (eds), *Terror, Insurgency and the State*, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, pp. 387-426.

Lincoln, B. (2006) *Holy Terrors: Thinking about Religion after September 11*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Lewis, B. (2002) *What Went Wrong? Western Impact and Middle East Response*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Lewis, B. (1990) 'The Roots of Muslim Rage', *The Atlantic*. September 1990. Retrieved 10th September 2020: https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/1990/09/the-roots-of-muslim-rage/304643/

Kamm, O. (2006) *Anti-Totalitarianism: The Left-Wing Case for a Neo-Conservative Foreign Policy*. London: Social Affairs Unit.

Kerwick, J. (2015) 'Conservativism v Neoconservativism: A Philosophical Analysis', *Electronic Journal for Philosophy*, Vol. 22(1), pp. 15–27.

Kundnani, A. (2015) 'A Decade Lost: Rethinking Radicalisation and Extremism' Claystone Report, January 2015. Retrieved 10th September 2020: https://mabonline.net/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/Claystone-rethinking-radicalisation.pdf

Kundnani, A. (2014) *The Muslims are Coming: Islamophobia, Extremism and the Domestic War on Terror*. London: Verso Books.

MacEoin, D. (2007) *The Hijacking of British Islam: how extremist literature is subverting mosques in the UK*. London: Policy Exchange.

Medvedetz, T. (2012) *Think-Tanks in America*. Chicago: Chicago University Press.

Miller, D. & Mills, T. (2009) 'The terror experts and the mainstream media: the expert nexus and its dominance in the news media', *Critical Studies on Terrorism*, 2:3, pp. 414-437. Available at: https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/17539150903306113

Murray, D. (2020) *Islamophilia: A very metropolitan malady*. London: emBooks.

Murray, D. (2005) *Neo-conservativism: Why We Need it*. London: Social Affairs Unit.

Pantucci, R. (2015) *We Love Death as You Love Life: Britain's Suburban Terrorists*. London: C. Hurst & Co. Ltd.

Pantucci, R. (2010) 'A contest to democracy? How the UK has responded to the current terrorist threat', *Democratization*, 17:2, pp. 251-271.

Pantucci, R. (2009) 'British Government Debates Engagement with Radical Islam in New Counterterrorism Strategy,' *Terrorism Monitor*, 7:10. Available at: https://jamestown.org/program/british-government-debates-engagement-with-radical-islam-in-new-counterterrorism-strategy/

Pautz, H. (2014) 'British Think-Tanks and Their Collaborative and Communicative Networks', *Political Studies Association,* Vol. 34(4), pp. 345–361.

Pautz, H. (2013) 'The think-tanks behind Cameronism', *The British Journal of Politics and International Relations*, Vol. 15, pp. 362-377.

Pautz, H. (2012) *Think-Tanks, Social Democracy and Social Policy*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Parmar, I. (2004) *Think Tanks and Power in Foreign Policy: A Comparative Study of the Role and Influence of the Council on Foreign Relations and the Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1939-1945*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Ranstorp, M. (2009) 'Mapping Terrorism Studies after 9/11: An Academic Field of Old Problems and New Prospects' in R. Jackson, M. Breen Smyth & J. Gunning (eds) *Critical Terrorism Studies: A New Research Agenda*. London: Routledge, pp. 13-34.

Ranstorp, M. (1996) 'Terrorism in the Name of Religion', *Journal of International Affairs*, 50: 1 (1996), pp. 41-62.

Sadeghi-Bourujerdi, E. (2019) *Revolution and its Discontents: Political Thought and Reform in Iran*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Sageman, M. (2004) *Understanding Terror Networks*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Silke, A. (2004) 'The Devil You Know: Continuing Problems with Research on Terrorism', in A. Silke (ed.) *Research on Terrorism*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, p. 58.

Silke, A. (2004a) 'The Road Less Travelled: Recent Trends in Terrorism Research', in A. Silke (ed.) *Research on Terrorism*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 186-283.

Stampnitzky, L. (2013) *Disciplining Terror: How Experts Invented 'Terrorism'*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Sterling, C. (1981) *The Terror Network: The Secret War of International Terrorism*. New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston.

Smith, J. E. (2019) *Irrationality: A History of the Dark Side of Reason*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Stern J. (2000) *Terror in the Name of God: Why Religious Militants Kill*. New York: Harper Collins.

Stone, D. (1996) *Capturing the Political Imagination: Think Tanks and the Policy Process*. London: Frank Cass.

Tucker, D. (1997) *Skirmishes at the Edge of Empire: The United States and International Terrorism*. Westport, CT: Praeger.

Weaver, K.R. and McGann, J.G. (2002) *Think-Tanks and Civil Societies: Catalysts for Ideas and Action*. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction.

About the Author:

Hadi Enayat is an independent researcher and visiting lecturer at the Aga Khan University Institute for the Study of Muslim Civilisations. He is also a research fellow at the Foreign Policy Centre. His main research interests are in the areas of religion and international relations, the sociology of law and secularism studies. His publications include *Law State and Society in Modern Iran: Constitutionalism, Autocracy and Legal Reform 1906-1941* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2013) which won the biennial Mossadegh Prize in 2013, and *Islam and Secularism in Post-Colonial Thought* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017).

AKU-ISMC is a higher education institution based in London with a focus on research, publications, graduate studies and outreach. It promotes scholarship that opens up new perspectives on Muslim heritage, modernity, culture, religion and society.

Work licensed under a Creative Commons BY license, allowing it to be cited and distributed worldwide, for non-commercial purposes and without modification only if the author(s) are credited appropriately according to standard academic practices.

The Aga Khan University Institute for the Study of Muslim Civilisations (AKU-ISMC),

Aga Khan Centre, 10 Handyside Street, London N1C 4DN, UK.

T +44 (0)20 7380 3800 ismc@aku.edu www.aku.edu/ismc

Incorporated in England as a company limited by guarantee no. 4448389. Charity Registration Number: 1179136

THE AGA KHAN UNIVERSITY

(International) in the United Kingdom

Institute for the Study of Muslim Civilisations