

# Radicalisation among Muslims in the UK

MICROCON Policy Working Paper 7  
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May 2009

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SIXTH FRAMEWORK PROGRAMME

Correct citation: Briggs, R. and Birdwell, J. 2009. *Radicalisation among Muslims in the UK*. MICROCON Policy Working Paper 7, Brighton: MICROCON.

First published in 2009

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ISBN-13 978 185864 592 1

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## **Radicalisation among Muslims in the UK**

**Rachel Briggs<sup>1</sup> and Jonathan Birdwell<sup>2</sup>**

### **MICROCON Policy Working Paper 7**

**Abstract:** Muslim communities in the UK have come under intense since 7 July 2005 (7/7), and the emergence of a home-grown threat raised concerns not just about the threat of future attacks, but it also played on deeper anxieties about Britain's growing diversity and apparent loss of a cohesive identity. Many theories have been offered about the drivers or causes of radicalisation, but they are rarely able to prove more than the exception, never the rule. In fact, it is almost impossible to say with any certainty what the causes are as it is so difficult to know whether a factor is instrumental, or merely present. It is perhaps more helpful to think about 'radicalising agents' – factors that are present (though not necessarily causal) and which appear frequently across different cases. This paper sets out the position of Muslims in the UK, the threat to the UK from al-Qaeda-linked and -inspired terrorism through an account of the main terror plots, outlines the main radical groups and movements under the three-pronged categorisation outlined above and closes with an explanation of latest UK government policy responses. It concludes with a note of caution about misinterpreting the nature and intention of these groups and notes the role that many – with some notable exceptions – could play in the effort to tackle radicalisation in the UK.

**Keywords:** Radicalisation; Islam; United Kingdom; youth; terrorism; integration

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## **Introduction**

Muslim communities in the UK have come under intense scrutiny in recent years, but especially since 7 July 2005 (7/7). The emergence of a home-grown threat raised concerns not just about the threat of future attacks, but it also played on deeper anxieties about Britain's growing diversity and apparent loss of a cohesive identity. The current terrorist threat and the UK's responses to it should be viewed against this wider backdrop. Since 7/7, the extent of the problem has become clearer as new plots have been unearthed and a succession of trials has provided rare glimpses into the lives of the radicals. This chapter outlines the details of the main plots.

Many theories have been offered about the drivers or causes of radicalisation, but they are rarely able to prove more than the exception, never the rule. In fact, it is almost impossible to say with any certainty what the causes are as it is so difficult to know whether a factor is instrumental, or merely present. It is perhaps more helpful to think about 'radicalising agents' – factors that are present (though not necessarily causal) and which appear frequently across different cases. This paper highlights a number: key places, charismatic leaders, relationship links, experiences and stated and assumed grievances.

One of the most frequent theories about radicalisation is that certain organisations or movements play central roles in indoctrinating individuals into a set of fundamental beliefs and an acceptance that violence is a legitimate tool for solving their problems. This collaborative research project divides Muslim organisations into three broad categories for the purposes of this study: non-political religious groups, religious and political groups and non-religious political groups. This chapter provides a brief synopsis of the main organisations and movements under each heading and offers, where it exists, evidence about their links to violence.

It should be acknowledged that this is a problematic framework. Few groups fit neatly into one category and often move between them over time or depending on their activities. It is also highly unlikely that they would self-categorise themselves in these terms. It also assumes that organisations – as corporate entities – are important players within the radicalisation process, rather than the individuals who pass through them. In fact, in many cases individuals go in and out of these organisations, often leaving when they do not find what they are looking for. To conclude that their

presence confirms the organisation's role would be misleading. Finally, these organisations can find themselves being used as convenient spaces for individuals to convene – often in the margins – where the culpability of the organisation is due more to its poor visibility and governance than a commitment to violence.

This paper sets out the position of Muslims in the UK, the threat to the UK from al-Qaeda-linked and -inspired terrorism through an account of the main terror plots, outlines the main radical groups and movements under the three-pronged categorisation outlined above and closes with an explanation of latest UK government policy responses. It concludes with a note of caution about misinterpreting the nature and intention of these groups and notes the role that many – with some notable exceptions – could play in the effort to tackle radicalisation in the UK.

## **1. Muslim communities in the UK**

There are around 2 million Muslims in the UK, the largest faith group after Christians (Bunlawala et al. 2004). Most trace their roots to migration and settlement after the Second World War, although their presence dates back as far as the 17th century. Almost half (46%) were born in the UK (Bunlawala et al. 2004), with three-quarters having South Asian heritage. The community is becoming more diverse: there are now 56 nationalities represented and 70 languages spoken (Khan 2004; Khan 2003; El Hassan 2003). Muslims have the youngest age profile of all faith groups; in 2001, one-third (33.8%) were under the age of 16, compared to one-fifth of the population overall (20.2%). The average age is 28, 13 years below the national average (Yunas Samad and Sen 2007). This has a bearing on the extent of political activism within the community, with most being youth-led.

Muslims constitute some of the most deprived communities in the UK. Almost one-third of Muslims of working age have no qualifications, the highest proportion for any faith group (Bunlawala et al. 2004). Muslim children experience high levels of the risk factors associated with child poverty (national average figures are shown in brackets): 42% live in crowded accommodation (12%); 12% live in households without central heating (6%) and over one-third (35%) are growing up in households where there are no adults in employment (17% Bunlawala et al. 2004). Muslims are the most disadvantaged faith group in the British labour market; they are three times more likely to be unemployed than the majority Christian group. Of those that are

employed, job prospects are poor; Bangladeshis and Pakistanis are 2.5 times more likely than the white population to be unemployed and 3 times more likely to be in low-paid jobs (Yunas Samad and Sen 2007). Muslims are over-represented in the prison system. They make up 3% of the population but 9% of the population of prisoners (Guessous, Hooper and Murphy 2001).

The relationship between Muslim communities and ‘mainstream’ British society (as if there were such a thing) has been the subject of much debate and analysis in recent years. A survey conducted by several Muslim groups found that since 9/11, 80% of Muslim respondents reported being subjected to Islamophobia; 68% felt they had been perceived and treated differently; and 32% reported being subjected to discrimination at UK airports (FAIR 2004, cited in Bunglawala et al. 2004). Some have argued that young Muslim men suffer disproportionately; Alexander suggests that they have emerged as the new ‘folk devils’ of popular and media imagination (Alexander 2000, cited in Bunglawala et al. 2004), and Archer notes that in public discourse Muslim men are not only conceptualised as ‘dangerous individuals’ with a capacity for violence and/or terrorism, but also as ‘culturally dangerous’ – as threatening ‘the British way of life’ (Archer 2003, cited in Bunglawala et al. 2004).

A succession of opinion polls have shown many Muslims are uncomfortable with life in the UK, more so than those in mainland Europe (Pew Global Attitudes Project 2006). The polling organisation, Pew, created a religious-cultural negativity index based on seven characteristics (selfishness, arrogance, immorality, violence, greediness, generosity and honesty). Britain’s score, based on the perception of British Muslims of Western non-Muslims with regards to these characteristics, was higher than other European Muslims, and in fact, closer to the score (opinion) of Muslims in Muslim countries. British Muslims are more inclined to see a conflict between Islam and modernity; more likely to self-identify along religious lines than national lines; and more deeply concerned about the future of Muslims in Britain. When asked, “Is there a conflict between being a devout Muslim and living in a Modern society?”, almost half of British Muslims (49%) felt there was.

At the same time, there is an ongoing and concerted campaign against Islamism by a coalition of both left and right who criticise the UK government for what they call a policy of appeasement towards these groups. Martin Bright of the *New Statesman* went so far as to claim that these organisations were engaged in a

“sophisticated strategy of implanting Islamist ideology among young Muslims in Western Europe” (Bright 2007). The groups to which he and others refer are, on the whole, actually pretty mainstream, often progressive ones, such as FOSIS (the Muslim equivalent of the National Union of Students) and Leicester’s Islamic Foundation which has been at the forefront of efforts to foster understanding between communities. Islamism is not inherently violent (Silvestri 2007), but these nuances are rarely acknowledged and casual links are made between these groups and more specific concerns about violent extremism. This makes balanced debate difficult and affects the analysis of many of the groups outlined in later sections of this paper.

## **2. Al-Qaeda-linked and -inspired terrorism**

MI5, the British security service, has said that it believes that there are 2,000 individuals who pose a direct threat to national security and public safety, and a further 2,000 who are actively plotting but not individually known to the authorities. It is thought that the UK faces 30 known plots, and the security service is monitoring 200 networks.<sup>3</sup> The threat was described by MI5 chief, Jonathan Evans as “the most immediate and acute peacetime threat in the 98-year history of my service”. He also said that recruits are getting younger and that international influences are now much more diverse; it is no longer just links to Pakistan.<sup>4</sup>

There have been more than 200 terrorist convictions in the UK since 11 September 2001; the following summarises the details of the most notable cases and is correct as of June 2008.<sup>5</sup>

### *7/7 Co-conspirators*

On 22 March 2007, Waheed Ali (born Shipon Ullah), 26, Sadeer Saleem, 27, and Mohammed Shakil, 31, all from Beeston, Leeds, were arrested on allegations that they were co-conspirators in the London bombings of 7 July 2005, and are currently on trial at Kingston Crown Court.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> According to Gordon Brown’s statement to Parliament, 19 March 2008.

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.guardian.co.uk/terrorism/story/0,,2205608,00.html>

<sup>5</sup> “‘Thousands’ pose UK terror threat”  
(<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/7078712.stm>).

<sup>6</sup> “More time to quiz 7 July suspects”, *BBC News On-line*, 23 March 2007.

It is alleged that Waheed Ali and Mohammed Shakil travelled with Mohammed Sidique Khan to Pakistan and it is believed that Shakil trained with him in a terrorist training camp there.<sup>7</sup> All three men have admitted that they travelled to London in December 2004 with 7/7 bomber Hasib Hussain, met up with Germaine Lindsay and visited together various London locations. The prosecution argues that these were scouting trips for the eventual attacks, something the defendants deny.<sup>8</sup> Prosecutors also claim that Khan and Shakil met with convicted terrorist Mohammed Junaid Babar and another man at Islamabad Airport on 24 July 2003. There is allegedly evidence on Ali's computer of frequent visits to jihadi affiliated websites, and police found a piece of paper in Shakil's possession with instructions for sending money to the Taliban embassy in Pakistan, and a long letter on his computer praising the 9/11 attackers. Similar documents about 9/11 were found on Saleem's seized computer.

On 9 May 2007, Khalid Khaliq, 34, was arrested on suspicion of "commission, preparation or instigation of acts of terrorism". He pleaded guilty to possession of an al-Qaeda training manual and was sentenced at Leeds Crown Court to 16 months.<sup>9</sup> Khaliq was apparently a single, unemployed father of three children. He was also a volunteer and trustee at Iqra Bookshop, which served as a centre for Muslim youth: 7/7 bombers Tanweer and Khan were also trustees of the bookshop. Khaliq is featured in a photograph along with Tanweer and Khan white-water rafting in Northern Wales.

### *21/7 Co-conspirators*

Muktar Ibrahim (or Ibrahim Muktar Said),<sup>10</sup> 29, Ramzi Mohammed, 25, Hussain Osman, 28, and Yassin Omar, 26, were found guilty of this attempted attack and sentenced to life imprisonment on 11 July 2007. Manfo Asiedu, 35, believed to be Ghanaian, is considered to be the fifth bomber, abandoned his bomb and went back to Ibrahim's apartment to defuse a booby-trap bomb. He was convicted of conspiring to cause explosions and sentenced to 33 years.

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<sup>7</sup> David Williams and Lucy Ballinger, "Stunned families of 7/7 victims see first images of suicide bombers in the moments before they brought carnage to Tube", *The Daily Mail*, 11 April 2008.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>9</sup> "Man jailed over al-Qaeda training manual", *Sky News On-line*, 11 March 2008.

<sup>10</sup> This is how he is referred to in the following article: "Ten in court for 'shielding' 21/7 attackers", *Times On-line*, 11 August 2005.

All four would-be bombers had come under the influence and guidance of Abu Hamza and Abdullah el-Faisal in their teens and early twenties.<sup>11</sup> Ibrahim had apparently ‘trained for jihad’ in Sudan in 2003 and was under surveillance in May 2004. He was also stopped and questioned at Heathrow on his way to Islamabad in December 2004, and the prosecution speculated that he might have attended the same training camp as Sidique Khan.<sup>12</sup> He had been involved in criminal gang activity for which he picked up a custodial sentence.

Yassin Omar’s flat in New Southgate, North London, served as the bomb-making factory. Omar was born in Somalia, and came to London in 1990 with his sisters where he was placed under the care of the local authority. He became increasingly attracted to Islam around 2000, began wearing a robe instead of Western clothes and started espousing support for the Taliban.

The fourth would-be bomber, Ramzi Mohammed, came to the UK from Somalia via Kenya when his father was forced to fight in one of the warring militias there.<sup>13</sup> He was placed in the care of social services in Slough. Until 2003, Mohammed led a Western lifestyle, but he then began attending the Finsbury Park Mosque and going to Hyde Park to listen to sermons. In January 2004, he began associating with Ibrahim and Omar. Police found a suicide note to his girlfriend and two children and extremist literature in his apartment.

A number of individuals have been found guilty of helping the 21/7 plotters. Adel Yahya, 25, from Ethiopia was sentenced to 6 years and 9 months for collecting information that was useful to a person preparing a terrorist attack. He met Omar at school and they attended Finsbury Park Mosque together. Yahya accompanied the other bombers on the training trip to the Lake District in 2004 and extremist literature was found in his apartment.

The following individuals were found guilty of giving assistance and protection to the bombers while they were in hiding. Muhedin Ali, 29, from Ladbroke Grove was sentenced to 7 years (Ramzi Mohammed’s suicide note was found in Ali’s apartment). Wahbi Mohammed, 25, from Stockwell, brother of Ramzi Mohammed, was sentenced to 17 years. Ismail Abdurahman, 25, from Lambeth was sentenced to 10 years for

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<sup>11</sup> Sandra Laville, “21/7 bombers: ringleader slipped through police net”, *The Guardian*, 10 July 2007.

<sup>12</sup> “Profile: Muktar Ibrahim”, *BBC News*, 11 July 2007.

<sup>13</sup> “Profile: Ramzi Mohammed”, *BBC News*, 9 July 2007.

failing to disclose information about Said and assisting Osman in evading arrest. Siraj Yassin Addullah Ali, 33, from Enfield, was sentenced to 12 years for failing to disclose information about Ibrahim and Omar. Ali was fostered by the same family as Omar and lived in the same block of flats in Southgate. Abdul Sherif, 30, from Stockwell, brother of Hussain Osman, was sentenced to 10 years. Osman travelled to Italy with Sherif's passport.<sup>14</sup>

A number of other individuals have recently been found guilty of assisting Osman: his wife, Yeshiemebet Girma,<sup>15</sup> 31, from Stockwell was jailed for 15 years for failing to inform police of her husband's plans to launch a terrorist attack and helping him to escape to Rome; Esayas Girma, 22, from Stockwell (brother of Yeshi Girma) and Mulumebet Girma, 23, from Brighton (sister of Yeshi Girma) were both sentenced to 10 years each; and Mohammed Kabashi, 23, (boyfriend of Mulu Girma) was jailed for 9 years.

#### *London Fertiliser Plot*

The group charged with this plot had purchased over 600 kg of ammonium nitrate in order to construct a bomb and had stored it in an Access Self-Storage unit in Hanwell, West London, and surveillance revealed a number of targets including the Ministry of Sound nightclub in London and Bluewater shopping centre in Kent.

Omar Khayam, the ringleader, is a British citizen born and raised in Crawley, West Sussex in a largely secular Muslim home. He attended Al-Muhajiroun meetings and travelled to Pakistan to train in a Mujahideen training camp to fight in Kashmir. After returning home to Britain, he left again for Afghanistan in 2001 and met with members of the Taliban. He was deeply affected by the war in Iraq, and after the invasion returned to Pakistan, met with al-Qaeda member Abdul Hadi, and began planning attacks in the UK.

Jawad Akbar was born in Pakistan but moved to Crawley when he was eight. He attended Brunel University where he became involved in a radical Islamist political group. Akbar travelled with Khayam to Pakistan in 2003.

Salahuddin Amin was born in London but raised in Pakistan. He attended Al-Muhajiroun meetings in Luton, where he met individuals who were attempting to set

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<sup>14</sup> "The accomplices to terror", *BBC News*, 4 February 2008.

<sup>15</sup> "Wife 'failed to report bomber's plans'", *Channel 4 News On-line*, 27 February 2008.

up 'jihadi support networks' between the UK and various groups abroad. Eventually Amin moved back to Pakistan, where UK officials claim he was a facilitator between the UK and extremists in Pakistan. In 2005 he was sent to Britain where he apparently gave a "full and frank" interview that figured prominently in the trial. He later retracted his story, denying any knowledge of the plot.

Waheed Mahmood met Khayam at the local mosque in Crawley, and participated in meetings held in Luton. Mahmood had a family home in Pakistan where the plotters met and decided to attack the UK. Mahmood had dismantled his hard drive and thus there was only verbal evidence against him. He was caught on tape praising the attacks on Madrid as a "beautiful job", and discussing possible attacks on Bluewater shopping centre in Kent.

Anthony Garcia (born Rahman Benouis in Algeria) claimed that seeing videos of atrocities in Kashmir was a turning point for him. He travelled to Pakistan in 2003 and attended the same training camp as Khayam. Back in the UK, Garcia was the individual who purchased the fertiliser and accompanied Khayam and Nabeel Hussain to the Access Storage Unit.

Mohammed Khawaja, of Pakistani origin, was born and raised in the suburbs of Ottawa, Canada. He attended the same training camp in Pakistan as the other plotters and agreed to provide the detonator for the bombs. He is still awaiting trial in Canada.<sup>16</sup>

Mohammed Babar acted as the key witness for the prosecution, after turning against the other defendants. He is an American of Pakistani descent who travelled to Pakistan shortly after the 9/11 attacks, reportedly to take part in the jihad, and while there came into contact with the other defendants in the case. He is serving three years in an American prison – a reduced sentence given in exchange for his testimony in the UK – and will enter the Witness Protection Program once he is released.

### *Abu Hamza*

Abu Hamza (Mustafa Kamel Mustafa) emigrated to the UK from Egypt in 1979. He came into contact with Afghan Mujahideen fighters who had come to the UK to seek medical attention, and eventually left the UK to work and fight in Afghanistan, where he suffered the loss of his hand and eye. He also served in Bosnia. When he returned

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<sup>16</sup> Ian MacLeod, "Supreme Court rejects terrorism law challenge", *National Post*, 3 April 2008.

to the UK he became a leading figure in the Islamist movement and began to establish himself at the Finsbury Park Mosque, where he eventually gained de facto control. He was questioned about plots, including the massacre of tourists in Luxor, Egypt, and the alleged bomb plots in Yemen, for which his son was jailed for three years. The mosque was raided in January 2003, in connection with the so-called 'ricin plot' of 2002, after which Hamza lost control of the mosque, although he continued to preach outside it. In 2004, the US government named Hamza as a 'terrorist facilitator with global reach'. He was successfully convicted on 11 counts and sentenced to seven years in jail.<sup>17</sup> In February 2008, the Home Secretary approved his extradition to the US, an appeal against which he recently lost.<sup>18</sup>

#### *Plot to attack the US and UK – Dhiren Barot*

Dhiren Barot was the mastermind behind a number of plans to attack targets in the UK and US, for which he was sentenced to life in prison. Seven other men also received jail sentences as co-conspirators. Their plans included blowing apart a London Underground tunnel and bombings using an explosives-packed limousine and a dirty radiation device. Barot allegedly showed his plans to al-Qaeda operatives who were hiding in Pakistan, while the other seven individuals made preparations back in the UK.

Barot was born in India to a Hindu family who emigrated to Kingsbury, in northwest London shortly after he was born. Barot converted to Islam when he was 20, reportedly after a visit to Kashmir.<sup>19</sup> In 1995, he allegedly went to Pakistan where he attended a terrorist training camp. Police found a manual with extensive notes on various weapons, chemicals for bomb-making and bomb-making instructions. Intended targets in the US included the IMF and World Bank in Washington, D.C., the Stock Exchange and Citigroup headquarters in New York and the Prudential Building in Newark, NJ.<sup>20</sup>

The co-conspirators were: Mohammed Naveed Bhatti, 27, of Harrow, North London, who was sentenced to 20 years; Junada Ferozem, 31, of Blackburn, who was

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<sup>17</sup> Information taken from "BBC Profile: Abu Hamza", *BBC News*, 8 February 2008. See also "Timeline: Hamza Trial", *BBC News* (<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/4644030.stm>).

<sup>18</sup> David Batty, "Abu Hamza loses legal fight against extradition to US", *The Guardian*, 20 June 2008

<sup>19</sup> Sandro Contenta, "He embraced Islam, then terrorism", *Toronto Star*, 16 October 2006.

<sup>20</sup> "Profile of Dhiren Barot", *BBC News*, 7 November 2006.

sentenced to 22 years; Mohamed ul-Haq, 28, of Wembley, who was sentenced to 18 years; Abdul Aziz Jalil, 24, of Luton, who was sentenced to 26 years; Omar Abdul Rehman, 23, of Bushey, Hertfordshire, sentenced to 15 years; Quaisar Shaffi, 28, of Willesdon, sentenced to 15 years; and Nadeem Tarmohammed, 29, of Wembley, who was sentenced to 20 years.<sup>21</sup>

### *Transatlantic attack*

In August 2006, a number of people were arrested on suspicion of plotting to blow up transatlantic planes using explosives disguised as soft drinks.

Eight men are currently on trial in the UK,<sup>22</sup> facing charges of conspiracy to murder and prepare acts of terrorism. All deny the charges. The prosecution's evidence consists of jihadi-related literature and images found in their homes, and 'martyrdom videos' made by six of the eight defendants.<sup>23</sup> Those on trial are: Abdula Ahmed Ali, 27, of Walthamstow; Tanvir Hussain, 27; and Assad Ali Sarwar, 28, who have all pleaded guilty to conspiracy to cause explosions and conspiring to cause public nuisance by distributing al-Qaeda-style videos threatening suicide bomb attacks in Britain.<sup>24</sup> They stand alongside Umar Islam and Ibrahim Savant, 27 (who reportedly left a suicide note for his wife),<sup>25</sup> both of whom admit conspiring to cause a public nuisance. Alongside them are Mohammed Yasar Gulzar; Wabeed Zaman, 22, of Walthamstow and reportedly follower of Tabligh Jamaat; and Waheed Arafat Kahn, 24, of East London.<sup>26</sup> Khan was a student at London Metropolitan University, was president of the Islamic Society affiliated with FOSIS, and he was also reportedly a Tabligh Jamaat follower. Two others are charged with failing to disclose information, but have not yet come to trial: Cossor Ali, 25, of Walthamstow; and Mehran Hussain, of Chingford.<sup>27</sup>

Rashid Rauf, a British-born citizen, was thought to be the master-mind behind the attacks and was arrested by Pakistani authorities at the urging of British and

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<sup>21</sup> Information taken from: "Dhiren Barot's co-conspirators", *BBC News*, 15 June 2007.

<sup>22</sup> Taken from the following website:

<http://www.dawn.com/2008/04/05/top13.htm>.

<sup>23</sup> See <http://www.bucksfreepress.co.uk/display.var.2177305.0.0.php>.

<sup>24</sup> See "Terror Trial: Three admit parliament bomb plot", *The Guardian*, 15 July 2008

<sup>25</sup> "Paradise plea by plotter", *The Sun*, 19 April 2008.

<sup>26</sup> See [http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk\\_politics/7348936.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk_politics/7348936.stm).

<sup>27</sup> "Two Terror plot suspects freed", *BBC News*, 24 August 2006.

American authorities in August 2006. Pakistani courts ruled that there was not enough evidence to convict him of terrorism-related charges, so the charges were reduced to forgery, although Britain and the US continued to press for his extradition. He is alleged to have escaped police custody,<sup>28</sup> although there are suspicions that the Pakistani authorities still have Rauf in custody but simply do not want to extradite him to Britain for reasons unknown.<sup>29</sup>

*London and Glasgow airport plots (29/30 June 2007)*

The most recent high-profile terrorist plots occurred on 29 and 30 June 2007, when two cars loaded with explosives were parked outside a nightclub in London's West End and the next day an attempt was made to drive a truck loaded with explosives into the entrance of Glasgow airport. The two men who drove the truck into Glasgow airport – Dr. Kafeel Ahmed, 27, from Bangalore, India and Dr. Bilal Abdullah, 27, an Iraqi doctor registered to work in the UK – are thought also to have parked the 'bomb cars' in London. Dr. Ahmed suffered 90% burns and died in hospital, while Dr. Abdullah was charged with conspiracy to cause explosions and was scheduled to stand trial in October 2008 with Dr. Mohammed Asha, a doctor from Jordan of Palestinian descent who is charged with conspiracy to cause explosions.<sup>30</sup>

Five other individuals were arrested, including Dr. Asha's wife, but three were released shortly after without charge. A fourth individual, Dr. Mohammed Haneef, was arrested in Australia but all charges against him have been dropped. Additionally, Dr. Kafeel Ahmed's brother, Dr. Sabeel Ahmed, was arrested and charged with withholding information about the attacks. Kafeel Ahmed had emailed his brother on the morning of the attack to instruct him to withhold information from the police. Dr. Sabeel Ahmed pleaded guilty to the charge and was sentenced to 18 months in jail, a lesser sentence due to the fact that he received the email after the attacks had already occurred. It was reported in various Indian papers that the two Ahmed brothers had undergone a change after becoming members of Tabligh e-Jamaat.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> "Pakistan manhunt for escaped terror suspect", *The Guardian*, 17 December 2007.

<sup>29</sup> "The mysterious disappearance of an alleged terrorist mastermind", *The Guardian*, 28 January 2008.

<sup>30</sup> "Bomb plot: Arrests and releases", *BBC News*, 5 October 2007.

<sup>31</sup> See <http://www.dnaindia.com/report.asp?NewsID=1109091>.  
<http://sundaytimes.lk/070708/International/i503.html>.

*Lessons from UK terrorism cases*

Many academics have sought to construct overarching theories about the causes and drivers of radicalisation, but these normally seem to prove only the exceptions rather than the rule. The case studies above show that few – if any – patterns are universal, and that it is difficult to draw causal links. However, these cases do highlight a number of factors that are often present, although it is impossible to know with any certainty how instrumental each one is on the path to violence. Several factors illustrated in the table below stand out as important, namely ‘places’, ‘leaders’, ‘relationships’, ‘experiences’ and ‘grievances’.

<b>Factor</b>	<b>Examples</b>
Key places	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Finsbury Park Mosque (now known as North London Mosque, apparently purged of its radical elements) (21/7)</li><li>• Speakers Corner, Hyde Park (21/7)</li><li>• Iqra bookstore in Beeston (7/7)</li><li>• Local mosques (fertiliser plot)</li><li>• Trips to Pakistan (fertiliser plot; Khan reportedly met Khayam and others involved in the fertiliser plot at a training camp in Pakistan)</li><li>• Tablighi Jamaat meetings/events (transatlantic attack plot, London/Glasgow airport plot)</li><li>• Universities, Islamic students groups: London Metropolitan University (transatlantic attack plot, 21/7 plotters); Brunel University (fertiliser plot)</li><li>• Websites (Numerous individuals in different plots had evidence of accessing jihadi websites; Al-Muhajiroun – now known as Ahl ul-Sunnah Wa al-Jamma operates exclusively by invitation-only internet chat room)</li><li>• Al-Muhajiroun meetings – Crawley, Luton: (fertiliser</li></ul>

	plot)
Charismatic leaders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Abu Hamza (influenced 21/7 plotters)</li> <li>• Sheikh el-Faisal (influenced Germaine Lindsay of 7/7, Richard Reid and Zacarias Moussaoui)</li> <li>• Omar Bakri (influenced fertiliser plotters)</li> <li>• Dhiren Barot (influenced his co-plotters, as well as Ramzi Mohammed, 21/7)</li> </ul>
Relationship links	<p>Family Links (Britain and Pakistan, in particular):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rashid Rauf's (transatlantic attack plot) wife is reportedly closely related by marriage to Maulana Masood Azhar, the founder of Jaish-e-Mohammed, an armed group that fought in Kashmir and was connected to Pakistan's intelligence service, ISI*</li> <li>• Waheed Mahmood (fertiliser plot) had a family house in Pakistan where the conspirators met to plan</li> </ul> <p>Friendships (Britain and Pakistan):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Salahuddin Amin (fertiliser plot) was born in Britain but raised in Pakistan and was the facilitator between British extremists and al-Qaeda</li> </ul> <p>Local friendships:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 7/7 plotters all grew up together in Beeston, Leeds. Khan referred to his friends in one of his videos as his daughter's 'uncles'</li> </ul>
Experiences	<p>Immigration and asylum systems: Yassin Omar, Ramzi Mohammed, Adel Yahya (21/7); Jawad Akbar, Anthony Garcia (fertiliser plot); Dhiren Barot (UK/US plots); Dr Kafeel Ahmed, Dr Bilal Abdullah (London and Glasgow airport);</p> <p>Social services: Yassin Omar, Ramzi Mohammed (21/7)</p>
Stated/assumed grievances	<p>British foreign policy: Mohammed Siddique Khan (7/7); Omar Khayam, Anthony Garcia (fertiliser plot); Abu Hamza</p>

\* Duncan Campbell and Randeep Ramesh, “Mysterious Disappearance of an alleged Terrorist Mastermind”, *The Guardian*, 14 August 2006.

### **3. Radical Groups and Movements**

What follows is an account of organisations and networks within the three categories of radicalisation that form the structure for this collaborative research project: non-political religious, religious and political, and non-religious political. Where there is evidence of links to violence, this is documented, although in many cases this is based on subjective judgments and fragmentary evidence. It is therefore more appropriate to view these groups as ‘radical’ rather than radicalised, where the latter term is assumed to infer an intention to use violence. Groups often cross the boundaries between the three categories so this should be viewed as a broad analytical tool rather than a precise typology.

#### ***3.1 Non-political religious groups***

##### *Tablighi Jamaat*

Britain is the current locus of Tablighi Jamaat in the West, with the Dewsbury Central Mosque in West Yorkshire serving as its European headquarters, although the group is highly decentralised.<sup>32</sup> It has been claimed that terrorists have used membership of this apolitical group as cover,<sup>33</sup> and that it has served as a first stop to violent extremism. But although its fundamentalist ideas are appealing, its apolitical stance means that many move on. It has even been criticised by some Muslims for failing to condemn Israel or release comments in support of Muslims in Chechnya, Kashmir and elsewhere.<sup>34</sup>

Tablighi Jamaat attracts a wide range of individuals, from business and political leaders to those seeking to turn their lives around after going off the rails. Its anti-Western, isolationist and fundamental characteristics also draw young Muslims who are disillusioned with modern society. Farad Esack, a South African Islamic scholar who spent 12 years with the group in Pakistan, said of the group, that it “attracts angry

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> See [http://www.dailymail.co.uk/pages/live/articles/news/news.html?in\\_article\\_id=466015&in\\_page\\_id=1770](http://www.dailymail.co.uk/pages/live/articles/news/news.html?in_article_id=466015&in_page_id=1770)

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

people -- people who need absolutes, who can't stand the grayness of life".<sup>35</sup> Convicted and suspected terrorists in the UK who have been or are suspected of being members include: Richard Reid, Kafeel and Sabeel Ahmed, Mohammed Sidique Khan, Shehzad Tanweer, and some of those involved in the transatlantic plot.

### *Deobandism*

Deobandism advocates a return to traditional interpretations of Islam and is often associated with Tablighi Jamaat. Some have argued that it has connections to violent groups like al-Qaeda and the Taliban, but its followers claim these groups have distorted their faith.<sup>36</sup> Deobandism is now the dominant force in British Islam.<sup>37</sup> Riyadh ul Haq – reportedly in line to become the spiritual leader of Britain's Deobandi adherents – runs an Islamic Academy in Leicester and used to be imam at Birmingham Central Mosque. One of the main reservations concerns its alleged advocacy of separatism. It is claimed that Riyadh ul Haq has urged Muslims to segregate themselves from non-Muslims; he has reportedly stated that friendship with Christians and Jews makes a “mockery of Allah's religion”, that football is “a cancer that has infected our youth”, and that music is the “Satanic web” Jews spread to corrupt Muslim youth.<sup>38</sup> It has also been claimed that he has argued that Muslims ought to “shed blood” overseas in jihad, in defence of Islam.<sup>39</sup>

### *Salafism (Saudi-Wahhabism) (da'wa)*

Salafism in the UK is organised under the name of Markaz Jamiat Ahl-e-Hadith and is centred at the Green Lane Masjid/Mosque in Birmingham. There are over 40 M.J.A.H branches throughout England and two based in Scotland.<sup>40</sup> The Green Lane Mosque was brought to national attention when a Channel 4 *Dispatches* programme claimed to uncover ‘hateful’ sermons delivered at the Mosque;<sup>41</sup> “speaker after speaker uttering

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<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> Randeep Ramesh, “Indian Islamic Group attacks BBC Film for Bin Laden Link”, *The Guardian*, 29 October 2007.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> Andrew Norfolk, “Hardline Takeover of British Mosques”, *The Times*, 7 September 2007.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> See <http://www.mjah.org/ContactUs/MJAHVenuesCircles/tabid/65/Default.aspx>.

<sup>41</sup> *The Guardian*, reporting on the Channel 4 *Dispatches* programme, mentions radical imams and sermons at the Green Lane and Sparkbrook Mosques. Jamie Doward, “Revealed: preacher's messages of hate”, 7 January 2007.

hate speech against unbelievers, Jews, women and homosexuals.”<sup>42</sup> The mosque complained that the programme had taken a handful of phrases out of context.<sup>43</sup> A report by the right-wing think tank, Policy Exchange, went on to claim that UK Islamic organisations were receiving significant funding from Saudi government-related groups who espouse a fundamentalist view of Islam.

Salafism has come under scrutiny because groups such as al-Qaeda and the Taliban draw their interpretation of Islam from Salafist origins. However, as Trevor Stanley notes, there are various groups of Salafis who claim to be ‘true Salafist’ and who consider others – such as al-Qaeda – as takfiris or ‘ex-communicators’. Moreover, while they share similar beliefs about the interpretation of a pure form of Islam, they disagree over the means of changing society either through da’wa or through violence. An article in the *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism Journal* argues that there are three different types of Salafists: purists, politicians and jihadists.

### **3.2 Religious and political groups**

#### *Hizb-ut Tahrir (Liberation Party)*

Hizb-ut Tahrir was founded in 1953, in Jordanian-ruled Jerusalem by Taqiuddin al-Nabhani with the goal of uniting Muslims under one supreme Islamic state or caliphate. [Officially, HT disavows violence, but](#) defends the right to self-defence (by means of violence). The organisation’s lack of clarity on this issue leaves it open to accusations of promoting violence. The group is said to be at its strongest and best organised in Britain (although membership remains low in comparison to other groups) and Croydon Mosque has been considered a base for HT events and operations. HT first became prominent in the UK in the mid-1990s with a noticeable presence on university campuses. In fact, throughout its history, there has been a keen focus on recruiting university students. HT’s leader in Britain during the mid-1990s was Omar Bakri, who left the group in 1996 to form the more radical Al-Muhajiroun.

The group seemed to fade in the late 1990s, but has re-emerged in an ostensibly more respectable incarnation. Following the attacks in London on 7 July 2005, the British government sought to ban HT,<sup>44</sup> but was forced to back down after police and

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<sup>42</sup> “The Hijacking of British Islam”, *The Policy Exchange*, p. 19.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., quoting another source.

<sup>44</sup> “PM forced to shelve Islamist group ban”, *The Independent*, 18 July 2006.

intelligence agencies reported that there was no direct and explicit connection between HT and violent extremism. HT was, however, banned from UK university campuses by the National Union of Students, although it is thought to continue to operate covertly.<sup>45</sup> Controversy surrounding the group continues. In a 2007 BBC *Panorama* programme, a former member argued for the organisation to be outlawed in Britain, claiming that the softer image presented by HT Britain is a ploy to enable its continued legal functioning. He also claims that Asaf Hanif and Omar Sharif, the two British citizens responsible for a terrorist attack on a bar in Tel Aviv in 2003, were members of HT in Britain, and that Bilal Abdulla was also part of HT circles with Maher in Cambridge.

*Al-Muhajiroun, The Saviour (or Saved) Sect and Al Ghurabaa*

Al-Muhajiroun was founded by Sheikh Omar Bakri Mohammed in 1996, and he shared leadership with Anjem Choudary. Its version of Islam is described as neo-Kharijite, which is a sect of Islam distinct from Sunni and Shia. The group gained notoriety when it held the now infamous ‘Magnificent 19’ conference glorifying the 9/11 hijackers at Finsbury Park Mosque. It has been reported that three of the 9/11 hijackers were connected with the group in Germany, and former students from British universities have been discovered fighting amongst “terrorists” abroad – at one point leading the Russian government to ask Britain to ban the group when British students were found fighting in Chechnya.<sup>46</sup> Al-Muhajiroun disbanded in 2004 in anticipation of a ban, and split into two separate groups, The Saviour Sect and Al Ghurabaa. These two groups were banned under the British Terrorism Act of 2006, but by the time the ban had come into force these groups had already created dozens of front organisations, many of which were located in Britain.<sup>47</sup>

There is evidence to suggest a link to violence. Abu Izzadeen and Sulayman Keeler – both found guilty of inciting terrorism – were members of both groups.<sup>48</sup> Other alleged members include Abdul Saleem, 32 years old, charged with inciting terrorism, but cleared of fundraising; Ibrahim Hassan, 25 years old, charged with

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<sup>45</sup> Steve Bloomfield, Raymond Whitaker and Sophie Goodchild, “Islamic group in secret plan to recruit UK students”, *The Independent*, 4 September 2005.

<sup>46</sup> “Muslim student group linked to terrorist attacks”, *The Guardian*, 19 September 2001.

<sup>47</sup> Banned Islamists spawn front organisations: Al Ghurabaa tries to ensure survival with groups across UK, Ian Cobain and Nick Fielding, *Guardian*, 22 July 2006

<sup>48</sup> “Islamist Activist guilty of funding terror”, *The Guardian*, 18, April 2008.

inciting terrorism, but cleared of fundraising; Shah Jilal Hussein, 25 years old, found guilty of funding terrorism remains missing after failing to turn up to court; Abdul Muhid, 25 years old, found guilty of funding terrorism; Hussain Rajib Khan, 29 years old, was cleared of funding terrorism, and the jury was unable to reach a verdict on a charge of inciting terrorism; and Omar Zaheer, 28 years old, for whom the jury were unable to reach a verdict on a charge of inciting terrorism.

#### *Ahl ul-Sunnah Wa al-Jamma (ASWJ)*

Sulyaman (Simon) Keeler formed ASWJ in 2005 as the reunification of The Saved Sect and Al Ghurabaa, with Omar Bakri Mohammed, Abu Yahya, Abu Izzadeen, Abu Uzair, and Anjem Choudary all extensively involved. They have claimed it is not a jihadist group, but evidence from their invite-only Internet forum suggests otherwise. Infiltrators to the site claim that Bakri preaches under a number of aliases, and has been quoted as praising the 7/7 attackers saying they were “in paradise”.<sup>49</sup> It has also been reported that the ASWJ website has called for British Muslims to travel to Somalia to fight against Ethiopian troops, who they claim are supported by Western countries and Israel.<sup>50</sup> The group claims to have 1,000 followers.

#### *Islamic Council of Britain*

This organisation was apparently formed by Abu Hamza and centred around the Finsbury Park Mosque. It was responsible for organising the infamous conference held there celebrating the 9/11 attackers. It seems it was disbanded with the arrest and conviction of Abu Hamza and the instatement of new mosque leadership (the mosque is now known as the North Central London Mosque).

#### *Alleged Jamaat-e-Islami Affiliates*

Jamaat-e-Islami is primarily an Islamist political party based in Pakistan. It was founded in 1941 by Abu al-A’la al-Mawdudi and is the oldest political party within Pakistan. Jamaat-e-Islami opposes all types of Westernisation, including democratically structured government and seeks to establish an Islamic state in Pakistan. JI also supports, and is affiliated with, the Muslim Brotherhood. There is disagreement over whether JI supports or condones violent struggle. JI itself claims to

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<sup>49</sup> “Covert preaching of banned cleric”, BBC News, 14 November 2006.

<sup>50</sup> “UK Website: Join Somalia Jihad”, [www.ynetnews.com](http://www.ynetnews.com), 28 December 2006.

work only through non-violent means of persuasion, but US intelligence claims to have found links between JI and al-Qaeda after the arrest of Khalid Sheik Mohammed and other al-Qaeda members in the homes of JI members.<sup>51</sup> While Jamaat-e-Islami does not have an explicit party or group in Britain, some commentators have claimed that a number of British Muslim organisations – including the Muslim Association of Britain, the Islamic Foundation, and the United Kingdom Islamic Mission – have close ties to Jamaat-e-Islami (Bright 2007). Ed Hussain has claimed that East London Mosque is controlled by the Bandladeshi JI and that the mosque serves as a gateway to extremism.<sup>52</sup>

### *Muslim Association of Britain*

MAB was founded in 1997 and describes itself as a “mainstream grass roots organisation” which “actively seeks to dispel the misconceptions about Muslims and helps to act as a bridge to promote better understanding between the UK and the Muslim World”. It has worked closely with the Stop the War Coalition and the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament. It has been accused of links to Hamas and other such groups. Policy Exchange claims it is the closest thing in Britain to the Muslim Brotherhood and Jamaat-e-Islami and MP Louise Ellman claims that Azzam Tamimi has been an adviser to Hamas and a spokesperson for the Muslim Brotherhood. She also quotes him in a number of instances making comments in defence of suicide bombers in Palestine as martyrs: “do not call them suicide bombers, call them Shuhada [martyrs]”; “they [Israelis] have guns. We have the human bombs. We love death, they love life”; “For us Muslims, martyrdom is not the end of things, but the beginning of the most wonderful of things.”<sup>53</sup> He made the following comment to the BBC: “Sacrificing myself for Palestine is a noble cause. It is the straight way to pleasing God and I would do it if I had the opportunity.” Although individual accusations have been made, there is no evidence to suggest MAB has played any role in violent extremism in or towards the UK.

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<sup>51</sup> “Jamaat-e-Islami, Hizbul Mujahideen & Al Qaeda”, South Asian Analysis Group, [www.southasiananalysis.org](http://www.southasiananalysis.org), 29/05/2003.

<sup>52</sup> Dr. Muhammed Abdul Bari, now Secretary-General of the Muslim Council of Britain, was chairman of the East London Mosque. See MacEoin 2007.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

### *3.3 Non-religious political groups*

In recent years, there has been a substantial rise in the amount of political activism within Muslim communities in the UK. This developed in two waves: first, that sparked by the build up to the invasion of Iraq in 2003, and second following 7/7 when communities decided to organize themselves helped by a massive influx of government funding for ‘capacity building’. This activity is, on the whole, entirely non-violent and groups include the Asian Youth Movement (which no longer exists); the Stop the War Coalition; the Respect Coalition; School Students against War (affiliated with Stop the War); the Socialist Workers Party; Globalise Resistance; Permanent Revolution (UK); and the Workers Power. Most groups are small-scale, tend to have regional bases rather than national reach, and are often allied to other issues, such as housing, foreign policy, deprivation, student politics, and so forth. Only the Stop the War Coalition is large enough to merit a detailed description, and is also important because it is linked to and spawned so many of the other movements and organisations.

#### *Stop the War Coalition*

The Stop the War Coalition is important for a number of reasons: it gained huge traction politically; it attracted a massive following, not just in the UK but in many other countries; it became a focal point for other protest; and because it brought Muslims and non-Muslims working together for a common goal. The key actors in the movement are the Socialist Workers Party and the Muslim Association of Britain (mentioned in the previous section); and its most notable members are George Galloway, Tony Benn, Tariq Ali and Salma Yaqoob.

One of the other interesting things about the Stop the War Coalition is that it managed to span the generational divide that runs deep within many Muslim communities, where older generations have often tended to stay out of formal politics. While the Coalition was led by the young, it attracted older participants, too. As Mobeen Azhar said of the Coalition’s activity in Leeds, ‘I have grown up in a climate of disagreement and apathy in the mosque. My peers (and organisations like MPAC) will bear testament to the frustration of many in my generation with the depoliticised mentalities so unavoidably associated with many of our religious leaders. To get my

parents' generation engaging, talking and organising was a very personal breakthrough for me' (Briggs 2007).

In most cases, these non-violent forms of political activism make a positive contribution to political and civic life in the UK and are empowering for communities which suffer high levels of deprivation (and are therefore in need of activism to change their circumstances). They might also prove to be part of the solution to violent extremism. As Salma Yaqoob says, '...the dominant character of Muslim radicalisation in Britain today points not towards terrorism or religious extremism, but in the opposite direction: towards political engagement in new, radical and progressive coalitions that seek to unite Muslim with non-Muslim in parliamentary and extra-parliamentary strategies to affect change.' She added, '...it is only by encouraging the widening of this progressive expression of Muslim radicalism that the political purchase of strategies based on either terrorism or Muslim sectarianism can be minimised (Yaqoob 2007).'

Some have sought to present these movements as dangerous and have described their emergence as a sign of the Muslim community's desire for separatism (Bright 2007). But this is not supported by polling which shows that young Muslims are keen to engage.<sup>54</sup> Analysis of the 2003 Home Office Citizenship Survey suggests that political activity by Muslims positively contributes to their sense of identification with Britain. What's more, in a recent survey four-fifths (81%) of Muslims said it was important to proactively engage in British politics (Gohir 2006), and in another, two-thirds of Muslim students said they did not see a conflict between loyalty to the Ummah and to the UK (FOSIS 2005). Set alongside Pew's data, this creates a confusing picture of the Muslim community in the UK. However, one must remember that community attitudes are never straightforward and there is not necessarily anything contradictory in a community feeling unhappy about life in the UK and also wanting to do something about it through increased political activity.

### *Riots in northern towns*

Although not a movement or organisation, it is worth noting in this section the disturbances in Northern towns which saw violence on the streets in a number of

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<sup>54</sup> It should be noted that many opinion polls have been conducted in recent years on these themes. However, very few can be considered reliable as they tend to draw on a very small sample that cannot be seen as representative.

places which was in large part explained by the socio-economic circumstances of Muslim and Asian communities set out in an earlier section. In the Summer of 2001, a number of northern towns experienced violent clashes predominantly caused by racial tensions, exacerbated by orchestrated rivalries between criminal gangs. In Oldham, the riots took place over three successive nights in May and left 86 police officers injured. Violence then erupted in Burnley, resulting in clashes between hundreds of white and Asian youths and widespread damage to property and businesses. On 7 July 2001, the worst violence broke out in the Manningham area of Bradford when 1000 young men took to the streets, leaving 120 police officers injured.<sup>55</sup>

The causes of the riots differed in each place; in Oldham they were due to racial tensions between Asian and white communities caused by social division and poverty; in Burnley gang rivalries were blamed; and in Bradford, tensions flared when an Anti-Nazi League march led to a stand-off with National Front supporters. A number of independent reviews were commissioned for each city, along with an overarching national report authored by community cohesion expert, Ted Cattle. He pointed to the fact that many communities lived ‘parallel lives’ and made recommendations around a number of underlying causes, including housing, youth, regeneration, politics and education (Home Office 2001).

#### **4. Policy Responses**

The UK government’s counter-terrorism policies are brought together under the CONTEST strategy. It is a 4-pronged approach which covers the so-called ‘four p’s’: prevent, pursue, protect and prepare. The government’s security budget (which covers all security, not just counter-terrorism spending) was £2.5 billion in 2007 and will rise to £3.5 billion by 2010, reflecting the growing importance of security. Increased resource to the Security Service (MI5) gives a clue as to the importance placed specifically on counter-terrorism; its staffing levels were 2000 in 2001, but by 2007 they had risen to 3,300 and will grow until they reach 4000 in the next few years. The Prime Minister also announced at the end of 2007 that the government had established dedicated regional counter-terrorism units with more than 2000 police and support staff.

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<sup>55</sup> Q&A: 2001 northern town riots, <http://newsvote.bbc.co.uk/mpapps/print/news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/5032166.stm> (accessed 21/07/2008)

There have been two significant changes to government policy in the last year or so: increased emphasis on ‘prevent’, and the realisation of the importance of language and communication.

Engagement work with Muslim communities began in earnest after 7/7 when the Home Office set up a formal process called the Preventing Extremism Together (PET) working groups. The process was a step in the right direction, but was widely criticized for being rushed, government-led, and involving too narrow a group of individuals (Briggs, Fieschi and Lownsborough 2006), but it established the principle of engagement and many lessons have been learned as a result. Since then, the government has greatly widened the range of individuals and organisations it engages and works with and has injected much needed money into creating, sustaining and developing community infrastructure that in many cases wasn’t there to begin with. But decisions about engagement are always fraught, especially when so much is at stake and the complexities of community politics are difficult for outsiders to navigate. In July 2008, there was considerable controversy surrounding the second bi-annual Islam Expo, whose main organizers include individuals involved with MAB. Some accused them of being supporters of Hamas,<sup>56</sup> which led the Communities Secretary, Hazel Blears, to ban any government involvement in the event.<sup>57</sup>

The Prime Minister, Gordon Brown, signaled his commitment to the prevent agenda by announcing several hundreds of millions of pounds of new funding over the next three years. This includes an additional £240 million to the Home Office between now and 2011 towards counter-terrorism policing; £400 million in the next 3 years invested through the Foreign Office, Department for International Development, and the British Council to tackle radicalisation and promote understanding overseas; and £70 million towards community projects dedicated to tackling violent extremism. In announcing this spending in a November 2007 speech to Parliament, he said:

To deal with the challenge posed by the terrorist threat we have to do more, working with communities in our country, first, to challenge extremist propaganda and support alternative voices; secondly, to disrupt the promoters of violent extremism by strengthening our institutions and supporting individuals who may be being targeted; thirdly, to increase the

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<sup>56</sup> Stop pandering to the Islamist extremists, Ed Husain, Evening Standard, 070708

<sup>57</sup> Hazel Blears’ speech to Policy Exchange seminar can be accessed: <http://www.policyexchange.org.uk/Events.aspx?id=688>

capacity of communities to resist and reject violent extremism; and fourthly, to address issues of concern exploited by ideologues, where by emphasizing our shared values across communities we can both celebrate and act upon what unites us.

The second and related major change has been a marked shift in government tone and language in recognition of the fact that the government was often making matters worse. The Research Information and Communications Unit (RICU), a unit within the newly formed Office for Security and Counter-Terrorism (OSCT) in the Home Office but with cross government reach, is seeking to improve government language in a way that avoids playing into the hands of the violent extremists and wins the hearts and minds of Britain's Muslim communities. Ministers will no longer use the phrase 'war on terror'; they will talk about a 'struggle' rather than a 'battle' and will stop talking about the 'Muslim problem'.<sup>58</sup> While this shift in Ministerial and official language is visible, it has yet to make significant inroads at the operational level.

The policy setting for Muslims is also influenced by a wider range of policies, such as immigration, integration, citizenship and cohesion, and in these areas the rhetoric has on the whole become harder in response to wider public concerns about security and fairness in resource allocation. In terms of policies relating to 'living together', there has been a shift from multiculturalism and the celebration of difference towards integration (for example, the Commission on Integration and Cohesion and the Green Paper on Citizenship), with the emphasis on immigrants and minority communities fitting into life in Britain, becoming active citizens, learning the language and playing a role in wider society. These specific initiatives are happening against the backdrop of an increasingly vocal debate about Britishness and identity.

## **Conclusions**

The threat to the UK from radicalisation will remain present for a long time yet; it has been described by MI5 as the most serious danger to face the UK for the last century. As we search for solutions, it is perhaps not surprising that suspicion falls on a range of groups and individuals whose behaviour may on the surface appear dangerous or

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<sup>58</sup> <http://www.guardian.co.uk/terrorism/story/0,,2213958,00.html>  
<http://www.guardian.co.uk/terrorism/story/0,,2215012,00.html>

subversive. However, if alienation of the next generation of young Muslims is to be avoided, it will be important to engage in greater depth with these groups, understand the complexities of community politics, and come to a more nuanced understanding of the rich mosaic of political mobilisation that is now flourishing across large parts of our Muslim communities. This mobilisation will in fact, with some notable exceptions, offer part of the solution to radicalisation: it gives positive alternatives for those who feel disillusioned and voiceless, it provides vehicles for solving the deeply entrenched problems associated with deprivation suffered by many Muslims, these organisations can challenge extremist rhetoric and build community resilience, and it will eventually provide a mechanism for political integration.

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