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THE COLD WAR ON BRITISH MUSLIMS: AN EXAMINATION OF POLICY EXCHANGE AND THE CENTRE FOR SOCIAL COHESION

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The Cold War on British Muslims: An examination of Policy Exchange and the Centre for Social Cohesion

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Contents

Executive Summary	6
Introduction	9
Part 1 Counter-subversion: The Cold War precedent	10
‘Stretching the Charter’ – State Counter-subversion	10
Blurring the Edges – The Private Counter-subversion Lobby	11
Counter-subversion and Counter-terrorism	14
Part 2 The Centre for Social Cohesion (csc)	16
The Interpal Controversy	17
Hate on the State	18
Crimes of the Community	20
CSC and the Anglican Communion	21
Vigil	23
The CSC and Universities	24
The CSC on the Far Right	27
Conclusion	31
Part 3 Donors of The Centre for Social Cohesion	32
Part 4 Policy Exchange	36
Origins	36
Expansion	37
Policy Focus	38
Islam and Multiculturalism	39
When Progressives Treat with Reactionaries	40
The Hijacking of British Islam	40
Living Apart Together	42
Choosing Our Friends Wisely	43
Faith Schools We Can Believe In	44
Part 5 Donors of the Policy Exchange	46
Individual and Public Sector Donors	46
Corporate Donors	47
Charitable Foundations	49
Conclusion	52
Acknowledgements	53
Notes	54

Executive Summary

This report attempts to understand the current climate of fear being whipped-up against Muslims in Britain by examining two right-wing think-tanks: the Centre for Social Cohesion (CSC) and Policy Exchange. The report maintains that the arguments advanced by these think-tanks represent a reversion to the failed counter-subversion strategies of the past.

The report also argues that right-wing think-tanks have understated the rise of Islamophobia on the far-right and in some cases condoned the rise of groups such as the English Defence League (EDL) because of their own links to the counter-jihad movement.

THE HISTORY OF COUNTER-SUBVERSION

Official counter-subversion was stepped-up in the wake of the explosion of popular protest in the late 1960s. Under pressure from ministers, MI5's Director-General agreed 'to stretch the [Service's] Charter as far as it would go',¹ which in practice led to increasingly spurious security justifications for political surveillance. While ostensibly aimed at communists and the 'far and wide left', this surveillance covered a whole generation of Labour activists, including Jack Straw, Peter Mandelson, Peter Hain, Patricia Hewitt, Harriet Harman, Cathy Ashton and Joan Ruddock.² Hewitt and Harman were targeted because of their work with the National Council for Civil Liberties, whilst Ruddock and Ashton were monitored because of their links to the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament.

The counter-subversion thinking of this period had a problematic influence on counter-terrorism policy. At the height of the 1970s counter-subversion campaign in Ireland, MI5 identified the Official IRA as a greater long-term threat to UK than the Provisional IRA.³ As the official historian of MI5 notes, this seems perverse in hindsight given that the Official IRA had embarked on what became a permanent ceasefire. In effect though, MI5 was fitting Ireland into its wider counter-subversion campaign, identifying the political 'threat' of the Official IRA, and discounting the violent threat of the Provisional IRA.⁴ This illustrates that far from being a rational response to terrorism, there is a two-fold danger in a counter-subversion approach that risks repressing those who are engaged in legitimate political activity while misunderstanding those who present a genuine threat of violence.

Whilst the expansion of counter-subversion was undertaken in response to ministerial pressure, a private counter-subversion lobby also played a part. Amongst the most notable are those groups which were funded by the US-based Heritage Foundation between 1982 and 1985, which included the Institute for European Defence and Security Studies (IEDSS).⁵

Founded in 1979, the IEDSS's critique of unilateral disarmament would target a number of institutions that have more recently been attacked for being too open towards engagement with political Islam. Examples include Christian churches, considered in T.E. Utley's *Ethics and Nuclear Arms*, and higher education, the focus of Roger Scruton and Caroline Cox's *Peace Studies: A Critical Survey*.⁶ This preoccupation was shared by other elements of the counter-subversion network, notably 'British Briefing' a clandestine newsletter written by former MI5 officer Charles Elwell. It warned of 'the problem of Christian left-wing groups' and cited the Jubilee Group, whose members included the future Archbishop of Canterbury, Rowan Williams, as 'the best known and probably the most influential' of these.⁸

In the early 21st Century, former IEDSS writers like Caroline Cox and Dean Godson would be at the forefront of those advocating a campaign against political Islam modelled on the Cold War counter-subversion narrative.

COUNTER-SUBVERSION TODAY: THE CENTRE FOR SOCIAL COHESION

The Centre for Social Cohesion (CSC) was founded in 2007 as a project of the conservative think-tank Civitas.⁹ Its emphasis was in line with Civitas' previous work on the subject. A key example was *The 'West', Islam and Islamism: Is ideological Islam compatible with liberal democracy?*, a 2003 pamphlet whose authors Caroline Cox and John Marks would later become directors of the CSC. They argued that Islamist terrorism was only part of a broader ideological challenge comparable to communist propaganda efforts during the Cold War.¹⁰ This vision was reflected in the appointment of Douglas Murray as the Centre's director; the author of *Neoconservatism: Why We Need It*. By the time he joined the CSC, Murray had already established a reputation as a critic of Islam, most notably in a 2006 speech in which he argued that 'Conditions for Muslims in Europe must be made harder across the board'.¹¹

The CSC's first full length report, *Hate on the State: How British Libraries Encourage Extremism*, criticised the London Borough of Tower Hamlets for stocking 'several hundred books and audio tapes by radical Islamists' in its libraries;¹² it also criticised the failure to include Stephen Schwartz and ibn Warraq, two writers associated with the counter-jihad perspective.¹³

An intriguing aspect of *Hate on the State* was the credit given to Dominic Whiteman, the central figure in a now defunct amateur counter-terrorist group called Vigil, members of which have been implicated in fabricating online terrorist threats. One *Telegraph* report on *Hate on the State* went so far as to describe it as a joint publication of the CSC and Vigil.¹⁴ Vigil's Dominic Whiteman was also one of a number of people credited in another CSC report, *Virtual Caliphate*.¹⁵

After the publication of *Hate on the State*, Douglas Murray joined with local Conservative councillors in launching a petition calling on Tower Hamlets to 'remove all Hate Books identified in the Centre for Social Cohesion's Report'.¹⁶ In November 2007, the Government announced that it was working on new guidance 'to deal with the inflammatory and extremist material that some seek to distribute through public libraries'.¹⁷ However, the initial guidance was revised after the Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals warned of a possible 'chilling effect' on libraries, similar to that of the 'Clause 28'.¹⁸

Universities too have been a key focus for the CSC. A *Degree of Influence* for example, published in 2009, considered the issue of funding for Islamic studies. It made a number of criticisms of universities in receipt of such funding, but its strongest claim was that there had been censorship of certain aspects of Islam in universities.¹⁹ The report however provided no basis for this claim. Professor Denis Hayes of Academics for Academic Freedom, told the *Guardian* the real threat was closer to home, arguing that 'The British government, ruling through the quangocracy, operates much more effectively to influence academic life'.²⁰

While many of the report's recommendations for greater transparency about university donations were unexceptionable, its findings as a whole nevertheless conformed to the consistent pattern of the Centre for Social Cohesion's output on universities. In each case Muslim support for terrorism was exaggerated or mischaracterised in ways that sought to make counter-terrorism the basis for a more broadly targeted counter-subversion approach. Ironically, it is arguably this counter-subversion strategy that is the greatest threat to the independence of British universities.

The CSC has not focused solely on Islam and has produced two reports on the British far-right: *The BNP and the Online Fascist Network* (2009) and *Blood & Honour: Britain's Far-Right Militants* (2010). The latter of these was produced with *Nothing British*, a Conservative-aligned campaign against the far-right. Mainstream conservatives may well have a key role to play in opposing the far-right. However, given the growth of far-right Islamophobia, it must be questionable whether the CSC is an appropriate partner. The BNP report in particular underplays the extent to which the BNP has been influenced by other Islamophobic currents. The BNP's alliance with the counter-jihad movement and the subsequent emergence of the English Defence League were among the most significant developments on the British

far right in recent years. Yet neither of the CSC's reports on the far right addressed them. This is perhaps not surprising in the light of the CSC's own contacts with the counter-jihad movement.

In August 2009 CSC's director Douglas Murray met with leading counter-jihad activist Robert Spencer, and Martin Mawyer of the US Christian Action Network.²¹ The event would later spark controversy because of the attendance of three members of the English Defence League.²² In marked contrast to the CSC's analysis of other forms of political extremism, Douglas Murray has characterised the EDL as a predictable response to political failure²³ and recently commended the EDL as 'a grassroots response from non-Muslims to Islamism'.²⁴ This must raise fundamental doubts about the CSC's ability to fulfil its self-proclaimed mandate. Can it really offer a serious analysis of threats to social cohesion in Britain, when one of the biggest emerging threats has its roots in a counter-jihad ideology that the CSC shares to a significant extent? A report on the English Defence League by the CSC, in its new incarnation as part of the Henry Jackson Society might go some way towards answering that question. Yet it is difficult to see how the CSC could produce a meaningful critique of the EDL, without serious reflection on its own role in the British debate about Islam.

COUNTER-SUBVERSION TODAY: POLICY EXCHANGE

Policy Exchange has a much broader remit than CSC and publishes research on a range of political issues including economics, education, health and environment and energy. It was established in 2002 by a group of Conservative MPs and modelled itself on the influential New Labour think-tank IPPR, which along with Demos provided much of the thinking behind New Labour's neoliberal reform of public services. Its leading figures called for the Tories to position themselves to the right of New Labour not by focusing on divisive issues like immigration or the EU but by developing a critique of the state. It advocated the expansion of private sector delivery of public services and committed itself to 'completely reinventing the way government traditionally works'.²⁵ It has sought to portray this process as being driven by a progressive and empowering agenda – what it calls, 'Using centre-right means to progressive ends'.²⁶

Policy Exchange's first chairman was Michael Gove. In July 2006, the same month Policy Exchange published its first report on Islamism, it hosted a book launch for Gove's neoconservative polemic *Celsius 7/7*. In the book Gove argued that what he called 'fundamentalist terror' had been facilitated by the 'sapping of confidence in Western values encouraged by the radical Left since 1968'.²⁷ He thanked a number of people for helping to shape his thinking on Islamism, among them were Douglas Murray of the Centre for Social Cohesion and Dean Godson, who that year was appointed head of Policy Exchange's Foreign Policy & Security Unit.²⁸ Godson, who comes from a family with a history of involvement in propaganda and covert action, had worked as a Research Fellow at the Institute for European Defence and Strategic Studies in the late 1980. Under his leadership Policy Exchange's major preoccupation has been with a perceived need to reassert 'Western values' against 'extremism' and the liberal political climate in which it is thought to thrive.

Godson's Foreign Policy & Security Unit has published a number of reports calling on the government to sever its links with particular individuals or groups and to expand its surveillance of Muslim communities. The most notorious of these reports was published in October 2007 and entitled *The Hijacking of British Islam*. The report was written by Denis MacEoin – an author of crime thrillers and ghost stories. It claimed to 'demonstrate unequivocally that separatist and hate literature, written and disseminated in the name of Islam, is widely available in the UK',²⁹ and called for mosques to be made to 'clean up their act'.³⁰ It was subsequently removed from Policy Exchange's website after the BBC discovered evidence suggesting that its findings had been fabricated.³¹

The Hijacking of British Islam followed an earlier report entitled *Living Apart Together*, which argued that, 'The rise of Islamism is not only a security problem, but also a cultural problem'.³² The authors blamed multiculturalism for a rise in 'anti-Western ideas' among Muslims and non-

Muslims. They sought to downplay experiences of Islamophobia and discrimination faced by Muslims in Britain, which are described as ‘myths’ and attributed to a ‘victim mentality’ ‘given social credence by institutions, politicians, the media and lobby groups.’³³ The report is equally dismissive of concerns over foreign policy and the sexualisation of women, which are attributed to a ‘cultural problem of self-loathing and confusion in the West’.³⁴ It called for the ‘bringing to an end the institutional attacks on Britain and its culture,’ and in particular criticised the teaching of history in schools which it is claimed is ‘taught in a one-sided, moralised way, focusing attention on the racism and violence of the Empire, and the oppression of ethnic minority groups and women, but with little sense of the positive contributions of the industrial revolution and the Empire’.³⁵

The authors contended that focusing on security and counter-terrorism government policy has failed to deal with a political or cultural threat. This idea has been most explicitly developed by Policy Exchange in its 2009 pamphlet *Choosing Our Friends Wisely*. The authors of this report criticised the Labour Government for, ‘stress[ing] law enforcement and strict security concerns over and above everything else.’³⁶ Furthermore, they argued that government policy should expand its focus from ‘preventing violent extremism’ to countering what they call ‘non-violent radicals,’ who it is claimed are ‘indoctrinating young people with an ideology of hostility to western values.’³⁷ The report explicitly calls for the British state to engage in large-scale political counter-subversion. The authors criticise MI5 for ‘not draw[ing] as much as it might on British experiences during the Cold War’ and, noting its claim that it does ‘not currently investigate subversion’, recall that the 1989 Security Service Act explicitly gives MI5 the power to do so.³⁸

In the Foreign Policy & Security Unit’s most recent publication, Policy Exchange calls for the introduction of counter-subversion operations that target British schools. *Faith Schools We Can Believe In* argues that faith schools, and the Coalition Government’s new Free Schools in particular, could pose a threat to ‘democratic values’. Echoing *Choosing our Friends Wisely*, it laments the fact that MI5 claim to no longer be involved in counter-subversion, commenting that: ‘If MI5 — which may be assumed to have far greater expertise in these matters — is reluctant to deal with these challenges, then what hope for the rest of the public sector?’³⁹ Amongst the report’s many recommendations on the monitoring of faith schools are that the Joint Terrorism Analysis Centre (part of MI5) should ‘conduct thematic and case study inspections of radicalisation in schools and, where appropriate, the parent charities of relevant educational establishments.’⁴⁰ The report also calls for ‘a commitment to core British values of democracy, tolerance and patriotism should be part of the ethos of every school and incorporated into new contracts for academies and Free School providers,’ and that, ‘Narrative British history should be a compulsory part of the school curriculum.’⁴¹

WHO FUNDS THE THINK-TANKS?

The authors of this report wrote to Policy Exchange and the CSC requesting in the interests of transparency that they disclose its sources of funding. The CSC stating in its response only that it is funded by private donations and has ‘neither sought nor received public funds.’⁴² Policy Exchange failed to respond. Research has however uncovered a number of the donors behind both think-tanks.

Research identified four foundations which have directly funded CSC since it split off from Civitas in June 2008: the Traditional Alternatives Foundation, the Bernard Lewis Family Charitable Trust, the Phillips & Rubens Charitable Trust and the New Heritage Foundation. By far the most significant of these donors is the Traditional Alternatives Foundation, a grant making trust run by the Thatcherite businessman Lord Kalms, owner of Currys, Dixons, The Link and PC World.

A member of Conservative Friends of Israel, in 2003 Kalms called on Jonathan Sacks to resign as Chief Rabbi, alleging that he had failed in his duty to provide sufficient support for Israel.⁴³ Kalms was also highly critical of the current Foreign Secretary William Hague during the 2006 Israeli invasion of Lebanon. After Hague described the Israeli assault as

'disproportionate', he compared Hague to an 'ignorant armchair critic'.⁴⁴

The Traditional Alternatives Foundation is not solely bankrolled by Kalms and has received funds from other right-wing foundations. In its 2009 and 2010 tax year, the Family Foundation Trust, formerly the Mintz Family Foundation, donated £10,000. At the same time it also provided funding for UK Friends of the IDF and UK Friends of the Association for the Wellbeing of Israel's Soldiers. Another donor, the G.R.P Charitable Trust, has also funded UK Friends of the Association for the Wellbeing of Israel's Soldiers, as well as the Israel-Diaspora Trust and the Anglo-Israel Association.

The current director of Policy Exchange, Neil O'Brien, has stated that two-thirds of its funding comes from individuals, a fifth from corporations and the rest from trusts and foundations.⁴⁵ Probably the best known of Policy Exchange's individual backers is the controversial Conservative peer Lord Ashcroft, who has also donated substantial sums to the Conservative Party.⁴⁶ Other donors include John Nash, the chairman of the private healthcare company Care UK and Henry Pitman, an old Etonian and founder of Tribal Group plc.⁴⁷ Policy Exchange is also supported by a number of corporations including Merck, one of the world's largest pharmaceutical companies,⁴⁸ the security company Reliance plc, BP, SAB Miller, BSkyB and Bupa⁴⁹ – all of whom have material interests in Policy Exchange's research.

An investigation of accounts filed with the UK Charity Commission and the US Internal Revenue Service has also identified the source of over £1 million of funding. By far the largest of these donors, together making up well over half of the total accounted for, are the Peter Cruddas Foundation and The Charles Wolfson Charitable Trust.

Peter Cruddas, a multi-millionaire businessman, was recently appointed co-treasurer of the Conservative Party. He serves as a trustee of his charitable foundation, along with Martin Paisner of the corporate law firm Berwin Leighton Paisner and the Foundation's chairman Lord Young of Graffham. The latter served as Secretary of State for Employment and Trade and Industry in the Thatcher Government.

The Charles Wolfson Charitable Trust is a charity run by Lord Wolfson of Sunningdale, who served as Thatcher's chief of staff. His father Charles Wolfson, a millionaire businessman, set up the Trust in 1960 to provide grants 'with particular, but not exclusive, regard to the needs of the Jewish community'.⁵⁰ Another trustee is Simon Wolfson, who also serves as a trustee of Policy Exchange. The Trust has funded other right-wing think-tanks including Civitas, the Social Affairs Unit, the Institute of Economic Affairs and the Adam Smith Research Trust⁵¹ and has also funded pro-Israel groups like the Israel-Diaspora Trust and the Anglo-Israel Association.⁵²

The Israel-Diaspora Trust was founded by the late Rabbi Sidney Brichto, a passionate supporter of Israel and scourge of its critics inside and outside the UK Jewish community.⁵³ He was succeeded in 2009 by Alan Mendoza, head of the neoconservative think-tank the Henry Jackson Society which recently took over the Centre for Social Cohesion.⁵⁴

The Anglo-Israel Association was founded in 1949 by Sir Wyndham Deedes, a Christian Zionist who had briefly served as Chief Secretary to the Administration in Palestine.⁵⁵ His nephew William Deedes became an editor of the *Daily Telegraph* and in 2006 wrote an opinion piece entitled, 'Muslims can never conform to our ways'.⁵⁶

A more explicitly Zionist foundation that backs Policy Exchange is the Lewis Family Charitable Trust which gave £10,000 to Policy Exchange in 2007/8, £20,000 in 2008/9 and another £10,000 in 2009/10.⁵⁷ It has also funded the Anglo-Israel Association, the UK Friends of Association for the Wellbeing of Israel's Soldiers, Palestinian Media Watch, The United Jewish Israel Appeal and the Zionist Federation. As noted above, the Lewis Family Charitable Trust is controlled by the hugely wealthy Lewis family, best known as the owners of the River Island clothing stores.

Introduction

This report attempts to understand the current climate of fear being whipped up against Muslims in Britain. It does this not by looking at the most obvious sources of hatred and bigotry such as the British National Party or the English Defence League. Rather it focuses on two apparently more respectable agencies engaged in the public debate about Islam and multiculturalism: the Centre for Social Cohesion (CSC) and Policy Exchange. It describes the history, structure, staffing and activities of these two key British think-tanks and the networks of money and power in which they are embedded.

The report begins by placing these contemporary actors into historical context by comparing the current campaign against Muslims with that waged against the left during the Cold War. This introductory section provides much needed context and illuminates many of the contemporary strategies adopted to marginalise British Muslims. It reveals that a number of the key actors in that earlier period are still active today and using similar arguments. Only the target has changed a little.

We then critically examine the strategies and arguments that have been advanced by these two think-tanks. We show how they have implicitly rejected counter-terrorism policies based on public safety, advocating instead a much broader campaign of political counter-subversion. The advocates of this approach have justifiably claimed some success in influencing public policy, notably with recent review of the government's Prevent strategy.⁵⁸ We argue that the approach advocated by these two think-tanks represents a reversion to the failed counter-subversion strategies of the past, which undermined civil liberties and proved to be a distraction from effective counter-terrorism policies. This approach is likely to stigmatise and even criminalise politically active Muslims – as well as liberals and leftists – and risks undermining the traditional freedoms enjoyed by churches, schools, universities and public libraries.

In separate sections of the report we examine the finances of both think-tanks. These sections reveal for the first time the network of individuals and foundations that are bankrolling the cold war on British Muslims. Many of the donors revealed here have extremist political agendas, arguably calling into question the ability of these think-tanks to produce fair and balanced research, and certainly suggesting the need for greater transparency over sources of funding. Indeed we argue that the lack of transparency in the funding of think-tanks raises serious questions about the functioning of democratic politics. Since 2000, political parties in the UK have been obliged to disclose the identity of major donors to the Electoral Commission. This legislation was introduced to address concerns that corporations and wealthy individuals were able to exert a disproportionate influence on public policy making. Under present legislation however think-tanks are immune from any such scrutiny. This is true even of organisations like Policy Exchange, which has charitable status and therefore exists ostensibly to serve the public interest. At a time when think-tanks play an increasingly important role in policy making, we argue that this is a serious oversight and in need of reform.

PART 1 COUNTER-SUBVERSION: THE COLD WAR PRECEDENT

Both supporters and critics have compared the neoconservative approach to Islam in Britain to anti-communist counter-subversion strategies of the cold war.⁵⁹

A glance back at this earlier period is illuminating in a number of ways. *Firstly* it provides an example of the kind of state counter-subversion that neoconservatives advocate. *Secondly*, it allows us to locate the neoconservatives themselves in a tradition of counter-subversion lobbying by non-state actors. *Thirdly*, it highlights the problematic relationship between counter-subversion and counter-terrorism.

‘STRETCHING THE CHARTER’ - STATE COUNTER-SUBVERSION

The classic official definition of subversion was given in 1972 by John Jones, who was then the director of the counter-subversion wing of MI5’s F Branch. He outlined a concept covering ‘activities threatening the safety or well-being of the State and intended to undermine or overthrow Parliamentary democracy by political, industrial or violent means.’⁶⁰

This definition reflected a growing preoccupation of British officialdom in the wake of the explosion of popular protest in the late 1960s. MI5 officer Peter Wright gave a memorable vignette of the period when he described the pressure on the Security Service to expand its counter-subversion activity at the expense of counter-espionage:

Early in his tenure as Director-General [of MI5], [Michael] Hanley called a meeting of senior staff in A Branch and F Branch to discuss the changing shape of MI5’s priorities. The meeting began with a presentation from Hanley on the climate of subversion in the country, and the growth of what he termed the ‘far and wide left.’ The Prime Minister and Home Secretary had left him in no doubt that they wanted a major increase in effort on this target. He then handed over to a young and ambitious F Branch officer, David Ransome, who outlined the activities and structure of a host of left-wing splinter groups, like the Workers Revolutionary Party (WRP) and the Socialist Workers’ Party (SWP).⁶¹

This marked the start of a major expansion of MI5 counter-subversion activity. According to Wright, while his immediate predecessor had sought to maintain the service’s independence, ‘Hanley resolved to do what his masters wanted, and he set about providing them with as professional and extensive a source of domestic intelligence as was possible.’⁶²

According to the official historian of MI5, Christopher Andrew, Whitehall civil servants shielded the service from attempts to widen its remit on industrial intelligence, in return for a promise from Hanley that he would interpret its charter broadly. While Hanley acknowledged that he was willing ‘to stretch the Charter as far as it would go’, he said he would not seek a warrant against individuals against whom there was no adverse security information.⁶³

In practise, this led to increasingly spurious security justifications in response to political demands for surveillance – a situation that was ultimately exposed in the 1980s by MI5 officer Cathy Massiter. Surveillance of the trade unions was largely justified through the involvement of Communist union officials; a practise which climaxed with the 1984 miners strike, despite the fact that MI5’s own evidence showed that the Communist Party of Great Britain was a moderating influence during the dispute.⁶⁴

While ostensibly aimed at communists and 'far and wide left' Trotskyists, MI5 surveillance covered a whole generation of Labour activists. The future Deputy Prime Minister John Prescott was targeted during the 1966 seamen's strike, whilst the expansion of counter-subversion in the 1970s led to the targeting of individuals such as Jack Straw, Peter Mandelson, Peter Hain, Patricia Hewitt, Harriet Harman, Jack Dromey, Cathy Ashton and Joan Ruddock.⁶⁵

Hewitt and Harman were targeted because of their work with the National Council for Civil Liberties (NCCL), which led to them being classed as 'communist sympathisers'. According to Cathy Massiter, this was at the instigation of a senior F Branch officer, Charles Elwell, who regarded the NCCL's work as an attempt to undermine the police.⁶⁶

Ruddock and Ashton were monitored because of their links to the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament. A file was opened on Ruddock when she was interviewed by a Soviet journalist, who, unknown to her, was a KGB officer. Ashton was classed as a Communist sympathiser because she shared a house with a member of the party.⁶⁷

According to Cathy Massiter, she was instructed to seek a warrant against CND vice-president John Cox, after talks between MI5 and Ministry of Defence, despite the fact that the service was already satisfied from its coverage of the Communist Party, that Cox's activities were not a cause for concern.⁶⁸

The official history of MI5 acknowledges that the service was under political pressure to go beyond its charter in its coverage of CND, as well as the trade unions, and that even some MI5 directors felt it had succumbed to this pressure.⁶⁹

Massiter's decision to speak out in 1984 publicly exposed how far MI5 had gone in 'stretching the charter' to satisfy political imperatives.⁷⁰ A year later, a new Director-General, Sir Anthony Duff, began moves to cut back F Branch counter-subversion following the end of the Miner's Strike.⁷¹

Decades later, three successive heads of MI5, Stella Rimington, Stephen Lander and Eliza Manningham-Buller, agreed in interviews with journalist Richard Norton-Taylor, that these developments marked a turning point in an MI5 counter-subversion campaign that had got out of hand.⁷²

It must be noted however, that the period covered by that campaign was a crucial one in British history. It began in 1972, as Britain's post-war social compact was breaking down. It ended in 1985, with the Thatcherite settlement that succeeded it firmly in place. It can fairly be asked whether F Branch had not served its purpose in helping to achieve that outcome.

BLURRING THE EDGES - THE PRIVATE COUNTER-SUBVERSION LOBBY

In his official history Christopher Andrew argues that much of MI5's focus on counter-subversion was in response to ministerial pressure.⁷³ However, a private counter-subversion lobby involving former MI5 hardliners also contributed.

Andrew records that in May 1979, the retiring head of F1 section, Charles Elwell, minuted the Director-General, warning that counter-subversion was being neglected:

The Communist threat has become more insidious because of the 'blurring of the edges between Communism and democratic socialism'. It is therefore more difficult to recognise and to counter. The job of identifying Communists outside the Party – generally known as 'sympathisers' – has become more

While ostensibly aimed at communists and 'far and wide left' Trotskyists, MI5 surveillance covered a whole generation of Labour activists.

important.⁷⁴

Such views were those of a dwindling minority within MI5, according to Andrew, but they found a ready audience among private counter-subversion activists.

One such figure was Brian Crozier, the creator of a secret committee known as 'Shield' that, from 1976 onwards, advised Margaret Thatcher and senior Conservative colleagues on subversion.⁷⁵

In June 1979, according to Crozier, this committee met to 'consider a new "strategic" paper prepared for "Shield" that month by a senior officer of MI5 who had just retired':

This was a penetrating dissection of the Security Service, and specifically where it had gone wrong. The picture that emerged was of an intellectually weakened organisation no longer prepared to take Marxist-Leninist influences seriously. Too much time and resources were devoted to the trailing of foreign spies (which it was argued, could be left to the police Special Branch) and too little to domestic subversion. This report was intended for the (new) Conservative Prime Minister, and was duly passed on to her, though to little, if any, effect.⁷⁶

As Robin Ramsey suggests, this officer was most likely Elwell.⁷⁷ His analysis was a congenial one for Crozier who believed that MI5's remit was too narrow, on the grounds that, 'The ultimate sophistication of subversion is to take over the government, not by unlawful, but by lawful means.'⁷⁸

Such views may have been what the new Conservative Home Secretary, William Whitelaw had in mind, when he asked MI5 Director-General Howard Smith for a thorough briefing that would allow him to counter 'some of the rather extreme advice' Mrs Thatcher had received.⁷⁹

Shield was wound up after a meeting with Thatcher at Chequers in July 1979.⁸⁰ Crozier though remained active through another of his groups 'The 61', and continued to have meetings with Thatcher which were kept secret from her senior colleagues.⁸¹

Much of Thatcher's subsequent approach to counter-subversion was in line with the views of the Crozier group. At one early meeting called by the Prime Minister to discuss industrial subversion, the MI5 director general came under pressure to agree to an extension of MI5's charter. When he resisted this, he found himself excluded from a second meeting on the subject attended by Whitelaw, Joseph and Carrington, the same ministers who had received the Shield briefings.⁸²

In 1981 a short-lived attempt was made to revive the anti-communist Information Research Department abolished by the previous Labour government. The new unit was focused on CND and defence issues, and was run by Peter Blaker, who received advice from Brian Crozier.⁸³

In February 1983, MI5 and MI6 prepared a joint dossier for the Prime Minister on Soviet contacts with the peace movement. This was largely based on the testimony of KGB officer Oleg Gordievsky. According to Christopher Andrew, 'Gordievsky's intelligence on the paucity of effective KGB contacts in the movement, as well as the limited influence of the Soviet embassy, was it was reported, both reassuring and in line with previous Service assessments.'⁸⁴ Despite this conclusion, counter-subversion activity against CND was stepped up in the following months.

In March 1983, with a general election in the offing, Defence Secretary Michael Heseltine set up a new unit to combat the peace movement, Defence Secretariat 19 (DS19). Following talks between Heseltine and the head of MI5, DS19 made contact with F Branch. It was this approach that led to the bugging of CND vice-president John Cox. At around the same time Special Branch officers recruited an informant within CND, Stanley Bonnett, on the instructions of MI5.⁸⁵

As the F Branch desk officer responsible for CND, Cathy Massiter was also tasked to gather unclassified material on the far-left affiliations of CND leaders. According to Stephen Dorril, this material was passed on to the head of DS19, John Ledlie, and thence to Peter Blaker, by now a Minister of State under Heseltine at the Ministry of Defence. Blaker then helped to draw up a letter about Communist manipulation of CND which was passed on to Conservative MP Ray Whitney (a former official of the Information Research Department) and circulated to Conservative candidates in the 1983 general election.⁸⁶

In an apparent allusion to this episode, Christopher Andrew's official history of MI5 states that, 'in March 1983, the Service provided the MOD with open-source material on the political affiliation of seven leading members of CND.'⁸⁷ Andrew makes no mention of the political use to which this material was put, but it is clear that the counter-subversion lobby had succeeded in making MI5 part of a partisan campaign against the supporters of nuclear disarmament for which there was no security justification.

This partially covert official campaign paralleled the activities of the private counter-subversion lobby. Amongst the most notable are those groups which were funded by the US-based Heritage Foundation between 1982 and 1985: particularly The Coalition for Peace through Security, and the Institute for European Defence and Security Studies.⁸⁸

The Coalition for Peace through Security (CPS) was headed by Julian Lewis, who was described by Crozier as 'The 61's' leading activist in Britain'⁸⁹ and is now a Conservative MP. In February 1983, at the height of the anti-CND campaign, *The Economist* reported that the group was having meetings with Peter Blaker, and was linked to the Conservative backbench Committee for Peace with Freedom set up at the behest of Downing Street.⁹⁰

After Massiter's allegations became public in February 1985, the CPS claimed it and not MI5 had been responsible for briefing ministers:

Why, they complain, it was THEY who infiltrated CND back in early 1983 and prepared a dossier on the leading lights, which went to Defence Ministers. About 90 per cent of the information given out by defence spokesmen came from THIS dossier, they claim.

Dr Julian Lewis, research director of the CPS, has a dim view of MI5's efficiency. 'It's a bit of a cheek to try and steal our thunder. Given the number of Communists in CND it would be disgraceful if their phones weren't being tapped.'⁹¹

While it is possible that there were two dossiers, it seems clear from Andrew's account that MI5 provided the MOD with material very similar to that for which CPS claimed responsibility. Ironically, Crozier continued to be strongly critical of MI5 during a meeting on 28 February 1985, at which he briefed Mrs Thatcher about the CPS's activities. He accused the MI5 Director-General, former F Branch director Sir John Jones of refusing to disseminate material and of breaking off contact with a former colleague (probably Charles Elwell), now working for Crozier's organisation.⁹²

Another component of the Heritage-funded network, the Institute for European Defence and Strategic Studies (IEDSS), was founded in 1979 'to study political change in Europe and assess its impact on strategic and defence issues'.⁹³ The Institute's critique of unilateralism would target a number of institutions that have more recently been attacked for being too open towards engagement with political Islam. Examples include Christian churches, considered in T.E. Utley's *Ethics and Nuclear Arms*, and higher education, the focus of Roger Scruton and Caroline Cox's *Peace Studies: A Critical Survey*.⁹⁴ ⁹⁵ This preoccupation was shared by other elements of the counter-subversion network, notably, Charles Elwell's British Briefing, which warned of 'the problem of Christian left-wing groups' and cited the Jubilee Group, whose members included the future Archbishop of Canterbury, Rowan Williams, as 'the best known and probably the most influential' of these.⁹⁶ In the early 21st Century, former IEDSS

[one] reason to revisit the Cold War period is that then, as now, counter-subversion thinking had an influence on counter-terrorism policy.

writers like Cox and Dean Godson would be at the forefront of those advocating a campaign against political Islam modelled on Cold War counter-subversion.

COUNTER-SUBVERSION AND COUNTER-TERRORISM

Another reason to revisit the Cold War period is that then, as now, counter-subversion thinking had an influence on counter-terrorism policy. The relationship between counter-subversion and counter-terrorism or counter-insurgency however has historically been more problematic than might be assumed. The best example of

this is the record of MI5 in Ireland at the height of the 1970s counter-subversion campaign.

Within the MI5, the security problems presented by the emergence of the Irish troubles came within the remit of F Branch. Christopher Andrew's account suggests that senior F Branch officers were not anxious to emphasise this aspect of their responsibilities:

As Director F from 1972 to 1974, with responsibility for counter-terrorism as well as counter-subversion, John Jones showed no desire to expand the Service's role in Northern Ireland. While on the Irish desk, a former Security Service officer recalls that he 'never had one conversation with Jones about Ireland in my whole time'.⁹⁷

Perhaps the starkest illustration of MI5's lack of enthusiasm for its Irish role came from Colin Wallace, an army information officer selected in early 1974 to take part in a project known as Clockwork Orange, initially intended as a psychological warfare campaign against the IRA and loyalist paramilitaries.⁹⁸

Journalist Paul Foot recounted the subsequent evolution of the operation:

Colin was inundated with scraps of information from other Intelligence sources in Northern Ireland and in London. Much of this was new to him. It concerned, in the main, British politicians, about whom Colin knew very little. But he shared the prevailing Army official view that one of the main reasons for the continued success of the terrorists was the succour they received from some politicians in London. He therefore wrote down the main features of the information in his army-issue notebooks.⁹⁹

The material described by Foot makes it clear that Wallace had been drawn into MI5's domestic counter-subversion campaign, an experience with which he soon became disillusioned:

We were told more and more about these politicians, what they felt about communism, what shares they'd got in Canada, even what they did in bed. The situation was getting very serious by the middle of 1974 and I felt I'd had enough. I was genuinely anxious to get back to the basic business of fighting terrorism and I decided that Clockwork Orange didn't have much to do with that anymore.¹⁰⁰

Christopher Andrew mentions Wallace's story only once, to cite an official denial of his allegations by Sir Anthony Duff, the head of MI5 in the late 1980s.¹⁰¹ Yet Wallace provides an early independent source for Andrew's picture of F Branch as an institution preoccupied by counter-subversion and comparatively uninterested in Ireland.

Wallace's account also provides an insight into the underlying reasons for a major MI5 mistake which Andrew records.

At the end of 1973, after two years' work on the Irish desk and the Irish Current Intelligence Group on the JIC, an F5 officer gave 'a somewhat sanguine forecast that it is possible that in due course the Provisionals, already badly mauled, will cease-fire, that the army will be partly withdrawn from Northern Ireland and will diminish its intelligence effort':

We and indeed the southern Irish also, regard [the Official IRA] as a greater long-term threat to UK and the Republic than the Provisionals, chiefly because of its greater sophistication, its Marxist orientation, and its links abroad.¹⁰²

As Andrew notes, this analysis seems perverse in hindsight given that the Official IRA had embarked on what became a permanent ceasefire some 18 months earlier. It is more understandable, however, once it is seen as the product of a counter-subversion worldview. Seen through this prism, the Official IRA's shift to political activity was precisely the evidence that it represented a more sophisticated subversive threat.

In effect, F Branch was fitting Ireland into the procrustean bed of its wider counter-subversion campaign, identifying the political 'threat' of the Official IRA, and discounting the violent threat of the Provisional IRA, which was in fact about to reorganise under a new generation of leaders committed to the 'long war'.¹⁰³

Far from being a rational response to terrorism, there is two-fold danger in a counter-subversion approach that risks repressing those who are engaged in legitimate political activity while misunderstanding those who present a genuine threat of violence. In the chapters that follow we show that a similar approach is being advocated in relation to the alleged threat of political Islam by the two leading neoconservative oriented think-tanks in the UK. This, we argue, will only repeat the mistakes of the past by marginalising legitimate political activity rather than focusing on genuine threats to the public.

PART 2 THE CENTRE FOR SOCIAL COHESION

The Centre for Social Cohesion (CSC) was founded in 2007 as a project of the conservative think-tank Civitas.¹⁰⁴ According to its website, the Centre's creation reflected concern about several developments which had contributed to a diminishing sense of community in Britain. The threat from Islamist terrorism was said to be the most prominent, but other concerns cited included large-scale immigration and growing doubts about multiculturalism.¹⁰⁵

This emphasis on setting the issue of Islamist terrorism within a wider set of social concerns was in line with Civitas' previous work on the subject. A key example was *The 'West', Islam and Islamism: Is ideological Islam compatible with liberal democracy?*, a 2003 pamphlet whose authors Caroline Cox and John Marks would later become directors of the CSC.

The authors argued that Islamist terrorism was only part of a broader ideological challenge comparable to communist propaganda efforts during the Cold War, as interpreted by neoconservative theorists such as Roy Godson.¹⁰⁶

Western societies must respond effectively to the challenge from ideological Islamists. To do so they need to use principles and analyses which have many parallels with the earlier conflict with ideological Marxism.

The broad distinction between terrorists operating in the name of Islam and peaceable law-abiding Muslims must be respected, but it must not be allowed to cripple the effort that is needed to preserve the principles and institutions of Western societies.¹⁰⁷

This vision of a broad cultural conflict with political Islam was reflected in the appointment of Douglas Murray as the Centre's director.

Murray had previously been a fellow at the Social Affairs Unit, which published his 2005 book *Neoconservatism: Why We Need It*. By the time he joined the CSC, Murray had already established a reputation as a critic of Islam, most notably in a 2006 speech in which he argued that 'Conditions for Muslims in Europe must be made harder across the board: Europe must look like a less attractive proposition.'¹⁰⁸

Murray's speech was heavily influenced by the concept of *Dhimmitude*, or western subjection to Islam, developed by the historian Bat Ye'or, who has been a defining influence on the recent emergence of a transatlantic anti-Muslim ideology known as the 'counter-jihad' movement.¹⁰⁹

'In the current war the enemy is, as a demographic and political fact, massed not just on foreign shores, but within the gates of our cities,' argued Murray. 'The collision of forceful Islam with European spinelessness and *dhimmitude* is fatal for our free societies. The effects of *dhimmitude* have been superlatively explained to us by Bat Ye'or and others'.¹¹⁰

In one of his first interviews as CSC director, Murray said that while other factors contributed to problems with community cohesion, 'the main organised undercurrent behind disaffection is radical Islam.'¹¹¹

Another early move which underlined the scale of threat perceived by the CSC, was Murray's attendance at a June 2007 conference at Pepperdine University in Malibu, *The Collapse of Europe, the Rise of Islam and the Consequences for the United States*.¹¹² This event was held under the auspices of the American Freedom Alliance and the Council for Democracy and Tolerance. Both of these organisations were funded by the Fairbrook Foundation — a non-profit which in addition to providing extensive support for Israeli settlements in the

West Bank — has also funded many of the key organisations involved in promoting the counter-jihad movement.¹¹³

Murray's affinity with this movement was underlined again in 2009, when he met one of its key figures, Robert Spencer, at a London meeting. This meeting broke up, however, after another participant invited along members of the English Defence League.¹¹⁴

This incident illustrated a point made about the counter-jihad phenomenon in a 2008 study for the Royal United Services Institute, which described the movement as a spectrum:

At one end are the most shrill voices, with their dystopian fantasies of mayhem and civil war enveloping Europe as the continent becomes incorporated into a new Caliphate. They resemble the writers of the American neo-fascist militia movement, forever waiting for the beginning of the race-war and the chance to fight the 'New World Order'. At the other end of the scale are mainstream writers and politicians whose views are not dissimilar.¹¹⁵

Israeli official claims provided the basis for much of the CSC's profile of Interpal, which cited 'allegations made by Israel and the USA that the British-based charity has provided financial assistance to both the military and non-military wings of Hamas

The movement's unifying idea, according to the Royal United Services Institute, is that 'Islam as an ideology is a threat to non-Muslims and to Western culture', reflecting a discourse which 'mixes valid concerns about Jihad-inspired terrorism with far more complex issues about immigration to Europe from predominantly Muslim countries.'¹¹⁶

These are clearly similar preoccupations to those of the CSC, which focused almost exclusively on Islam in its early publications. Although there is no reason to believe there are any financial links between the CSC and the Fairbrook Foundation, its relationships with Fairbrook grant recipients underline the Centre's ideological affinity with the counter-jihad movement.

THE INTERPAL CONTROVERSY

The first CSC publication was an A-Z of Muslim organisations in Britain, which appeared on the Centre's website in July 2007.¹¹⁷ By April the following year, this had had been replaced with the message: 'The UK Islam A-Z is temporarily off line. The Centre for Social Cohesion is currently updating the UK Islam A-Z in advance of its forthcoming publication, *a Guide to British Muslim Organisations*, due to be published next month. The Centre apologises for any inconvenience.'¹¹⁸ In fact, the Centre had received a libel threat arising out of its profile of Interpal, a British charity involved in providing aid in the West Bank and Gaza.¹¹⁹

Interpal had been a source of friction between the Israeli and British governments for several years. The Israeli daily *Haaretz* reported in 2004 that Foreign Minister Jack Straw had refused a request from his Israeli counterpart Silvan Shalom to put an end to Interpal's activities. Significantly, *Haaretz* noted that even if the Israeli intelligence on Interpal were made public, it would not necessarily meet the threshold for banning a UK charity and that, 'it is therefore not at all certain that even if the evidence were to be revealed, it would lead to a curbing of Interpal in Britain.'¹²⁰

Nevertheless, Israeli official claims provided the basis for much of the CSC's profile of Interpal, which cited 'allegations made by Israel and the USA that the British-based charity has provided financial assistance to both the military and non-military wings of Hamas.'¹²¹

The profile also cited a 2006 BBC Panorama documentary, which also relied extensively on evidence provided by current and former Israeli security officials, noting that the programme had prompted an investigation by the Charity Commission.¹²² However, when the Commission ultimately reported in 2009, it stated:

The material provided seemed to indicate that certain local partners funded by the Charity promoted terrorist ideology or activities amongst their beneficiaries. However, the inquiry could not verify to its satisfaction each of these items provenance or accuracy. In order for the Inquiry to draw firm conclusions from the material, it would need proof that the material was found at particular identifiable local partners, and/or showed activities which could be proved to have been carried out at a particular identifiable partner, during a particular period of time.¹²³

Much as *Haaretz* had predicted, the Commission concluded:

The Inquiry found that, given the seriousness of the allegations being made, the material did not reach the standard of proof required under civil law for the inquiry to consider taking regulatory action on this issue.¹²⁴

The inability of the Israelis to provide the British authorities with credible evidence against Interpal arguably reflects a deeper difference in perspective. While the British demanded evidence that charitable funds were being diverted towards terrorism, the Israelis saw charitable activity, in itself, as a form of ideological warfare. This incident underlines the significance of the cold war perspective advanced by the CSC. Under such a paradigm, whether particular activities are legitimate in themselves becomes less important than whether the actors involved are regarded as allies or enemies.

The CSC's attitude to charitable activity in the West Bank is one example of this. Only a month before the criticism of Interpal was published, CSC's director, Douglas Murray, had spoken at a conference whose organisers were funded by the Fairbrook Foundation, a US charity that was itself funding militant Israeli settlers in the West Bank. While there is no necessary connection between the two events, they do suggest a fundamental double standard.

HATE ON THE STATE

The CSC's first full length report was *Hate on the State: How British Libraries Encourage Extremism* by Douglas Murray and James Brandon. This criticised the London Borough of Tower Hamlets for stocking 'several hundred books and audio tapes by radical Islamists' in its public libraries.¹²⁵ Although the report acknowledged that Tower Hamlets collection featured other views on Islam, it also criticised the failure to include Stephen Schwartz and ibn Warraq, two writers associated with the counter-jihad perspective.¹²⁶

Hate on the State also criticised a number of other local authorities including Waltham Forest, Birmingham and Blackburn, over the quantity of Islamist material in their library collections, whilst suggesting that the problem was not necessarily on a similar scale to Tower Hamlets.¹²⁷ In response, Birmingham City Council stated:

Many of the writings highlighted are historic and scholarly works. We do not stock any material in any of our libraries that incites racial hatred. We have a balanced selection of literature on Islam and other cultural beliefs.¹²⁸

In a statement issued to the BBC's *Newsnight* programme, Tower Hamlets Council acknowledged that, 'The Islamic book stock came from a narrow range of publishers, thereby not reflecting the broad range of Islamic thought.'¹²⁹

Following *Newsnight's* coverage of the report, the council decided not to withdraw any literature from the shelves, citing advice from the Chartered Institute of Libraries & Information Professionals that 'If publicly-available material has not incurred legal penalties, then it should not be excluded on moral, political, religious, racial or gender grounds to satisfy the demands of sectional interest'.¹³⁰

Douglas Murray subsequently joined with local Conservative councillors in launching a petition calling on the council to 'remove all Hate Books identified in the Centre for Social Cohesion's Report from our Public Libraries and Library Catalogue'.¹³¹

In November 2007, Prime Minister Gordon Brown announced that, 'The Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport is working with the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council to agree a common approach to deal with the inflammatory and extremist material that some seek to distribute through public libraries, while also of course protecting freedom of speech.'¹³²

An initial draft of this guidance was strongly criticised by the Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals, which particularly queried advice that:

Librarians and library authorities should not be unduly concerned with the provisions of race relations legislation, and focus on avoidance of commission of the offences created by the Terrorism Act 2006.¹³³

The Institute warned of a possible 'chilling effect' on libraries, similar to that of the 'Clause 28' legislation on library collections about homosexuality, and argued that advice requiring a pre-emptive cull of existing materials 'serves to promote a climate of fear and self-protection which, if taken to logical conclusions, could lead to the culling of established literary and religious works including the Bible and the Koran.'¹³⁴

In response to a consultation, 43% of librarians felt that the draft guidance would not help to promote community cohesion.¹³⁵ As a result of such criticisms, revised guidance was published in 2009, with input from CILIP. Ayub Khan, head of libraries in Warwickshire, welcomed the shift saying: 'My initial concern was that these guidelines would be very narrow, focussed on a Muslim community, and I'm delighted that they've taken a wider perspective.'¹³⁶

In March 2010, the *Telegraph* reported that many of the books cited in *Hate on the State remained* available in Tower Hamlets.¹³⁷ So it appears that despite its initial impact on the Government, the report's effect on public policy was ultimately limited.

The struggle over library guidelines illustrates the intrinsic challenge that the CSC's 'cultural cold war' perspective presents to liberal institutions, in this case, libraries and local authorities. The initial draft led some librarians to feel they were being asked to become participants in the War on Terror, a position most notably expressed by John Pateman, the head of Lincolnshire Libraries, who warned in 2008:

The 'War on Terror' has a direct effect on what we do and a divisive effect on the communities we serve. It is in our professional interest to oppose it. Libraries and information are our business, but so too are freedom of expression, freedom of information and human rights. We must oppose any attacks on civil liberties. We must oppose censorship and stand up for diversity and community cohesion.¹³⁸

Britain's librarians, it seems, have so far resisted the call to join the cultural cold war on Islam.

CRIMES OF THE COMMUNITY

The CSC's second major publication, *Crimes of the Community*, by James Brandon and Salam Hafez, was published in February 2008. It focused on honour-based violence in the forms of forced marriage, domestic violence, honour killings and female genital mutilation.

The report itself took a relatively nuanced view of the role of Islam in relation to the issue. For example, it noted that until recently, sexually repressive notions of honour were widespread in many parts of the world,¹³⁹ and highlighted the existence of forced marriages in some orthodox Jewish communities¹⁴⁰ and the practice of female genital mutilation among some African Christians.¹⁴¹

In the *London Review of Books*, Jacqueline Rose wrote of the report:

Crimes of the Community is the most informative source I have read on honour-based violence in the UK. Nonetheless, its title – ‘crimes of the community’ – could be read as implying, against the evidence of the document itself, that the community, rather than consisting of individuals, some condoning, others hating these hideous acts carried out in their name, harbours such crimes in its very nature.¹⁴²

This danger was arguably realised in the furore over the Archbishop of Canterbury's views on Islam, which broke out shortly after the report's publication.

On 7 February 2008, the Archbishop, Dr Rowan Williams, discussed the nature of Shari'a law, and the extent to which the law of the land should recognise the legal and moral religious codes. Williams stated that:

This lecture will not attempt a detailed discussion of the nature of *sharia*, which would be far beyond my competence; my aim is only, as I have said, to tease out some of the broader issues around the rights of religious groups within a secular state, with a few thoughts about what might be entailed in crafting a just and constructive relationship between Islamic law and the statutory law of the United Kingdom.¹⁴³

Williams' speech and a subsequent radio interview led to a storm of criticism, in which the CSC's report became a key debating point. It was picked up, most notably, by Christopher Hitchens in *Slate*:

By a nice coincidence, a London think-tank called the Centre for Social Cohesion issued a report just days before the leader of the world's Anglicans and Episcopalians capitulated to Islamic demands. Titled *Crimes of the Community: Honour-Based Violence in the UK*, and written by James Brandon and Salam Hafez, it set out a shocking account of the rapid spread of theocratic crime.¹⁴⁴

Douglas Murray was himself highly critical of the Archbishop's speech, writing that: ‘The beautifully hostile press reaction to Rowan Williams' disgusting views is the only aspect of this story that could provide any hope.’¹⁴⁵

The effort to provide men and women with equal rights before the law is one of the greatest achievements of the human species. In sharia - even the ‘early’ parts of sharia where people don't have hands cut off or get flogged or beheaded - the testimony of a woman is worth half that of a man. In calling for the institution of Islamic sharia, the Archbishop of Canterbury has just trampled on the worth, equality and dignity of women in Britain who were

born Muslim. This is not liberalism. It is discrimination. There is no more damage that Rowan Williams can do. He must resign.¹⁴⁶

In the face of such attacks, the Archbishop's office issued a clarification, stating that he 'made no proposals for sharia in either the lecture or the interview, and certainly did not call for its introduction as some kind of parallel jurisdiction to the civil law.'¹⁴⁷ Ironically, Dr Williams' speech had alluded to some of the very issues that Murray raised:

It is argued that the provision for the inheritance of widows under a strict application of *sharia* has the effect of disadvantaging them in what the majority community might regard as unacceptable ways. A legal (in fact Qur'anic) provision which in its time served very clearly to secure a widow's position at a time when this was practically unknown in the culture becomes, if taken absolutely literally, a generator of relative *insecurity* in a new context.¹⁴⁸

Indeed, a close reading shows more points of agreement between *Crimes of the Community* and the Archbishop's speech than would have been readily apparent from the media coverage in February 2008. For example, in contrast to Hitchens' emphasis on theocratic crime, both documents make it clear that the roots of honour-based violence lie in wider custom and tradition as much as in religion.

Why then did the two documents become counterpoints in such a highly-charged public debate? Part of the answer may lie in the internal politics of the Anglican Communion.

CSC AND THE ANGLICAN COMMUNION

From its inception, the CSC had close links with key figures in the Church of England. Its 2007 advisory council included Williams' predecessor as Archbishop of Canterbury, Lord Carey of Clifton, and the then Bishop of Rochester Michael Nazir-Ali. There was also a prominent lay Anglican, Baroness Cox of Queensbury¹⁴⁹ – all three were closely identified with the conservative wing of the Church of England.

The CSC was formed at a time when differences between conservatives and liberals within the Anglican Communion were already deepening. The role that attitudes towards Islam played within this division were chronicled, and to a great extent exemplified, by religious journalist Damian Thompson.

In a November 2006 *Telegraph* article, Thompson charted Lord Carey's emergence as a key figure for opponents of his successor, who, he suggested would be forced to step down with a few years.

Since his retirement in 2002 [Carey] has become 'the king over the water' for conservative evangelical Anglicans, who – thanks to mushrooming churches in Africa – now far outnumber communicants of the Church of England.

Thompson attributed this in part to Carey's conservative views on homosexuality, but also identified his approach to Islam as a key factor.

[H]e has also developed a knack that eluded him in office: of talking common sense. He was the first senior churchman to attack moderate Muslim leaders for not condemning Islamic suicide bombers 'clearly and unequivocally'; this week he criticised the wearing of full-face veils by Muslim women.

Thompson himself would be instrumental in introducing American counter-jihad ideas to Britain. In July 2007, he recommended the works of Robert Spencer, a central figure in the movement, 'to anyone who still believes sentimental nonsense about the Religion of Peace

or its founder.¹⁵⁰

In January 2008, Thompson repeated a claim from Spencer's Dhimmi Watch website, that 'after the death of a young Muslim man in a car crash in Sydney last month, an Islamic crowd invaded a hospital in order to stop medical tests being carried out on the body in contravention of Sharia law.'¹⁵¹ He added the striking caveat, 'I'd be interested if anyone can stand it up.' In the *Church Times*, Andrew Brown wrote: 'It took me less than five minutes to track the story to its source, a blog run by a fascist sympathiser in Sydney whose blog roll contains only three British sites, all run by BNP members, and two links to Serbian nationalists, as well as links to American right-wing extremists such as Ann Coulter and 'Family Security Matters'.¹⁵²

Thompson later updated his original blog post to acknowledge that 'no one has been able to substantiate the report and it's beginning to give off the strong whiff of an urban legend.' His willingness to credit counter-jihad material based on such flimsy evidence may have been related to his strong belief in its instrumental value to the conservative faction within the Church of England. As the Church's divisions threatened to come to a head at a series of rival conferences in the summer of 2008, Thompson wrote that Bishop Nazir-Ali was 'building a creeping power base inside the Church of England among ordinary churchgoers.' He added:

Nazir-Ali's popularity in England has very little to do with anti-gay sentiment. It's almost entirely the result of his brave stance against the creation of islands of Sharia law in Britain.

To me, by far the most shocking episode in the Church this year has been Dr Williams's call for the extension of watered-down Sharia, and his slippery attempt to extricate himself from the controversy. The Pakistani-born Nazir-Ali has caught the mood of the nation as no other bishop has; his boycott of Lambeth will remind us all that the C of E has utterly failed to grapple with the challenge of radical Islam.

I hope Islam will loom far larger on the agenda of the Lambeth Conference than the issue of homosexuality.¹⁵³

Given his conviction that Islam was a winning issue for Anglican conservatives, Thompson naturally found the CSC's output highly congenial, and he promoted its work assiduously on his Telegraph blog. In September 2007, he had praised the CSC's *Hate on the State* report, writing that, 'I know and admire Douglas' Murray, the CSC director:

It is people of his generation who recognise the major threat to social cohesion in this country: Islam.

I know I should say 'militant' Islam, but to be honest I'm finding it increasingly difficult to tell the difference between the militants and the moderates.¹⁵⁴

In the crucial summer of 2008, Thompson praised the Centre's 'scary report', *Virtual Caliphate*, as the work of a 'dynamic new think-tank' headed by the 'fearless young intellectual' Douglas Murray, with 'even more controversial material to come'.¹⁵⁵

A stark portrait of the mood with the Church of England during this period was provided by Stephen Bates in the *Guardian*:

Factionalism is rife with ambitious men such as Rochester's Michael Nazir-Ali, overlooked when Williams was appointed and again when John Sentamu was made Archbishop of York, scarcely giving Williams his support. Nazir-Ali may be a darling of the rightwing press for saying rude things about the Islam of his forebears, but he is not collegiate, or broadly liked even by fellow evangelicals among his colleagues - some of whom regard him as arrogant and patronising.

Nazir-Ali was one of two English bishops to attend the Jerusalem gathering where he spoke in barely veiled terms about his disdain for the church leadership. He will boycott the Lambeth conference, 20 miles down the road from his diocese.¹⁵⁶

The Liberal Dean of Southwark, the Very Rev Colin Slee, would later claim that Nazir-Ali's boycott, and his resignation the following year, were steps towards the creation of a 'sectarian alternative church intentionally designed to create turbulence in the Anglican Communion'.¹⁵⁷

In June 2009, Nazir-Ali presided at the Eucharist at the London launch of a new conservative umbrella body within the Church, the Federation of Confessing Anglicans.¹⁵⁸ Baroness Cox also took part.¹⁵⁹ Her presence underlined the continuing close links between some Anglican conservatives and the CSC. In January 2009, she had become a company director of the Centre, along with John Marks and the Irish journalist Ruth Dudley Edwards, replacing Douglas Murray and Hannah Stuart.¹⁶⁰

Ironically, Murray himself had started out as a believing Anglican, but began to question his faith as a result of his work on Islam, writing in December 2008, 'Gradually, scepticism of the claims made by one religion was joined by scepticism of all such claims.'¹⁶¹ Murray's experience is perhaps emblematic of a wider possibility, that the adoption of counter-jihad ideology has done conservative Christians more harm than good by contributing to a climate of public hostility to strongly held religious belief in general.

VIGIL

A particularly intriguing aspect of the CSC's output was the credit given to Dominic Whiteman, the central figure in an amateur counter-terrorist group called Vigil. The acknowledgements of the Centre's first report, *Hate on the State*, thanked Vigil for its assistance and cooperation.¹⁶²

One *Telegraph* report on the study went so far as to describe it as a joint publication of the CSC and Vigil, and carried a commentary from Patrick Mercer, a Conservative MP who had worked with the latter group.¹⁶³ However, a (presumably later) online version of the same report made no mention of Vigil's role.¹⁶⁴

Vigil came to public attention in November 2006 when it carried out an internet sting operation against the Islamist cleric Omar Bakri Mohammed, which featured on the BBC's *Newsnight* programme. A *Telegraph* report from this period described Vigil as a 'secretive organisation' involved in 'disrupting and exposing terrorist activity.' It claimed that Vigil had five staff, of whom only two could be named, Dominic Whiteman and Glen Jenvey.¹⁶⁵

In the following years, a number of incidents would raise questions about the methods employed by Vigil members. In April 2007, one of Whiteman's (whose real name is spelled Wightman) overseas contacts, an American policeman working in Iraq, received a message from Wightman's email address. The message asked the recipient to post a message on an Arabic bulletin board, calling for bombs to be placed in European supermarkets by planting them in the shopping baskets of unsuspecting women. The American refused the request, viewing it as illegal and likely to cause a panic.¹⁶⁶

When the email was raised with Wightman in 2009, he initially denied it had been sent. Subsequently, however, he admitted it had come from his address. He claimed it had been sent by Glen Jenvey, with whom he had now fallen out, in an attempt to discredit him.¹⁶⁷

Jenvey himself later admitted to fabricating threats, after he was quoted in a January 2009 *Sun* article about threats to prominent British Jews on a Muslim web forum, Ummah.com. Subsequent investigations linked some of the material on Ummah.com to an email account which had been used to promote Jenvey's sellyourstory.org website.¹⁶⁸ Jenvey subsequently admitted to posting the material, claiming it had been an undercover sting operation that had gone wrong.¹⁶⁹

In the same month as the *Sun* story, the *People* newspaper published a story linking the

Left-wing activity in the universities was a central concern of cold war counter-subversion ideology, exemplified in works such as Cox and Marks 1975 *Rape of Reason*

Islambase website to a threat against the singer Madonna. The Ministry of Truth blog would later suggest that individuals linked to the Vigil network may also have inspired this story, arguing on the basis of circumstantial IP evidence that Paul Ray, an associate of Glen Jenvey, may have been responsible for an attempt to incite Muslims on another forum ahead of the story.¹⁷⁰

A year earlier, in January 2008, Dominic Wightman's own blog had itself featured an improbable story on Islambase. Attributed to one Guy Baldwin (probably a pseudonym) the story claimed that 'a team of Russian hackers' had obtained various salacious details of the internet habits of Islambase users, notably

singling out an individual called 'Hamza'.¹⁷¹

In June 2008, Wightman was one of a number of people credited by James Brandon, in the acknowledgements to his CSC report *Virtual Caliphate*.¹⁷² Brandon described the report's methodology as follows:

This study is based on an online discussion on the password-protected forum of the islambase.co.uk website in which many of the website's most active users discussed their favourite Islamic websites. The discussion was initiated by one of the website's most active contributors, 'Hamza', and resulted in many of the most-active members of the forum listing 40 other sites.¹⁷³

The role of Vigil members in posting and attempting to solicit provocative material on Islamist forums raises questions in itself about the conclusions which can be drawn from such anonymous postings. The direct involvement of Vigil members in producing the CSC's reports can only compound those doubts.

THE CSC AND UNIVERSITIES

Left-wing activity in the universities was a central concern of cold war counter-subversion ideology, exemplified in works such as Cox and Marks 1975 *Rape of Reason*. Cox and Marks became directors of the CSC in January 2009. Given their advocacy of a counter-subversion approach as a model for the war on terror in *The 'West', Islam and Islamism*, it is not surprising that universities have also been a key focus for the Centre for Social Cohesion.

In April 2008, CSC's Robin Simcox wrote that the centre would soon be publishing a report by Professor Anthony Glees on Saudi and Muslim funding of British universities.¹⁷⁴ The *Sunday Telegraph* published details of the findings:

Prof Glees's report claims that over the past five years, 70 per cent of politics lectures at the Middle Eastern Centre at St Antony's College, Oxford, were 'implacably hostile' to the West and Israel – an allegation denied by Oxford.¹⁷⁵

The report also claimed that the Government's chief adviser on Islamic Studies Dr Atallah Siddiqui had links to extremist groups:

Dr Siddiqui said: 'These claims are false. I deny completely that I have any organisational or ideological links with extremist organisations. I also deny that the Markfield Institute has any such links with extremist organisations.'¹⁷⁶

Despite the heavy trailing of the report in the media, it appears the CSC was unable to stand by Professor Glees' allegations. As of July 2011, no report by him appeared on the list of publications on the CSC's website.¹⁷⁷

In a December 2009 article on the funding of Islamic Studies, Professor Glees wrote that 'One might expect certain think-tanks to support investigations, but they too are terrified of lawsuits.'¹⁷⁸

The CSC's next foray into academia was *Islam on Campus: A Survey of UK Student Opinion*, published by the CSC on 27 July 2008.¹⁷⁹ The report was based on campus visits, interviews, and an online survey carried out by YouGov. Its authors noted that 'Britain has over a hundred universities', but added 'we chose to focus our research on a dozen high profile universities with significant Muslim student populations and active Islamic Societies.'¹⁸⁰ No further rationale was given for the choice of individual universities, or of how representative this sample was expected to be.

The first key finding highlighted in the report's executive summary was that:

Just under a third of Muslim students polled (32%) said killing in the name of religion can be justified - the majority of these said killing could be justified if the religion was under attack, and 4% of all respondents supported killing in order to preserve and promote that religion.¹⁸¹

This finding featured prominently in a number of newspapers. The *Telegraph* headlined it as: 'Killing for religion is justified, say third of Muslim students'.¹⁸² It appeared in the *Daily Mail* as: 'One third of British Muslim students say it's acceptable to kill for Islam'.¹⁸³

However the original poll question asked of Muslim students did not mention Islam, but stated:

Is it ever justifiable to kill in the name of religion?

Yes, in order to preserve and promote that religion 4%

Yes, but only if that religion is under attack 28%

No, it is never justifiable 53%

Not sure 15%¹⁸⁴

A similar question was asked of non-Muslim students, of whom 94% said it was never justifiable to kill in the name of the religion. 1% said it was justified to 'preserve and promote' a religion, 1% 'if that religion is under attack' and 4% were unsure.¹⁸⁵

Muslim students were asked whether they were members of Islamic societies, and this data was used to break down responses to the question on killing in the name of religion.¹⁸⁶ Non-Muslim students were also asked if they were members of religious societies, but this data was not used to break down responses on the same question.¹⁸⁷

It seems intuitively likely that religious respondents are more likely to support violence in name of religion, even if they are not more supportive of violence in general, because of the value they attach to religion. The CSC could have attempted to quantify this effect, considered how far it accounted for Muslim responses, and compared the responses of adherents of other religions, and members of other university religious societies. YouGov appears to have collected some, and perhaps all, of the data necessary to ask these questions.

The findings, as presented, make it impossible to tell how far the support for religious violence the study found correlates with Islam specifically, rather than with religious adherence generally. We are not told what percentage of Christian, Jewish, other religious or non-religious students believe religious violence is acceptable.

Doing so might have raised issues less congenial to tabloid headline writers, and perhaps to the CSC's religious supporters. Equally, it might have shown that Christian and Jewish students were no more likely to support religious violence than non-religious students, in

which case the CSC would seem to have missed an opportunity. Either way, a fairer piece of research would have presented the data for all religious denominations rather than just singling out Muslims.

A third CSC study looking at universities, Robin Simcox's *A Degree of Influence* was published in 2009. This returned to the issue of funding for Islamic studies, the subject of Professor Glee's abortive effort.

The report's executive summary stated that it would look at: 'financial contributions that are available on the public record to strategically important area and language studies that pertain to the study of the Middle East (including Islamic Studies), East Asia (including China and Japan), and the former Soviet Union, the report examines whether these donations have had a significant effect on higher education in the UK.'¹⁸⁸

However, the methodology section formulated this slightly differently making no specific mention of the Middle East:

The categories of studies included in this report are as follows:

- Islamic Studies and area studies as they relate to the Islamic world
- East Asia (with special reference to China and Japan)
- Eastern Europe (including Russia)¹⁸⁹

The report made a number of criticisms of universities in receipt of funding for Islamic Studies. Its strongest claim, that there had been censorship of certain aspects of Islam in UK universities, was also the most doubtful.¹⁹⁰

As *Guardian* commentator David Shariatmadari noted, this charge was based on precisely two pieces of evidence, both disputed.¹⁹¹ The first of these involved a meeting at the Middle East Centre at St Antony's College, Oxford, the same institution previously attacked by Professor Glee. The chair Dr Eugene Rogan interrupted an audience member who was talking about Saudi funding of terrorist networks, and called on to him to restrain his language out of respect for other Muslims' beliefs.¹⁹² The CSC's report cited the incident in support of the proposition that:

It is vital that the presence of Saudi government officials at these and other lectures held in St Antony's College does not limit what academics are willing to hear said publicly about Saudi Arabia in the college.¹⁹³

The University of Oxford stated that:

There was no Saudi speaker and the discussion was not about Saudi Arabia. Eugene Rogan was intervening to stop one member of the audience directing a personal attack on another member of the audience.¹⁹⁴

CSC's own extract from the transcript of the event shows that the speaker, Dr Mansour Yousif Elagab, was allowed to conclude his remarks after the interruption, which itself probably owed more to Dr Elagab's comment that 'they think when they die they will meet angel women', than to what he said directly about terrorist funding.¹⁹⁵

Perusal of a fuller version of the transcript makes the CSC suggestion that Dr Rogan was shutting down discussion of Saudi support for terrorism seem even more unlikely. Consider the following contributors, neither of whom was cut short by Dr Rogan:

Mr. Roger Hardy: ...This doesn't get Saudi Arabia off the hook as it would like to be. Which I think the accusations against the Saudis, one way or the other, Wahabism in Saudi Arabia has created a kind of milieu, kind of seabed in which at least a support base for al-Qaeda has been made possible...

Dr Farhad Khosrokhavar: ... So far as the Wahabi ideology is concerned in the case of those people who were involved from Saudi Arabia this Wahabi ideology had radicalised their sense of ideology, had some strong influence probably, but not in the case of those who were of European background, who were of immigrant background. They didn't know so much about those things, about Wahabi and so on...¹⁹⁶

The report's second piece of evidence concerned an artwork depicting a bridge in Saudi Arabia which was removed from the University of London's School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) 'Edge of Arabia' exhibition, and replaced by another by the same artist, because the exhibit curators felt it would cause unnecessary offence.

The CSC report comments: "That "Al Siraat" could be seen as art inoffensive enough to be displayed in Saudi Arabia – where freedom of speech and repression is severely restricted – yet too provocative for an art exhibition on a UK university campus, which should be a bastion of free speech, is remarkable."¹⁹⁷

David Shariatmadari wrote of this: "[Simcox] neglects to mention that the bridge was the site of a mass-drowning during flash floods. Could this be why it was dropped from the show, on grounds of taste? I'm at a loss to see how it's offensive to Muslims – and it was, as Simcox says, exhibited in Saudi Arabia."¹⁹⁸

In neither instance is evidence presented that donors were involved in or attempted to influence either incident. *A Degree of Influence* therefore provides no basis for the claim that foreign funders are involved in censorship in British universities, one of the report's central allegations.

This was the conclusion reached by some of those academics most actively concerned about censorship. Professor Denis Hayes of Academics for Academic Freedom, told the *Guardian* the real threat was closer to home, arguing that "The British government, ruling through the quangocracy, operates much more effectively to influence academic life," and that "All the examples given in this document have stronger parallels in the UK."¹⁹⁹

A Degree of Influence could itself be said to exemplify this trend, given its emphasis on officially-defined strategically important subjects. While many of the report's recommendations for greater transparency about university donations were unexceptionable, its findings as a whole nevertheless conformed to the consistent pattern of the Centre for Social Cohesion's output on universities. In each case Muslim

Muslim support for terrorism was exaggerated or mischaracterised in ways that sought to make counter-terrorism the basis for a more broadly targeted counter-subversion approach.

support for terrorism was exaggerated or mischaracterised in ways that sought to make counter-terrorism the basis for a more broadly targeted counter-subversion approach. Ironically, it is arguably this counter-subversion strategy that is the greatest threat to the independence of British universities.

THE CSC ON THE FAR RIGHT

The CSC has produced two reports focused on the British far-right: *The BNP and the Online Fascist Network* (2009) by Edmund Standing; and *Blood & Honour: Britain's Far-Right Militants* (2010) by Standing and Alexander Meleagrou-Hitchens. The latter of these was produced

with *Nothing British*, a Conservative-aligned campaign against the far-right.

Mainstream conservatives may well have a key role to play in opposing the far-right. However, given the growth of far-right Islamophobia, it must be questionable whether the Centre for Social Cohesion is an appropriate partner in that effort. It should be noted that both CSC reports acknowledge far-right targeting of British Muslims, portraying it as an aspect of traditional neo-Nazi racism.^{200 201} While this account may be adequate in the case of *Blood & Honour*, it elides the extent to which the BNP has been influenced by other Islamophobic currents and notably the counter-jihad movement.

The weakness of the BNP report in this respect was highlighted even by relatively sympathetic observers, such as a contributor to the Spittoon, a blog co-edited by the CSC's Houriya Ahmed. The blogger, 'Shikwa' defended the report and its author Edmund Standing against charges that it deliberately downplayed anti-Muslim bigotry but added:

Ever since however, Standing has engaged with the ensuing debate by arguing that anti-Muslim bigotry is merely a 'tactic' of the BNP and not an integral part of their ideological outlook. I don't think we should be jockeying for position on this issue – who does the BNP hate the most – but I was uncomfortable with Standing's argument. Even if he's right and the BNP is just adopting an anti-Muslim stance to win votes that is an alarming indication of the way some people are starting to view Muslims in this country.²⁰²

Another contributor commented:

If you look at the Youtube channels examined by Standing in the CSC report then you will find videos dedicated to taqiyyah. This is clearly concern with Islam as a religion, not the skin colour of its followers. So far as my understanding of Standing's arguments goes, they simply cannot explain this.²⁰³

This appears to be a reference to 'Islam - Al *Taqiyya* (the art of deception)' a video posted to the 'bnprenaissance' account, which has since been removed by Youtube.²⁰⁴ A video of the same name has since appeared at another youtube account, featuring an image of the bus destroyed at Tavistock Square in the 7/7 bombings doctored to show an 'Islam is Peace' poster on its side.²⁰⁵ The employment of concepts such as 'Taqiyya' – a standard counter-jihad trope – reflects a wider flirtation between the BNP and the counter-jihad movement.

The anti-fascist magazine *Searchlight* reported in March 2007 that a key figure in the BNP, Alan Goodacre, intended to build links with anti-Muslim bloggers by seeking the help of Adrian Morgan of the Western Resistance website.²⁰⁶ In pursuit of this strategy, Goodacre had written to the *Jewish Chronicle*, claiming that 'our repudiation of anti-Semitism is genuine. We are the only party in Britain that is truly serious about fighting the Islamofascist threat.'²⁰⁷ This claim positioned the BNP to take advantage of an emerging alliance between the counter-jihad movement and elements of the European far right. The central role in this development was played by the US-based Centre for Vigilant Freedom (CVF), a counter-jihad group whose blog network, the 910 Group, included Adrian Morgan's Western Resistance blog.²⁰⁸

In October 2007, the CVF sponsored the Counter-jihad Brussels conference that brought counter-jihad speakers like Robert Spencer and Bat Ye'or together with far-right parties such as the Belgian Vlaams Belang and the Sweden Democrats.²⁰⁹ In a blog-post following the conference, CVF organiser Christine Brim said that the French fascist Jean-Marie Le Pen had not been invited to the conference because of his 'current and past positions on Israel, the Holocaust and anti-semitism', but added:

We suggest looking for the possible movement of Le Pen's political party Front National towards the center-right, as they may change their platform to

pro-active support to improve the situations of European Jews and Israel. The same trend is happening in Austria, and with the BNP in the UK (also not invited and did not attend the conference). If such parties specifically state pro-Israel positions, and take real actions opposing anti-semitism and disavowing previous positions – and reach out to Jewish constituents and encourage Jewish participation in party positions - these are real actions to observe, and to approve. They have not done this yet - but are starting.²¹⁰

This flirtation ultimately proved abortive, as will be seen below. In Britain, the counter-jihad's movement's alliance with the far-right would instead be manifested in new organisations that would rival the BNP.

CSC's report *The BNP and the Online Fascist Network* noted the support of some pro-BNP bloggers for violent anti-Muslim protests in Luton. However, it made no mention of the provenance of the protests themselves.²¹¹

One key far-right agitator in the area was Paul Ray, who had been interviewed in the preceding two years by US counter-jihad bloggers Pamela Geller and Phyllis Chesler. Geller noted that Ray was a Christian Zionist who had infiltrated the pro-Palestinian International Solidarity Movement (ISM) on behalf of the counter-campaign Stop the ISM in the summer of 2006.²¹² Ray's support for the BNP initially prompted Chesler to write that 'I think we are at war and we must make alliances with people with whom we may not agree on every issue', a position from which she later backtracked.²¹³

The organisation behind the protests, United People of Luton, included a number of people with a background in the BNP.²¹⁴ However, in the following months those links would be repudiated as the group became the nucleus of a new British counter-jihad movement.²¹⁵ This role would be formalised when the English Defence League attended the Counter-jihad Zurich 2010 conference.²¹⁶

Faced with this new rival, the BNP denounced the EDL as a 'Zionist false flag operation,' underlining the opportunism of its previous disavowal of anti-Semitism.²¹⁷ In reality, the counter-jihad movement is a coalition in which US militarists, the Christian right, European far-right nationalists and militant Zionists all play central roles, along with a variety of other sectarians.²¹⁸

The BNP's dalliance with the counter-jihad movement and the subsequent emergence of the English Defence League were among the most significant developments on the British far right in recent years. Yet neither of the CSC's reports on the far right addressed them.

This is perhaps not surprising in the light of the CSC's own contacts with the counter-jihad movement. In August 2009 Douglas Murray met with leading counter-jihad activist Robert Spencer, and Martin Mawyer of the US Christian Action Network at a pub in Crossharbour in East London.²¹⁹ The event would later spark controversy because of the attendance of three members of the English Defence League.²²⁰

Murray later said of the incident: 'Last month, a group of EDL supporters came to an interview I was due to give in east London. I told them that I thought they were BNP-linked, could have nothing to do with them and left the area.'²²¹ He continued:

For years, our political class has allowed militant Islam to thrive in Britain and ignored those who have been warning of the consequences. Now the entirely predictable street-level response has begun. In the ensuing noise, as actual fascists from all sides try to clear the ground for themselves, those of us who hate them all will need all our care and caution to work out who is who.²²²

Murray's characterisation of the EDL as a predictable response to political failure was in marked contrast to the CSC's analysis of other forms of political extremism. The episode underlined the truth of Toby Archer's suggestion that 'counter-jihad discourse is a spectrum'

in which ‘at one end are the most shrill voices, with their dystopian fantasies of mayhem and civil war enveloping Europe’ and ‘at the other end of the scale are mainstream writers and politicians whose views are not dissimilar.’²²³

Although CSC publications have ignored the far-right links of the counter-jihad movement, some CSC writers have begun to address the question elsewhere. In an October 2010 article

..... : the counter-jihad : discourse has been an : attractive vehicle for a : heterogeneous range : of political actors in : the United States and : Europe :

for *Standpoint* and the Spittoon, Alexander Meleagrou-Hitchens criticised the links between the English Defence League and US counter-jihad bloggers such as Pamela Geller.²²⁴ He went on to quote the leading US neoconservative Daniel Pipes, who complained that:

Misled by the Islamists’ insistence that there is no such thing as ‘moderate Islam,’ my allies often fail to distinguish between Islam (a faith) and Islamism (a radical utopian ideology aiming to implement Islamic law in its totality).

This amounts not just to an intellectual error but a policy dead-end.²²⁵

Pipes’ reference to ‘my allies’ is in itself a reflection of the spectrum of counter-jihad discourse described by Archer. However, it also suggests that the growth and virulence of the counter-jihad movement has reached a point where mainstream neoconservatives, such as Pipes, feel the need to distance themselves from it.

One key moment in this respect was Nick Clegg’s attack on Policy Exchange in October 2008 for issuing a private briefing that relied on evidence from the Society of Americans for National Existence – an organisation that sought to make Islam illegal. The briefing was circulated as a Microsoft Word file and Meleagrou-Hitchens was listed in the document properties as its author.²²⁶

If such episodes prompted reflection on the part of some CSC authors, it has not to date been reflected in the Centre’s own output. Indeed, in January 2011, Douglas Murray attacked the left for ‘polishing their halos’ in relation to the role of the far right in the counter-jihad movement. He told a conference in London:

The English Defence League, when they started protesting had banners saying things like Sharia law discriminates against women, Sharia law is anti-gay. Well I’m good with both of those sentiments I’m sure most people in this room are. If you’re going to have a grassroots response from non-Muslims to Islamism, that would be how you’d want it surely. But of course, we all know there are awkward things around this. There have been exposed links from the EDL with far right organisations in individual cases, and maybe, others will know more about this, wider than that. But you know, Louis Amis wrote a very interesting piece in *Standpoint* magazine a few months ago and he said, and others have said that as far as they have seen within the EDL, they have tried to kick out BNP elements. Does that mean that they are racists or they aren’t. I’m not making a definitive point, but I’m just saying these things are extremely complex, and we ought to be careful before dismissing whole swathes of people.

Thirdly, these groups Stop the Islamization of Europe and Stop the Islamization of Europe of America, I don’t know enough about them. As far as I can see Stop the Islamization of Europe only has a few members. In America,

Robert Spencer is one of the directors, I happen to know Robert Spencer, I respect him, he's a very brilliant scholar and writer.²²⁷

Murray's ignorance about the role of the far right in the counter-jihad movement is surprising given his acknowledged friendship with Spencer, one of the central figures in the counter-jihad conferences which brought together far-right activists from across Europe.²²⁸ It is surely disingenuous considering that he claims to be an expert in threats to social cohesion.

Yet the rise of the counter-jihad movement raises issues that would appear to be central to its remit. This must raise fundamental doubts about the CSC's ability to fulfil its self-proclaimed mandate. Can it really offer a serious analysis of threats to social cohesion in Britain, when one of the biggest emerging threats has its roots in a counter-jihad ideology that the CSC shares to a significant extent?

A report on the English Defence League by the CSC, in its new incarnation as part of the Henry Jackson Society might go some way towards answering that question. Yet it is difficult to see how the CSC could produce a meaningful critique of the EDL, without serious reflection on its own role in the British debate about Islam.

CONCLUSION

As the Royal United Services Institute's 2008 study of the movement noted, the counter-jihad discourse has been an attractive vehicle for a heterogeneous range of political actors in the United States and Europe. The British conservative Christian faction associated with the Centre for Social Cohesion is a distinctive illustration of this. Its own former employees have, on occasion, lamented the virulent tenor of the CSC work on Islam. James Brandon wrote in January 2009:

until recently I worked with Murray at his Centre for Social Cohesion, which I joined because, in mid-2007, few other thinktanks were willing to seriously address the problem of Islamism at all. My time there was a constant struggle to 'de-radicalise' Murray and to ensure that the centre's output targeted only Islamists – and not Muslims as a whole. This October, however, I had finally had enough of this constant battle and resigned. To his credit, Murray has privately retracted many of his more noxious comments – but he apparently lacks the courage to do so publicly.²²⁹

If Brandon's battle was futile, it was arguably because the counter-jihad rhetoric served the purposes of the centre's supporters in a way that more nuanced work would not have done. It was precisely the most spurious material that was most attractive to right-wing ecclesiastics and their media cheerleaders, in their power-play against their liberal rivals.

In April 2011, the Centre for Social Cohesion announced it was to become a part of the neoconservative Henry Jackson Society.²³⁰ It remains to be seen whether this will mark a new direction in the Centre's output. Certainly the Henry Jackson Society's proclaimed mission to 'foster a strong British and European commitment towards freedom, liberty, constitutional democracy, human rights' is hard to reconcile with the counter-jihad discourse that has been a formative influence on the work of the Centre and its director up till now.

PART 3 DONORS OF THE CENTRE FOR SOCIAL COHESION

The authors of this report wrote to the Centre for Social Cohesion requesting in the interests of transparency that it disclose its sources of funding. The CSC declined to disclose any such details, stating in its response only that it is funded by private donations and has 'neither sought nor received public funds'.²³¹ An examination of accounts filed by registered charities in the UK however has uncovered a number of the think-tank's donors.

The Centre for Social Cohesion was originally financed by a Project Fund of its parent think-tank Civitas. Civitas initially raised £428,092 for the fund, around two thirds of which was spent during 2007.²³² It received a further £131,250 in early 2008, before CSC became independent in June that year.²³³

A number of charities and foundations are known to have provided funding to Civitas between 2006 and 2008 and may therefore have provided funds for the CSC Project Fund. At least some of the money is likely to have come from the United States, where a not-for-profit Foundation called American Friends of Civitas operated between 2004 and 2007, based in Virginia. One US foundation which is known to have funded Civitas during this time is the John Templeton Foundation which donated \$8,801 in 2006 and \$1,955 in 2007.²³⁴ Another is The Rosenkranz Foundation which provided a grant of \$20,346 in March 2008 for a 'Research fellow to study threats to those who speak out against Islam across Europe'.²³⁵ The Rosenkranz Foundation has also funded the neoconservative think-tank the American Enterprise Institute and the neoconservative magazine *Commentary* which describes itself as 'the intellectual home of the neoconservative movement'.²³⁶ It also funds Policy Exchange where its founder Robert Rosenkranz is a trustee.²³⁷

Civitas shared other donors with Policy Exchange during this period. The second largest Policy Exchange donor identified, the Charles Wolfson Charitable Trust, provided a total of £45,000 to Civitas between 2006 and 2008.²³⁸ The MJC Stone Charitable Trust, which is controlled by the former chairman of the commodities trader E D & F Mann, Michael Stone, donated £29,000 to Civitas between 2006 and 2008 as well as providing £5,000 to Policy Exchange. Another connection is through the Public Interest Foundation, which provided a total of £18,000 to Civitas between April 2007 and April 2009.²³⁹ It is headed by Policy Exchange Trustee Theodore Agnew and donated £10,000 to the think-tank in 2010.²⁴⁰

Another major donor to Civitas at the time the CSC was set up was the Nigel Vinson Charitable Trust, a small grant-making trust set up in 1972 and controlled by its namesake. Now, Lord Vinson is a trustee of Civitas, a Founder Director of the Centre for Policy Studies and Life President of the Institute of Economic Affairs – both influential Thatcherite think-tanks. His trust provided a total of £62,700 to Civitas in the two years up to June 2008.²⁴¹

The Rufford Foundation (formerly the The Rufford Maurice Laing Foundation) which is focused mainly on supporting nature conservation projects, donated to Civitas £10,000 in its 2007, 2008 and 2009 tax years.²⁴² The John Armitage Charitable Trust, run by the Old Etonian hedge fund manager John Armitage, donated £24,000 in 2008/9.²⁴³ Another donor identified is The Foyle Foundation, which was formed under the will of the late Christina Foyle, manager of Foyles bookshop in London. The Foundation provided £15,000 in 2006.²⁴⁴ The G R P Charitable Trust, a small grant-making organisation with a particular focus on Jewish charities, provided £25,000 in 2007 as well as providing in excess of £10,000 to the Anglo-Israel Association and another £10,000 to the United Jewish Israel Appeal.²⁴⁵

The Anglo-Israel Association was founded in 1949 by Sir Wyndham Deedes, a Christian Zionist who had briefly served as Chief Secretary to the Administration in Palestine.²⁴⁶ His

nephew William Deedes became an editor of the *Daily Telegraph* and in 2006 wrote an opinion piece entitled, 'Muslims can never conform to our ways'.²⁴⁷

The United Jewish Israel Appeal (UJIA) is a multi-million pound UK charity linked to the Zionist Federation of Great Britain, which funds educational and welfare programmes in Northern Israel as well as spending substantial sums organising and funding trips to Israel for young British Jews, called the Israel Experience.

A number of other donors to Civitas also fund mainly Jewish charities, including a number of pro-Israel organisations. For example the Rubin Foundation Charitable Trust, headed by R. Stephen Rubin, the chairman of sporting goods corporation Pentland Group plc, gave £55,250 to Civitas between 2007 and 2009 and during the same period also gave over half a million pounds to the UJIA.²⁴⁸

The Catherine Lewis Foundation, which is headed by multi-millionaire property investor David Lewis, gave £6,500 to Civitas in 2006/7 and £25,000 in 2007/8.²⁴⁹ It also funds the Israel-Diaspora Trust an organisation founded by the late Rabbi Sidney Brichto, a passionate supporter of Israel and scourge of its critics inside and outside the UK Jewish community.²⁵⁰ Brichto was succeeded in 2009 by Alan Mendoza, head of the neoconservative think-tank the Henry Jackson Society which recently took over the CSC.²⁵¹

Smaller donations have been identified from a number of other conservative foundations, including The Stanley Kalms Foundation which provided £5,000 to Civitas in 2005/6, as well as making grants to a number of conservative and Zionist organisations like the Anglo Israel Association, the Institute of Economic Affairs and the Centre for Social Justice.²⁵² The Stanley Kalms Foundation was set up in 1989 and is run by the Thatcherite businessman Lord Kalms, owner of Currys, Dixons, The Link and PC World.

The W.T.J. Griffin Charitable Settlement, a grant-making organisation set up in 1986 and headed by UKIP's Tom Griffin, provided £3,000 to Civitas in 2005/6²⁵³ and the Samuel Storey Family Charitable Trust, a grant-making trust set up in 1974 and controlled by the multimillionaire businessman Sir Richard Storey, also provided small sums, donating a total of £2,750 between 2006 and 2008.²⁵⁴

Since it split off from Civitas in June 2008, the CSC has filed only Abbreviated Accounts which do not record its income and expenditure.²⁵⁵ Research has identified four foundations which have since directly funded the Centre for Social Cohesion: the Traditional Alternatives Foundation, the Bernard Lewis Family Charitable Trust, the Phillips & Rubens Charitable Trust and the New Heritage Foundation.

By far the most significant of these donors is the Traditional Alternatives Foundation, a grant making trust run by the aforementioned Lord Kalms and his wife. In the year up to 31 March 2009, the CSC received £195,000 from the Traditional Alternatives Foundation and was its only grant recipient. In 2010 it received £125,000, 75% of the Traditional Alternatives Foundation's total donations that year.

The Traditional Alternatives was set up by a deed dated 14 August 1990. Its charitable objects state:

Trustees shall pay or apply the income of the Trust Fund in furtherance of Education (including education in the Jewish Religion) Learning and Research for the public benefit, and in the promotion of programmes of lectures and study groups and other forms of seminars and discussion aimed at increasing knowledge of all aspects of Judaism and the Jewish communities both in England and overseas and in particular of Judaism in contemporary society including the production of materials for such activities and the dissemination of the useful results thereof.²⁵⁶

The Foundation grew out of a series of conferences held in London in 1989-90 which were funded by Stanley Kalms and led by the future Chief Rabbi Jonathan Sacks.²⁵⁷ The 'Traditional Alternatives' conferences were aimed at galvanising Britain's Jewish community, but accord-

ing to the *Guardian* journalist Madeline Bunting, Kalms became 'disappointed and frustrated by Dr Sacks's slow progress'. In 1996 she noted that Kalms had 'withdrawn from the Anglo-Jewish scene in the past five years' and had shifted 'his interest and money to a radical Orthodox think-tank in Jerusalem'.²⁵⁸

More recently Kalms has provided support to evangelical Christians within the conservative movement. He gave £300,000 to the Christian Conservative activist Tim Montgomerie to set up his Renewing One Nation group in 2000. The group, which was a forerunner to the think-tank associated with Iain Duncan Smith, the Centre for Social Justice, was officially non-denominational and ran alongside Montgomerie's Conservative Christian Fellowship from which most of its personnel were reportedly recruited.²⁵⁹

In 2003 Kalms called on Jonathan Sacks to resign as Chief Rabbi, alleging that he had failed to provide sufficient support for Israel.²⁶⁰ Kalms, a member of Conservative Friends of Israel, was also highly critical of the current Foreign Secretary William Hague during the 2006 Israeli invasion of Lebanon. After Hague described the Israeli assault as 'disproportionate', he compared Hague to an 'ignorant armchair critic' and wrote: 'A tragedy is unfolding. The outcome is life or death to the Israeli state.'²⁶¹

Kalms's Traditional Alternatives Foundation is not solely bankrolled by Kalms and has received funds from other right-wing foundations. In its 2009 and 2010 tax year, the Family Foundation Trust, formerly the Mintz Family Foundation, donated £10,000, which it described as 'a contribution to their Centre for Social Cohesion'. At the same time it also provided funding for UK Friends of the IDF and UK Friends of the Association for the Wellbeing of Israel's Soldiers. Another foundation, the G.R.P Charitable Trust, donated £25,000 to the Traditional Alternatives Foundation in the 2008 tax year. It too has funded UK Friends of the Association for the Wellbeing of Israel's Soldiers, as well as the Israel-Diaspora Trust and the Anglo-Israel Association. More recently, in 2009/10, The Maurice Hatter Foundation, which is headed by the Labour Party donor Sir Maurice Hatter, and has mainly funded liberal Jewish organisations, donated £25,000.²⁶² It previously donated £25,000 to Civitas in 2007/8 and has also provided some funding to the United Jewish Israel Appeal.²⁶³

The other major CSC donor identified is the Bernard Lewis Family Charitable Trust, which donated £25,000 in 2009 as well as donating £15,000 to Policy Exchange.²⁶⁴ Founded in 2008, this trust is controlled by the hugely wealthy Lewis family, best known as the owners of the River Island clothing stores. The family's assets are held by the Lewis Trust Group, which is controlled by an offshore company registered in the Cayman Islands. In addition to River Island, the Group owns the investment company Cavendish Asset Management and has property holdings worth over £1 billion²⁶⁵ including 13 hotels in Israel and three in the United States.²⁶⁶ According to the Electoral Commission, the Lewis Trust Group has donated a total of £52,000 to the Conservative Party whilst the head of the family, Bernard Lewis, has personally donated £40,000. Bernard Lewis chairs the Bernard Lewis Family Charitable Trust, which according to its latest accounts controls funds just short of £5 million.

An affiliated family trust, the Catherine Lewis Foundation, which as noted above has funded Civitas, also donated £25,000 to the Traditional Alternatives Foundation in 2008/9.²⁶⁷

Another CSC donor identified is the Phillips & Rubens Charitable Trust which donated £5,000 in 2008/9 having donated £10,000 to Civitas in the previous year. In the two years up to April 2009 it also donated a total of £106,750 to the United Jewish Israel Appeal.²⁶⁸

The Phillips & Rubens Charitable Trust was originally set up in 1969 by the London accountant Michael Phillips and his wife Ruth. Phillips was at that time a partner in the accountancy firm Hacker, Rubens, Phillips & Young, which he ran with the late Stuart Young.²⁶⁹ Stuart Young, who would later be appointed chairman of the BBC by Margaret Thatcher, was the brother of David (now Lord) Young who chairs the board of trustees of The Peter Cruddas Foundation, which funds Policy Exchange. Lord Young and Michael Phillips are also both trustees of the Stuart Young Foundation along with the solicitor Martin Paisner, who is also a trustee of The Wolfson Family Charitable Trust, The Peter Cruddas Foundation,

the Phillips & Rubens Charitable Trust and a number of other conservative foundations.²⁷⁰

Finally, another CSC donor, albeit a minor one, is the New Heritage Foundation. Established in December 2007, it donated £3,750 to CSC in its first financial year. The Trust's only other grant was £1,000 given to Alan Craig, the leader of the Christian Peoples Alliance party.

The New Heritage Foundation's charitable objects dedicate it to 'the promotion of religious harmony for the benefit of the public', but notably with a focus solely on the Christian and Jewish faiths. It was originally headed by the late Cyril Stein, the multi-millionaire founder of the gambling company Ladbrokes, and it is now run by his son Jonathan. Cyril Stein, who died in February 2011, was a hardline Zionist.

In 1991 when the then Chief Rabbi Lord Jakobovits described the plight of Palestinian refugees as a 'stain on humanity' Stein wrote to him saying: 'The foolishness of your latest outburst is beyond comprehension'.²⁷¹ In the 1990s he provided thousands of pounds to an Israeli charity dedicated to building on occupied Palestinian land in East Jerusalem²⁷² and in 2005 withdrew his support from the Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon in protest over the withdrawal of Israeli settlements from Gaza.²⁷³ In more recent years Stein funded an illegal Israeli settlement in the West Bank and was involved in efforts to promote Christian Zionism in the UK.²⁷⁴

Stein [founder of Ladbrokes gambling company] funded an illegal Israeli settlement in the West Bank and was involved in efforts to promote Christian Zionism in the UK

PART 4 POLICY EXCHANGE

ORIGINS

Policy Exchange was established by a group of Conservative MPs who had backed Michael Portillo in the 2001 Conservative leadership contest. Portillo's backers saw themselves as modernisers of an out of touch party which had put off potential voters through its negativity, xenophobia and social conservatism.

After Portillo withdrew from the leadership race his backers pledged to continue in their mission to modernise the Party. They were led by two former Asda (British superstore chain) executives – Francis Maude and Archie Norman – the latter of whom was the first FTSE-100 chairman to sit in the House of Commons.²⁷⁵ The group set up two affiliated think-tanks; XChange, which later became Policy Exchange, and the now defunct CChange or Conservatives for Change.

Policy Exchange was officially launched at the Tate Gallery in London on the evening of 29 April 2002.²⁷⁶ It modelled itself on the influential New Labour think-tank Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR), which along with Demos provided much of the thinking behind New Labour's neoliberal reform of public services. Following IPPR's example, Policy Exchange applied for charitable status and whilst maintaining close links with the Conservative Party remained officially independent, supported by donations from corporations, foundations and wealthy individuals.

The earliest trustees of Policy Exchange were Francis Maude and his fellow Conservative MP David Willets – both of whom are now Cabinet Ministers. They resigned in June 2002 and were replaced by a number of public figures most of whom had less overt connections to the Conservative Party. The most notable of these early trustees was Michael Gove – now also a Cabinet Minister but then a columnist at *The Times* and the author of a biography of Michael Portillo. He became Policy Exchange's first chairman. Its first director was Michael Gove's former flatmate Nicholas Boles, a Conservative member of Westminster City Council.

Gove and Boles were both part of a group of ideological young Tories later dubbed the Notting Hill Set. Other reputed members included Alice Thomson and Rachel Whetstone, both of whom became Policy Exchange trustees, and of course David Cameron and his close friend George Osborne. Like Portillo's backers, the Notting Hill Set was conscious of the need to rebrand the Conservative Party and together they were developing a new political vision inspired by the 'Compassionate Conservatism' professed by George W. Bush.²⁷⁷

'Compassionate Conservatism' was summarised by Bush's speechwriter Michael Gerson as the belief that 'the government should encourage the effective provision of social services without providing the service itself.'²⁷⁸ This matched much of the thinking in Britain's neoconservative orientated think-tanks which had become preoccupied with the question of how to cultivate a sense of social cohesion without undermining the considerable gains of the Thatcher era. The vision of public services delivered by charities and private corporations inspired the young Tories and would eventually lead to their concept of 'The Big Society'. Often dismissed by critics simply as a gloss for the Conservative Party's cuts agenda, Cameron is being quite genuine when he insists that 'The Big Society' is an authentic political vision. Not long before Policy Exchange was established, Gove and Boles edited a collection of essays exploring conservative renewal with another reputed member of the Notting Hill Set, Ed Vaizey. *A Blue Tomorrow: New Visions from Modern Conservatives* was written shortly after the Tories' defeat in the 2001 General Election. In the introduction to the collection Gove, Boles and Vaizey called for the Tories to position themselves to the right of New Labour, not by

focusing on divisive issues like immigration or the EU but by developing a critique of the state.

In *A Blue Tomorrow* Boles contributed a chapter, criticising what he called New Labour’s ‘central planning’. He called for the next Tory Prime Minister to devolve power to ‘teachers and doctors who are proud professionals’ and ‘parents who want to be school governors’ or ‘patients who want to serve on local hospital boards.’²⁷⁹ Boles argued that the Conservatives needed to ‘develop a vision of transformation in the way our government and public services are run’ which would ‘be informed by detailed research undertaken by the Party’s policy teams and outside think-tanks.’²⁸⁰

This is precisely the role that Policy Exchange has played. First under Boles’s leadership and then under his successors it has advocated the expansion of private sector delivery of public services and has committed itself to ‘completely reinventing the way government traditionally works’.²⁸¹ It has sought to portray this process as being driven by a progressive and empowering agenda – what it calls, ‘Using centre-right means to progressive ends’.²⁸²

EXPANSION

In its early years Policy Exchange was a medium sized think-tank, operating on an annual income of around half a million pounds. However, after David Cameron was elected leader of the Conservative Party in October 2005 its income increased substantially as did its staff numbers, publications and events.

Policy Exchange staff levels 2002-2009

Year	Researchers	Fundraisers	Administrators	Total
•	2	1	2	5
•	8	1	4	13
•	4	1	3	8
•	5	1	5	11
•	19	1	4	24
•	27	3	4	33
•	17	2	7	26
•	22	3	8	33
•	22	4	8	34

In 2005 Policy Exchange employed a total of eleven members of staff, only five of whom were researchers. Its total staff numbers more than doubled after David Cameron was elected Tory leader and had tripled by 2007.

Policy Exchange’s current income puts it ahead of the New Labour affiliated think-tank Demos, which saw its income decline over the same period, but still behind the Institute for Public Policy Research, which enjoyed an income of over £3 million for several years under the Labour Government.²⁸³

In its latest financial statements made up to 30 September 2010, Policy Exchange reports employing 34 members of staff – 22 researchers, eight administrators and four fund raisers. It reported an income of over £2 million, almost four times its income before Cameron became Tory leader.

POLICY FOCUS

Policy Exchange divides its research into nine categories: Arts & Culture, Crime & Justice, Economics, Education, Environment & Energy, Foreign Policy & Security, Government & Philosophy, Health and Social Policy.

As gauged by listed publications and events, its largest single research area is Economics, followed by Government & Philosophy, Education, Environment & Energy, Foreign Policy & Security.

The five remaining areas constitute a relatively small proportion of the think-tank’s activities, together making up around a quarter, although with the exception of art and culture their share of its activities has risen in recent years.

The pie chart [“above” – check later positioning] displays the total number of events and publications listed in each policy area up to 31 December 2010.

The same data is displayed in the table [“below” – check later for table positioning], which shows the growth in the total number of events and publications as well as the relative prominence of each research area year on year.

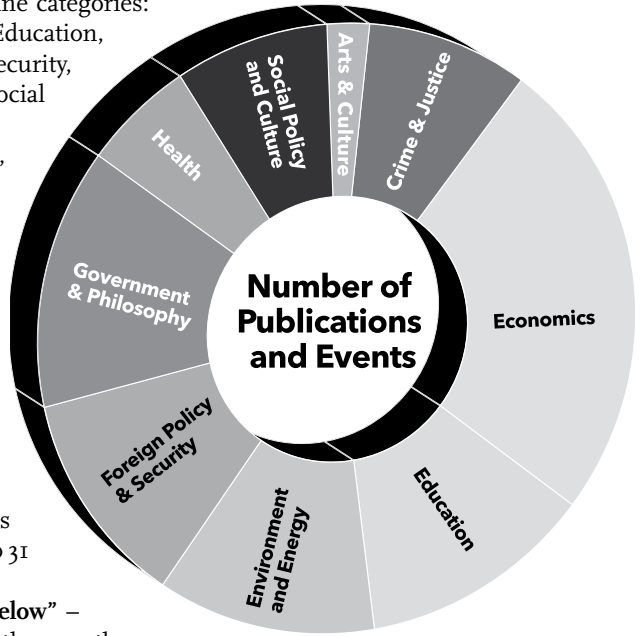
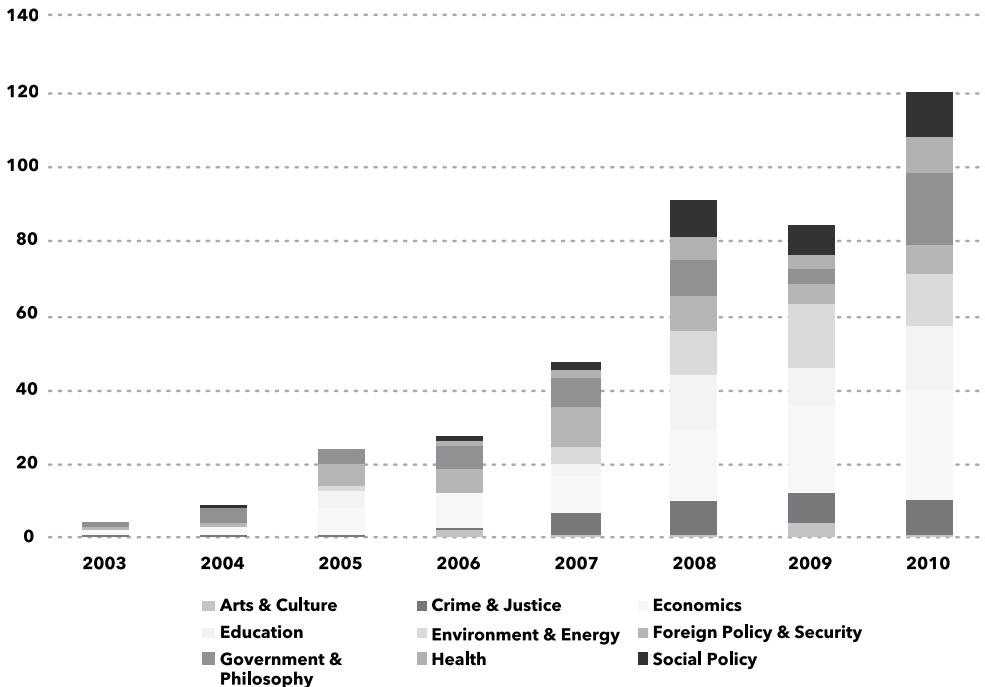


Chart showing the relative prominence of Policy Exchange’s Research Areas year on year between 2003 and 2010.²⁸⁴



ISLAM AND MULTICULTURALISM

Policy Exchange's research on Islam is the remit of its Foreign Policy & Security Unit. The Unit was originally known as the think-tank's International Programme and was headed by Anna Reid, a former journalist who had written for *The Economist*, *The Times* and the *Daily Telegraph*.²⁸⁵ Its early publications and events focused on terrorism, regime change and other foreign policy issues and showed no interest in domestic 'extremism'. This all seemed to have changed in 2006 after Dean Godson was appointed Research Director of International Affairs.

Godson comes from a family with a history of involvement in propaganda and covert action. His father Joseph Godson was involved in an attempt to expel Aneurin Bevan from the Labour Party whilst he was US Labour attaché in London.²⁸⁶ His elder brother Roy Godson is an expert on covert action and disinformation and organised 'educational visits' for British trade unionists to the US in the 1980s for 'education about Western democratic values'.²⁸⁷ Dean Godson himself worked as a Research Fellow at the Institute for European Defence and Strategic Studies in the late 1980s. In 1987 Godson authored a report which detailed how the unpopular US Strategic Defence Initiative could be promoted in the UK through 'proxy forces' which he said could form the 'spearhead of an indigenous Public Diplomacy program'.²⁸⁸

At Policy Exchange Godson developed a Terrorism and Security Programme, which was for a time separated off from the International Programme. They later merged again to form its current incarnation, the Foreign Policy & Security Unit. Under Godson's leadership the Unit continued to host events on conventional foreign policy issues but its research shifted to focus almost exclusively on British Muslims.

Despite its name, the publications of the Foreign Policy & Security Unit have not focused on foreign policy under Godson, or on security. Although it has produced publications on counter-terrorism, its major preoccupation has not been protecting citizens from violence but with a perceived need to reassert 'Western values' against 'extremism'. In other words, it is less concerned with public safety and more with counter-subversion. This is directed not only against those it considers 'extremists' but also against the liberal political climate in which such extremism is thought to thrive.

Although the focus on Islam and multiculturalism was new, the ideology underpinning it was not. The neoconservative agenda that Godson brought with him was already shared by leading figures from a number of think-tank. There were already hints of it in *A Blue Tomorrow* in which Gove, Boles and Vaizey declared: 'We believe debate has been inhibited by intellectual timidity in the face of the new Left and intellectual complacency about the advances of the Eighties. We want to see taboos broken in the search for a sturdier truth.'²⁸⁹ In 2005 all three would become signatories of the Statement of Principles of the Henry Jackson Society, a British think-tank supported by a number of leading US neoconservatives which has since taken over the Centre for Social Cohesion. In its Statement of Principles the Society declared that: 'liberal democracy should be spread across the world [and] 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'.²⁹⁰ Gove hosted the Society's launch in the House of Commons in November 2005 and was subsequently appointed a trustee.²⁹¹ Another signatory to the Society's Statement of Principles was David Willets MP, one of Policy Exchange's two original trustees.

Michael Gove had developed a personal interest in Islamism around the same time Policy Exchange shifted its research focus, suggesting he may have played a part in recruiting Godson. In July 2006, the same month in which Policy Exchange published its first report on Islamism, it hosted a book launch for Gove's neoconservative polemic *Celsius 7/7*. In the book Gove argued at length that what he called 'fundamentalist terror' was not a response to Western aggression in Iraq or other injustices in the region. Rather, he claimed, it represented a 'seamless totalitarian movement' that had been facilitated by, 'The weakness of the West

Bright was not a right-winger but like a number of journalists on the liberal-left he had displayed a certain hostility towards Islam.

in the face of terrorism,' and the 'sapping of confidence in Western values encouraged by the radical Left since 1968.'²⁹² Gove thanked a number of people for helping to shape his thinking on Islamism, who included Dean Godson, Nicholas Boles and Douglas Murray of the Centre for Social Cohesion – who's '*Neoconservatism: Why We Need It* had only recently been published.'²⁹³

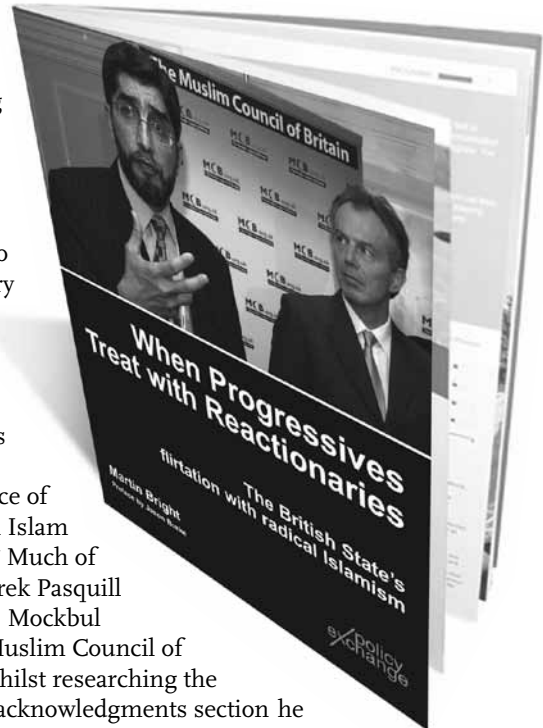
WHEN PROGRESSIVES TREAT WITH REACTIONARIES

In July 2006, a few weeks before the launch of Gove's *Celsius 7/7*, Policy Exchange published its first report on *Islam and Multiculturalism, When Progressives Treat with Reactionaries*, written by the then *New Statesman* journalist Martin Bright.

Bright was not a right-winger but like a number of journalists on the liberal-left he had displayed a certain hostility towards Islam. In December 2001 he wrote an article for the *New Statesman* entitled 'The great Koran con-trick' in which he claimed that historical

work on the origins of Islam had been effectively censored because of a 'fear of offending Muslim sensibilities'.²⁹⁴ Three of the historians referred to in the article wrote to the *New Statesman* objecting to the piece. One commented that: 'The spurious air of conspiracy and censorship conjured up in Martin Bright's article is nonsense.'²⁹⁵

When Progressives Treat with Reactionaries was published on 1 July 2006, no doubt it was timed to set the agenda in the run up to the first anniversary of the London bombings. Bright said he chose Policy Exchange, a 'slightly provocative publisher', because he 'believe[d] a coalition of the left and right needs to be built around this issue.'²⁹⁶ The pamphlet drew on a series of articles by Bright on the British Government's relations with Muslim groups. He accused the Foreign Office of 'pursuing a policy of appeasement towards radical Islam that could have grave consequences for Britain.'²⁹⁷ Much of the material came from Foreign Office official Derek Pasquill who was strongly critical of Foreign Office adviser Mockbul Ali and the Government's relationship with the Muslim Council of Britain.²⁹⁸ Bright had interviewed Michael Gove whilst researching the pamphlet and quoted him in the report.²⁹⁹ In the acknowledgments section he thanked Dean Godson 'whose driving energy and immense professionalism', he said had, 'kept the project on the rails.'³⁰⁰



THE HIJACKING OF BRITISH ISLAM

When Progressives Treat with Reactionaries was followed by a number of reports purporting to show evidence of extremism amongst British Muslims and calling on the Government to sever its links with particular individuals or groups and to expand its surveillance of Muslim communities. The most notorious of these reports was published in October 2007, titled *The Hijacking of British Islam: How Extremist Literature is Subverting Mosques in the UK*. The report

was removed from Policy Exchange's website after the BBC discovered evidence suggesting that its findings had been fabricated.

The Hijacking of British Islam was overseen by Dean Godson and written by Denis MacEoin – a author of crime thrillers and ghost stories with a background in religious studies and particular expertise on the origins of the Baha'i faith.

The account of the research methodology given in the report stated that over the course of six months four research teams had visited 95 Islamic institutions, mostly mosques, 'to determine the extent to which literature inculcating Muslim separatism and hatred of nonbelievers was accessible in those institutions'.³⁰¹

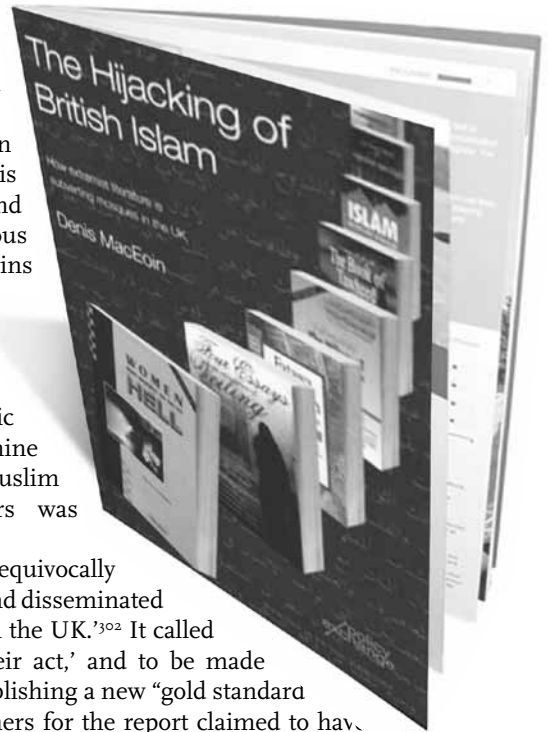
The report claimed to 'demonstrate unequivocally that separatist and hate literature, written and disseminated in the name of Islam, is widely available in the UK'.³⁰² It called for mosques to be made to 'clean up their act,' and to be made 'subject to greater regulation aimed at establishing a new "gold standard for genuinely moderate Islam."'³⁰³ Researchers for the report claimed to have collected a total of 80 offensive books and pamphlets. The majority of the report – 17 pages in total – consisted of extracts from this 'hate literature'. Though most of the material collected did not advocate violence, the report argued that by stressing separateness from non-Muslims the literature created an 'ideological space which can be exploited by those who are prepared to justify and engage in terrorism against the West'.³⁰⁴

The report was released to coincide with the visit of King Abdullah of Saudi Arabia to the UK. It made front page news in *The Times*, the *Daily Telegraph*, the *Daily Mail* and the London *Evening Standard* and was extensively covered in most mainstream media.³⁰⁵ The BBC, however, did not cover the report in any of its news output. *Newsnight* had been offered an exclusive and, according to Policy Exchange, the BBC were at first enthusiastic about the story.³⁰⁶ However, in the process of checking the veracity of the claims *Newsnight* discovered evidence suggesting that the report's findings had been fabricated.

After a mosque named in the report had denied issuing one of the receipts for the 'hate literature', the BBC examined all the receipts that had been passed to them by Policy Exchange. Its expert identified concerns about five of the receipts. According to *Newsnight's* then editor Peter Barron:

1. In all five cases the mosques involved said the receipts did not belong to them.
2. The expert analysis showed that all five had been printed on an inkjet printer - suggesting they were created on a PC.
3. The analysis found 'strong evidence' that two of the receipts were written by the same person.
4. The analysis found that one of the receipts had been written out while resting on another receipt said to be from a mosque 40 miles away.³⁰⁷

On 12 December 2007, two months after *The Hijacking of British Islam* was published, *Newsnight* ran a story on the allegedly forged receipts followed by a studio discussion between Dean Godson and Jeremy Paxman. Godson accused *Newsnight's* Peter Barron of



‘disastrous editorial misjudgement’ and ‘appalling stewardship’. Charles Moore, Michael Gove’s successor as Policy Exchange chairman, later responded with an article in the *Daily Telegraph* criticising what he called Peter Barron’s ‘flawed methodology’ and claiming that the BBC had treated Policy Exchange staff ‘like criminals’. ‘I find it repellent,’ Moore wrote, ‘that the might of the BBC is deployed to threaten and bully a charity in this way.’³⁰⁸ He did not comment on the authenticity of the receipts.

Policy Exchange subsequently threatened to sue the BBC over the *Newsnight* story but the legal action never materialised. Instead Policy Exchange itself found itself defending a libel action. In September 2008 the North London Central Mosque (*aka* Finsbury Park Mosque) issued a claim in the High Court over the report’s allegations. The case came to court in December 2009 but was struck out on the basis that the Trust which filed the claim was not a legal person. By that time Policy Exchange had removed the report from its website, where the following statement appeared:

[*Living Apart Together* by Policy Exchange] seeks to downplay experiences of Islamophobia and discrimination faced by Muslims in Britain

The Hijacking of British Islam: Al-Manaar Muslim Cultural Heritage Centre

In this report we state that Al-Manaar Muslim Cultural Heritage Centre is one of the Centres where extremist literature was found. Policy Exchange accepts the Centre’s assurances that none of the literature cited in the Report has ever been sold or distributed at the Centre with the knowledge or consent of the Centre’s trustees or staff, who condemn the extremist and intolerant views set out in such literature. We are happy to set the record straight.³⁰⁹

LIVING APART TOGETHER

Neither *When Progressives Treat with Reactionaries* nor *The Hijacking of British Islam* dealt much with the issue of multiculturalism – the attack on which has been an important feature of British neoconservatism. This was however the main focus of Policy Exchange’s second report on British Muslims, *Living Apart Together*, which was published several months before *The Hijacking of British Islam*.

Living Apart Together was co-authored by Munira Mirza and two Policy Exchange research associates, Abi Senthilkumaran and Zein Ja’far. Munira Mirza, a founding member of the libertarian Manifesto Club (associated with the so-called ‘Living Marxism network’ of former members of the ultra-left Revolutionary Communist Party),³¹⁰ went on to become an Advisor for Arts and Culture to the Conservative London Mayor Boris Johnson. In *Living Apart Together* she and her co-authors argue that, ‘The rise of Islamism is not only a security problem, but also a cultural problem.’³¹¹ The problem identified by the authors is evidence suggesting a rise in religiosity amongst younger British Muslims and perhaps more significantly a rise in ‘anti-Western ideas’. The latter of which, the authors note, are ‘not exclusive to Muslims and can also be found in wider society.’³¹²

The critical views evidenced in the report are blamed primarily on the multicultural policies pursued in the aftermath of the urban riots of 1981, but also on the legacy of the New Left of the 1960s which developed an intellectual critique of what it saw as the hierarchical, sexist, imperialist and exploitative aspects of British society. The authors of *Living Apart Together* observe that according to the survey data presented in the report a significant number of non-Muslims share concerns about materialism, consumerism, the commodification of women, as well as an antipathy towards America and even capitalism in general. ‘There are numerous

books, articles, television and film documentaries,' the report notes, 'which rage against the arrogance of America and the capitalist West more generally, belying the suggestion that Muslim hatred of the West is unique.'³¹³

Multiculturalism is attacked in the report first of all on the relatively progressive basis that through its stress on cultural difference it fails to appreciate the diversity of British Muslims. However, it is also criticised for supposedly encouraging (allegedly unwarranted) feelings of alienation and victimhood. The report includes a whole chapter on 'victimhood' that seeks to downplay experiences of Islamophobia and discrimination faced by Muslims in Britain. Both are described as 'myths' and are attributed to a 'victim mentality' which is 'given social credence by institutions, politicians, the media and lobby groups.'³¹⁴ The authors of *Living Apart Together* are equally dismissive of common concerns over unethical foreign policy and the sexualisation of women, which are attributed to a 'cultural problem of self-loathing and confusion in the West'.³¹⁵ Thus concerns about British society are not treated as responses to actual social problems but manifestations of a lack of pride in Western or British culture or values.³¹⁶

Living Apart Together mourns the collapse of the hierarchical nature of pre-sixties British society and – ironically given Policy Exchange's Thatcherite orientation – even laments 'the decline of working class politics'.³¹⁷ Its prescriptions for rebuilding social solidarity in the UK are decidedly reactionary. It yearns for 'a renewed sense of collectivity' and – recalling the 2005 London bombings – a recovery of 'solidarity that currently only appears at moments of grave crisis'.³¹⁸ This desire for national unity achieved through war, crisis and the existence of a common enemy is a common theme in right-wing ideology (Glen Beck's 9/12 Project is one recent example). The report calls for the 'bringing to an end the institutional attacks on Britain and its culture,' and in particular criticises the teaching of history in schools which it is claimed is 'taught in a one-sided, moralised way, focusing attention on the racism and violence of the Empire, and the oppression of ethnic minority groups and women, but with little sense of the positive contributions of the industrial revolution and the Empire'.³¹⁹ This call for a nationalist rather than a scholarly education system has a long been a preoccupation of the reactionary right and recalls Michael Portillo's speech at the 1995 Tory conference:

Let us teach our children the history of this remarkable country. I don't mean the wishy-washy sociological flim-flam that passes for history in many of our schools today. I don't mean the politically correct, debunking anti-patriotic nonsense of modern text-books. I mean the real history of heroes and bravery, of good versus evil, of freedom against tyranny.³²⁰

CHOOSING OUR FRIENDS WISELY

The authors of *Living Apart Together* argued that focusing too much on public safety and security might lead to the abandonment of important values or political principles. It was suggested that: 'we should guard against the logic that any policy is good as long as it will reduce the terrorist threat.' It concludes that: 'a society that prioritises its safety above all else will soon have no values left to lose.' This is an argument commonly made by liberals seeking to protect civil and political rights; but this was not the concern of the authors of *Living Apart Together*. Rather the authors' concern was that engaging with particular Muslim groups might compromise British or Western values – neither of which is ever defined in the report.

This notion that through focusing on security and counterterrorism government policy has failed to deal with a political or cultural threat can also be found in *When Progressives Treat with Reactionaries*. However, it has been most explicitly developed by Policy Exchange in its 2009 pamphlet *Choosing Our Friends Wisely: Criteria for Engagement with Muslim Groups*.

The authors of this report criticised the Labour Government for, 'stress[ing] law enforcement and strict security concerns over and above everything else.'³²¹ They argued that government policy should expand its focus from 'preventing violent extremism' to countering what it calls

‘non-violent radicals,’ who it is claimed are ‘indoctrinating young people with an ideology of hostility to western values.’³²²

Choosing Our Friends Wisely was co-authored by Shiraz Maher and Martyn Frampton. Frampton was then a Research Fellow at Peterhouse, Cambridge, the home of the neoconservative Henry Jackson Society which Frampton has also written for and which has since taken over the CSC. Maher, then a Senior Fellow at Policy Exchange, claims to be a former member of Hizb ut-Tahrir and says he moved away from Islamism whilst studying history at Cambridge.³²³ His political journey appears to have been substantial. At the peak of Israel’s bombing of Gaza in 2009, he wrote an article for the *Daily Telegraph*, ‘Britain’s Muslims should condemn Hamas, not Israel’.³²⁴

In *Choosing Our Friends Wisely* Maher and Frampton echo with more bravado the themes developed in *Living Apart Together* and their prescriptions for ‘tackling extremism and defending our shared values’ are far more bold. They explicitly call for the British state to engage in large-scale political counter-subversion modelled on the covert operations that targeted trade unionists, peace activists and socialists in Britain during the Cold War. The report notes with approval the campaign against the left-wing of the Labour Party, particularly the expulsion of Militant in the 1980s.³²⁵ The authors criticise MI5 for ‘not draw[ing] as much as it might on British experiences during the Cold War’ and, noting its claim that it does ‘not currently investigate subversion’, recall that the 1989 Security Service Act explicitly gives MI5 the power to do so.³²⁶

FAITH SCHOOLS WE CAN BELIEVE IN

In the Foreign Policy & Security Unit’s most recent publication, Policy Exchange calls for the introduction of counter-subversion operations targeting British schools. Published in November 2010, the full title of the report is *Faith Schools We Can Believe In: Ensuring that Tolerant and Democratic Values are Upheld in Every Part of Britain’s Education System*. As the title suggests the report argues that faith schools, and the Coalition Government’s new Free Schools in particular, could pose a threat to ‘democratic values’. It is suggested that what the authors call ‘extremist transnational organisations’³²⁷ might seek to covertly establish or influence schools in the UK and that a more rigorous inspection regime is required to deal with the ‘very real threats’ posed by ‘non-violent extremism’.³²⁸ Echoing *Choosing our Friends Wisely*, *Faith Schools We Can Believe In* laments the fact the MI5 claim to no longer be involved in counter-subversion, commenting that: ‘If MI5 — which may be assumed to have far greater expertise in these matters — is reluctant to deal with these challenges, then what hope for the rest of the public sector?’³²⁹

The authors of the report are careful to suggest that its concerns over ‘extremism’ apply to faith schools of all religions, raising for example the possibility of Creationism being taught in science lessons in Christian schools. The overwhelming focus of the report however is on British Muslims. There are 138 references to Muslims and Islam, or related terms; 33 references to Christians or Christianity; 20 references to Jews or Judaism; five references to Hindus or Hinduism; and four references to Sikhs or Sikhism.³³⁰ The report notes on page seven that:

Potential problems can exist in all types of faith schools; but particular concerns have arisen in connection with certain Islamist-run institutions. The worries include affiliations of those involved in a school with extremist transnational organisations; the promotion of ideas that are antithetical to the basic values of tolerance; and the denial of the primacy of secular democracy as the means of making law.³³¹

In its section on the education policy of the Muslim Council of Britain (MCB) the report analyses a 2007 document it produced to provide guidance to state schools on how they can

accommodate Muslim pupils.³³² The authors complain that the MCB's document 'encourages Muslim parents to make maximal use of their legal rights' and 'gives the impression that the onus is on schools to adapt to Muslims, rather than the other way round.'³³³

Amongst the report's many recommendations on the monitoring of faith schools are that the Joint Terrorism Analysis Centre (part of MI5) should 'conduct thematic and case study inspections of radicalisation in schools and, where appropriate, the parent charities of relevant educational establishments.'³³⁴ The report also calls for 'a commitment to core British values of democracy, tolerance and patriotism should be part of the ethos of every school and incorporated into new contracts for academies and Free School providers,' and that, 'Narrative British history should be a compulsory part of the school curriculum.'³³⁵

In addressing the question of how 'extremism' might be defined by authorities monitoring schools, the authors note that, 'non-violent extremism' is 'extremely difficult to pin down and eliminate in a society which is committed to free speech.'³³⁶ They then suggest that the Due Diligence Unit they propose creating should consider if the sponsors, proposers or any associated staff:

- a) support or condone the deliberate targeting for attack of civilians (as defined by the Geneva Conventions) anywhere in the world.
- b) call for, or condone, attacks on British service personnel and their allies anywhere in the world or against any forces acting under a UN mandate.
- c) call for or condone the destruction of UN member states.
- d) give a platform to deniers of, or apologists for, crimes against humanity, including genocide.
- e) support or condone terrorism anywhere in the world.
- f) discriminate or advocate discrimination on the basis of religion, religious sect, race, sexual orientation or gender in any aspect of public life or public policy.
- g) oppose armed forces' recruitment.

What is notable about these criteria is that none of them relate to 'democratic values' that are so regularly invoked by Policy Exchange and only one concerns issues of political equality. Most instead relate to war and political violence and are no doubt intended to target critics of the wars and occupations of the US, Britain and Israel.

PART 5 DONORS OF THE POLICY EXCHANGE

The authors of this report wrote to Policy Exchange requesting in the interests of transparency that it disclose the sources of funding for the Foreign Policy & Security Unit. Policy Exchange did not respond. Research has however uncovered a number of the think-tank's donors.

Policy Exchange's current director Neil O'Brien has stated that two-thirds of its funding comes from individuals, a fifth from corporations and the rest from trusts and foundations.³³⁷ Although according to O'Brien money from individuals makes up the vast majority of Policy Exchange's income, we know the identity of very few of these donors.

INDIVIDUAL AND PUBLIC SECTOR DONORS

Policy Exchange's earliest funds are known to have come from the financial backers of Michael Portillo in the 2001 Conservative leadership contest.³³⁸ Major donors to Portillo's campaign included the veteran Tory spin-doctor Tim Bell; Sir Stanley Kalms (now Lord Kalms), a former chairman of the Dixons Group and the main donor behind the Centre for Social Cohesion; and Lord Harris, the chairman of Carpetright plc.³³⁹ Lord Harris, who later donated £90,000 to David Cameron,³⁴⁰ has sponsored city academies, championed by Policy Exchange, as has another of Portillo's other financial backers Sir Geoffrey Leigh, the founder of the Margaret Thatcher Foundation.³⁴¹

Another early donor was the millionaire hedge fund manager Colin Barrow whose Westminster townhouse was the HQ for Portillo's leadership campaign. He is known to have funded both Policy Exchange and Localis³⁴² – a think-tank with which it is closely linked. A leading figure in the Conservative City Circle, a group set up to strengthen support for the Tories in London's financial centre, Barrow was appointed a director of Policy Exchange in July 2003. He also served as a director of Conservatives for Change, which provided the initial funding for Policy Exchange through a £75,000 loan.³⁴³

Barrow is currently the leader of Westminster City Council, which has itself funded Policy Exchange research. The Council contributed £2,500 of public money to Policy Exchange for its report *Hitting the Bottle* in March 2009 and previously gave £1,175 to Policy Exchange in December 2003.³⁴⁴

Another public body that has donated to Policy Exchange is the City of London Corporation, the municipal government for London's financial sector. Through its private and charitable funds the City of London Corporation has funded five different Policy Exchange research projects at a total cost of £84,200. It has also given £3,000 of public money to Policy Exchange for organising fringe events at Conservative Party conferences.³⁴⁵

Probably the best known of Policy Exchange's individual backers is the controversial Conservative peer Lord Ashcroft, who has also donated substantial sums to the Conservative Party. Ashcroft was approached by Francis Maude for financial support in early 2003. After meeting Michael Gove for lunch in the House of Lords, Ashcroft agreed and was subsequently invited to join the think-tank's board – an offer he declined.³⁴⁶

It would appear from this incident that individuals who donate large sums are typically invited to join the board of trustees. This suggests that the various wealthy businessmen and Conservative Party donors on Policy Exchange's board are also donors to the think-tank. These include Theodore Agnew of the insurance company Jubilee Managing Agency, who is known to have supported reports on schools and philanthropy; the banker Richard Briance; the multi-millionaire hedge fund owner George Robinson; the Chartered Accountant Edward Sells; and Simon Brocklebank-Fowler whose corporate communications firm Cubitt

Consulting donated £18,118 to the Conservative Party in 2007 and another £5,004 in 2008.³⁴⁷ Another Conservative Party donor on Policy Exchange's board is Simon Wolfson, the chief executive of the clothing retailer Next and the son of the company's former chairman David Wolfson who served as Thatcher's Chief of Staff.³⁴⁸ Their family's trust, The Charles Wolfson Charitable Trust, has donated over £200,000 to Policy Exchange (detailed further below).

Policy Exchange's board also includes Robert Rosenkranz, an American multi-millionaire financier whose Rosenkranz Foundation has given around £27,000 to Policy Exchange in recent years.³⁴⁹ The Rosenkranz Foundation has also funded the neoconservative think-tank the American Enterprise Institute and the monthly magazine *Commentary*³⁵⁰ which describes itself as 'the intellectual home of the neoconservative movement'.³⁵¹

The identity of a number of other individual donors to Policy Exchange is known because their support is acknowledged in Policy Exchange publications. These include the London art dealer Philip Mould; Phil Hulme, the co-founder of the Hadley Trust; and John Nash, the chairman of the private healthcare company Care UK, who has financed reports on the NHS, schools and knife and gun crime. Other individuals who have financed reports on the NHS include Hugh Osmond, the founder of Pizza Express and Punch Taverns; and Henry Pitman, an old Etonian and founder of Tribal Group plc.³⁵²

CORPORATE DONORS

Henry Pitman's Tribal Group makes its money by providing outsourced public services and giving what it calls 'advice and change management support' to the public sector.³⁵³ In its 2010 accounts Tribal reported that 90% of its £202 million revenue was generated from the UK public sector.³⁵⁴ The company commented that: 'We see major opportunities to grow the business as the NHS accelerates the pace of reform to meet rising demand in a sustained period of funding constraints.' In February 2011 it announced that it had signed an agreement to 'to assist the UK Government further in the delivery of efficiency savings'.³⁵⁵

Another private company which stands to make substantial sums from the public sector reforms long advocated by Policy Exchange is Care UK, whose chairman John Nash was personally thanked in the same report as Tribal Group's Henry Pitman.³⁵⁶ Like Tribal Group, John Nash's Care UK makes the bulk of its money through outsourced public services. It is optimistic about the future of UK public policy and noted in its 2009 accounts that 'public sector commissioners are increasingly turning to the independent sector to drive efficiency and reform'.³⁵⁷ The company welcomed the Conservative Party's policy statements on health, which it said 'have substantially strengthened their commitment to more open market reform to allow new providers of NHS services'.³⁵⁸ John Nash is also a Tory donor and in November 2009 donated £21,000 to Andrew Lansley, who is now the Secretary of State for Health.³⁵⁹

Another questionable source of funds for Policy Exchange's health research is Merck, one of the world's largest pharmaceutical companies which in May 2009 gave £17,500 to Policy Exchange to support research into drugs pricing.³⁶⁰

Such potential conflicts of interest are not limited to health. In a report on police reform published in January 2008, Policy Exchange thanked Reliance Security Management 'for their generous support'. There is no record of a UK company called Reliance Security Management, but the authors were presumably referring to the security company Reliance plc whose contract with Sussex police force is noted with approval in the report.³⁶¹ Reliance has been awarded a number of Private Finance Initiative projects by UK police authorities and has even been contracted out 'specialist investigative work' by some forces.³⁶²

Policy Exchange has acknowledged that receiving funds from corporations with a material interest in its research is problematic. In 2006 its then director Nick Boles told *PR Week*: 'We're nervous of the perception that corporates are sponsoring research because that undermines our credibility.'³⁶³ Nevertheless, Policy Exchange makes it quite clear that corporations are able to influence its output. Whilst it states that corporations cannot commission research, it says they can 'contribute ideas and give advice to Policy Exchange's research programme[s]'.³⁶⁴

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Corporations are encouraged to join the think-tank's 'Business Forum', launched in 2003 as part of its 'Corporate Engagement' policy.³⁶⁵ In early 2006 *PR Week* reported that companies were paying between £5,000 and £10,000 to join the forum and that its members included BP, SAB Miller, BSKyB and Bupa³⁶⁶ – all of whom have material interests in Policy Exchange's research. In its 2008 accounts, Policy Exchange notes that many of the corporations which joined its Business Forum 'went on to work directly with our research teams by giving financial and/or research support.'³⁶⁷

It would also appear that events held at Policy Exchange can effectively serve as lobbying opportunities for corporations. In

the *Dispatches* programme 'Politicians for Hire', the former Health Secretary Patricia Hewitt recommended Policy Exchange as a think-tank which could be used by businesses seeking to influence government policy. *Dispatches* set up a fictional US public affairs company and contacted Hewitt and several other senior politicians asking them if they were interested in a position on the advisory board in their London office. Hewitt attended a bogus interview and told the undercover reporters:

Now the think-tank and the seminar route I think is a very good one and will remain a good one and so identifying the right think-tank. Policy Exchange is a good one at the moment, Demos is another good one. And saying ok, does that think-tank already have a relationship with Minister X? Can we invite Minister X to give a seminar on this subject? Your client would then sponsor the seminar and you do it via the think-tank. And that's very useful, because what you get for your sponsorship is basically you sit next to the Minister.³⁶⁸

CHARITABLE FOUNDATIONS

NAME OF TRUST OR FOUNDATION	VALUE OF DONATIONS IDENTIFIED (£)
Peter Cruddas Foundation	440,000
The Charles Wolfson Charitable Trust	218,666
Esmée Fairbairn Foundation	81,359
Garfield Weston Foundation	50,000
The Michael Bishop Foundation	50,000
Lewis Family Charitable Trust	40,000
Sloane Robinson Foundation	40,000
The Stewart Newton Charitable Trust	40,000
Bernard Lewis Family Trust	15,000
The Earl Fitzwilliam Charitable Trust	15,000
Redlynch Charitable Trust	10,000
The Bernard Sunley Charitable Foundation	10,000
The Englefield Charitable Trust	10,000
The Hazelhurst Trust	10,000
Tresillian Trust	10,000
The Sutton Trust	8,000
Robert and Felicity Waley-Cohen Charitable Trust	5,000
The MJC Stone Charitable Trust	5,000
The Rothermere Foundation	5,000
David and Jennifer Sieff Charitable Trust	4,000
The Orr MacKintosh Foundation	2,500
Anthony Travis Charitable Trust	2,000
The Lempriere Pringle Charitable Trust	1,500
Woburn 1986 Charitable Trust	1,000
Barbara and Stanley Fink Foundation	unknown
Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation	unknown
Joseph Rowntree Foundation	unknown
The Golden Bottle Trust	unknown
The Hadley Trust	unknown
The Hintze Family Charitable Foundation	unknown

According to Neil O'Brien, contributions from corporations make up roughly a fifth of Policy Exchange's income, whilst donations from trust and foundations comprise less than a sixth of its total income.³⁶⁹ Though the less significant group of donors, trust and foundations are also the most transparent group, since in the UK and US large donations made by trust and foundations are disclosed in their financial statements.

An investigation of accounts filed with the UK Charity Commission and the US Internal Revenue Service has identified the source of over £1 million of funding, which judging by Neil O'Brien's estimates should constitute roughly 90% of Policy Exchange's funds from trust and foundations over the last five years.³⁷⁰ By far the largest of these donors, together making up well over half of the total accounted for, are the Peter Cruddas Foundation and The Charles Wolfson Charitable Trust.

Peter Cruddas, a multi-millionaire businessman, was recently appointed co-treasurer of the Conservative Party. He founded the Peter Cruddas Foundation in 2006. A former city trader who made his fortune as the founder of the internet securities dealer CMC, his personal fortune has been estimated at £810 million.³⁷¹ According to the Electoral Commission he donated a total of £300,000 to the Conservative Party in the run up to the 2010 General Election and has since donated a further £117,600 in addition to another £8,000 donated in his wife's name.³⁷²

Cruddas serves as a trustee of his charitable foundation, along with Martin Paisner of the corporate law firm Berwin Leighton Paisner and the Foundation's chairman Lord Young of Graffham. The latter served as Secretary of State for Employment and Trade and Industry in the Thatcher Government.

The Peter Cruddas Foundation donated £140,000 to Policy Exchange in 2007/8 and £300,000 in 2008/9. These funds have supported research on public service delivery and welfare, 'broken Britain', and child poverty.³⁷³ The Foundation is credited in Policy Exchange reports on health, education and welfare reform and child poverty.

Policy Exchange's second largest donor amongst the trusts and foundations identified is The Charles Wolfson Charitable Trust – a charity run by Lord Wolfson of Sunningdale who served as Margaret Thatcher's chief of staff. His father Charles Wolfson, a millionaire businessman, set up the Trust in 1960 to provide grants 'with particular, but not exclusive, regard to the needs of the Jewish community'.³⁷⁴ Another trustee is Simon Wolfson, who as noted above also serves as a trustee of Policy Exchange.

The Charles Wolfson Charitable Trust provided £75,000 to Policy Exchange in 2007³⁷⁵ and £143,666 in 2008.³⁷⁶ The Trust's donations are not declared in its 2009 or 2010 accounts but it is possible that it has since provided further donations. The Trust has funded other right-wing think-tanks including Civitas, the Social Affairs Unit, the Institute of Economic Affairs and the Adam Smith Research Trust³⁷⁷ and has also funded pro-Israel groups like the Israel-Diaspora Trust and the Anglo-Israel Association.³⁷⁸

As noted above, the Israel-Diaspora Trust was founded by the late Rabbi Sidney Brichto, a passionate supporter of Israel and scourge of its critics inside and outside the UK Jewish community.³⁷⁹ He was succeeded in 2009 by Alan Mendoza, head of the neoconservative think-tank the Henry Jackson Society which recently took over the Centre for Social Cohesion.³⁸⁰ The Anglo-Israel Association was founded in 1949 by Sir Wyndham Deedes, a Christian Zionist who had briefly served as Chief Secretary to the Administration in Palestine.³⁸¹ His nephew William Deedes became an editor of the *Daily Telegraph* and in 2006 wrote an opinion piece entitled, 'Muslims can never conform to our ways'.³⁸²

In addition to the sums donated by The Peter Cruddas Foundation and The Charles Wolfson Charitable Trust, a further £415,359 was identified which was donated by 22 UK foundations and trusts. Another six foundations and trusts have been identified as donors because they were credited in Policy Exchange reports, although the value of their donations is not known.

Like the Peter Cruddas Foundation and The Charles Wolfson Charitable Trust, a number of these foundations are controlled by people with close connections to the Conservative

Party. For example the Englefield Charitable Trust which donated £5,000 to Policy Exchange in 2008 and in 2009³⁸³ is the family trust of the Benyon family. Its trustees include Sir William Richard Benyon, a former Conservative MP and his son Richard Benyon, the current Conservative MP for Newbury and a Junior Minister in the Department for Environment, Food, and Rural Affairs.

The millionaire landowners James and Charlotte Townshend, who control the Redlynch Charitable Trust, have donated £28,000 to their local Conservative Association in Dorset and Michael J Stone, who founded The MJC Stone Charitable Trust, has donated over £350,000 to the Conservative Party.³⁸⁴

Sir Michael Bishop, the founder and chairman of The Michael Bishop Foundation, which donated £50,000 to Policy Exchange over three years, has donated over £700,000 to the Conservative Party since October 2009. Similarly the Stewart Newton Charitable Trust, which has donated £40,000 to Policy Exchange, is headed by the financier Stewart W Newton who has made donations to the Conservative Party totalling over £100,000.

As noted above, one of the trustees of Policy Exchange, George Robinson, is a major donor to the Conservative Party. He is also a trustee of the Sloane Robinson Foundation and the Tresillian Trust, which have donated £40,000 and £10,000 to Policy Exchange respectively.³⁸⁵

The Garfield Weston Foundation, which gave £50,000 to Policy Exchange in 2007/8,³⁸⁶ has been criticised by the Charity Commission for its links to the Conservative Party in a Regulatory Case Report published in March 2010. A subsidiary of the charity called Wittington Investments Ltd donated £100,000 to Conservative Central Office in November 2004. In a statement from its PR company, the Brunswick Group, The Garfield Weston Foundation admitted that between 1993 and 2007 Wittington Investments had made donations totalling around £1.3 million 'to think-tanks and political parties'.³⁸⁷ The Foundation's own accounts record that in addition to its Policy Exchange donations, it gave £100,000 to the Institute of Economic Affairs between 2004 and 2006.³⁸⁸

A number of the donor trust and foundations appear to be run or influenced by right-wing Christians. The Garfield Weston Foundation, The MJC Stone Charitable Trust, The Earl Fitzwilliam Charitable Trust and the Englefield Charitable Trust all support churches and/or faith organisations and another donor, The Hintze Family Charitable Foundation, was set up to 'advance the work of Christian Churches in England and Wales'. As noted above, one of Policy Exchange's major donors, The Charles Wolfson Charitable Trust, funds a host of Jewish organisations. Although a few, like the Anglo-Israel Association, lobby on behalf of Israel, the great majority are non-political health and welfare organisations.

A more explicitly Zionist foundation that backs Policy Exchange is the Lewis Family Charitable Trust which gave £10,000 to Policy Exchange in 2007/8, £20,000 in 2008/9 and another £10,000 in 2009/10.³⁸⁹ It has also funded the Anglo-Israel Association, the UK Friends of Association for the Wellbeing of Israel's Soldiers, Palestinian Media Watch, The United Jewish Israel Appeal and the Zionist Federation. As noted above, the Lewis Family Charitable Trust is controlled by the hugely wealthy Lewis family, best known as the owners of the River Island clothing stores. The family's assets are held by The Lewis Trust Group, which is controlled by an offshore company registered in the Cayman Islands. In addition to River Island, the Group owns the investment management company Cavendish Asset Management and has property holdings worth over £1 billion³⁹⁰ including 13 hotels in Israel and three in the United States.³⁹¹ According to the Electoral Commission the Lewis Trust Group has donated a total of £52,000 to the Conservative Party whilst the head of the family, Bernard Lewis, has personally donated £40,000.³⁹² The Trust recently donated £3,796,903 to another family trust, the Bernard Lewis Family Charitable Trust which in turn gave £15,000 to Policy Exchange in 2009, as well £50,000 to The United Jewish Israel Appeal and £25,000 to the Centre for Social Cohesion.³⁹³

Conclusion

THIS REPORT has described how two of Britain's most influential right-wing think-tanks have used the fear of terrorism and of Islam to push an authoritarian political agenda. Their efforts should be understood as a response to a resurgence in progressive political movements which have challenged the militarism of the United States, Britain and Israel, as well as the model of globalisation championed by these states. Funded by wealthy businessmen and financiers, and conservative and pro-Israel trusts and foundations, these British neoconservatives are inspired by the operations against peace activists and trade unionists during the Cold War and explicitly seek to revive this tradition of political counter-subversion. Their modern targets are politically engaged Muslims, liberals and leftists, as well as liberal institutions such as schools, universities and public libraries.

The 2010 General Election brought the advocates of this approach to the very centre of political power. Schools and universities are now under the control of Michael Gove and David Willets respectively, whilst libraries are under the control of Ed Vaizey. All three are influential members of the British neoconservative movement. David Cameron, though initially reluctant to publicly associate himself too closely with the neoconservatives, has now announced a war on multiculturalism and advocated a 'muscular liberalism' in defence of 'Western values'. His controversial Munich speech symbolised his support of the neoconservative faction in his Government and was a rebuff to the liberal members, most notably Baroness Warsi, who had only recently spoken out against Islamophobia.³⁹⁴ The Coalition Government's Prevent Strategy, published in June 2011, was clearly influenced by the kind of neoconservative ideas pushed by the Centre for Social Cohesion and Policy Exchange. It stated that: 'preventing terrorism will mean challenging extremist (and non-violent) ideas that are also part of a terrorist ideology,'³⁹⁵ and later lamented that, 'work to date has not recognised clearly enough the way in which some terrorist ideologies draw on and make use of extremist ideas which are espoused by apparently non-violent organisations very often operating within the law.'³⁹⁶

The policies advocated by the Centre for Social Cohesion and Policy Exchange, and apparently endorsed by the Coalition Government, will have grave consequences for British politics if they are not challenged. Such an approach will inevitably mean the curtailment of civil liberties and the narrowing of political debate. For British Muslims the consequences may be even more serious. A community already facing routine vilification, racial intimidation and violence would potentially face even greater monitoring, intimidation and harassment by the state. Furthermore the Islamophobic undercurrent of such policies simultaneously risks further fuelling the racist violence against Muslims perpetrated by groups like the British National Party and the English Defence League – ironically the very extremism that organisations like the Centre for Social Cohesion and Policy Exchange claim to oppose.

the Islamophobic undercurrent of such policies simultaneously risks further fuelling the racist violence against Muslims

Acknowledgements

We hope that this report might help to illuminate the somewhat opaque funding arrangements of the Centre for Social Cohesion and Policy Exchange. As part of a process of encouraging these and other think-tanks to own-up to their funding sources we gratefully acknowledge that this report has been produced with the aid of a grant of £5,000 from The Cordoba Foundation. Our thanks to its CEO Anas Altikriti for the support.

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We would also like to mention Political Research Associates in the US and their excellent website Rightweb, for their help. We should mention Mike Flynn in particular as well as Jim Lobe of Interpress and Eli Clifton and Ali Gharib of Lobelog (and now at the Center for American Progress).

The authors would also like to thank colleagues at Spinwatch including especially William Dinan, Andy Rowell and Tamasin Cave and those courageous individuals and organisations that have stood against the attacks on Muslims, Islam and 'Islamism'. In particular we should mention Bob Pitt of Islamophobia Watch, Arun Kundnani of the Institute for Race Relations, Dr Robert Lambert and Dr Jonathan Githens-Mazer of the European Muslim Research Centre, the Campaign Against Criminalising Communities, Scotland Against Criminalising Communities and many others.

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