

## Education & countering violent extremism: western logics from South to North

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# **Education & Countering Violent Extremism (CVE): Western Logics from South to North?**

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**Mario Novelli**

**Professor in the Political Economy of Education**

**University of Sussex, UK**

**[m.novelli@sussex.ac.uk](mailto:m.novelli@sussex.ac.uk)**

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## **Abstract**

This paper explores the way education and conflict have become entangled together during the post-9/11 'war on terror' response to 'radical Islam' at home and abroad. The paper charts the complex ways that education has been deployed to serve Western military and security objectives in multiple locations in the global south and how these strategies have now returned to the 'West' in the form of CVE interventions. Drawing on Foucault's concept of the 'boomerang effect' I will explore whether and how education techniques and strategies deployed abroad in pursuit of imperial interests, return to the West and are deployed to monitor, control and suppress marginalized communities in a form of 'internal colonialism'. Finally, the paper brings the two sections together to explore commonalities and divergences in the findings.

**Keywords:** education, counter-terrorism, countering violent extremism, radicalization, Prevent

## Introduction

The role of education in ‘countering violent extremism’ (CVE), has emerged as an important area of research and practice both in education and in international development, two fields of inquiry that I work across. I have however, watched from afar, for several years now, as this area has emerged on the national and international stage. Partly, this was due to other research commitments, but I have also kept a distance out of concern that the area was highly ideological, security led and unlikely to be a space where ‘open’ reflection, critique and debate could take place. The debate ‘post-9/11’ is often so polarized, that it is difficult to chart an intellectual path which is neither categorized as apologist for terrorist atrocities nor cheerleader for the imperialist ambitions and practices of Western states.

Recently, however, I attended several policy workshops. The first was led by the Inter-Agency Network on Education in Emergencies<sup>1</sup>, the second led by the Swiss Development Cooperation Agency<sup>2</sup> and the third run by Wilton Park and the UK Foreign office<sup>3</sup>. All the events confirmed my earlier fears, but this was tempered with the realization of the necessity of intervening in these spaces to challenge both the practices and assumptions that underpin much of the mainstream CVE thinking. I fear that these approaches, albeit unintentionally, might be driving young people towards ‘extremism’ rather than combatting it – through lack of reflexivity, humility, historical memory and nuance on the part of the architects and practitioners of CVE as they try to address this important issue. My experience in these events, also made me realize that many people in national governments, NGOs and international organizations are also uneasy about the ‘security’ approach and implications of CVE and are looking for alternative and more progressive ways of addressing, what is undoubtedly a defining issue of our time.

This paper then is an attempt to contribute to an emerging critique of the mainstream education for CVE approach by interrogating its security roots in post 9/11 western military interventions and the implications therein for education and society in the UK and elsewhere<sup>4</sup>. In the next section, I begin by providing some theoretical grounding for the subsequent historical and empirical evidence presented, by exploring the interconnections and disjunctures between Western foreign policy and domestic policy, education and security and its implications. Secondly, I then trace the security roots and logic of ‘CVE and education’ approaches back to their imperial roots in the mountains of Pakistan, and the battlefields of Iraq, Afghanistan, Somalia and other zones of contention, where education systems and education communities have become caught up in diverse ways with post 9/11 ‘War on Terror’ security agendas. This is then followed up with examples exploring the evolution of the UK’s ‘Prevent’ strategy and how it relates to the UK education system. In conclusion, I will reflect on these North-South relations, the commonalities and points of divergence and suggest a way forward for an alternative CVE movement and the role of education therein.

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<sup>1</sup> See (<http://www.ineesite.org/en/round-table-role-of-education-youth-urban-violence-extremism> )

<sup>2</sup> See ([http://www.norrag.org/fileadmin/Events/PVE\\_Workshop\\_INPUT\\_paper\\_final.pdf](http://www.norrag.org/fileadmin/Events/PVE_Workshop_INPUT_paper_final.pdf) )

<sup>3</sup> See <https://www.wiltonpark.org.uk/event/wp1510/>

<sup>4</sup> In this I would like to note the work of Dr Ayaz Naseem and Adeela Arshad-Ayaz, based at Concordia for organising the ‘Symposia of Teaching about Extremism, Terror and Trauma’, 2016, Montreal, where a version of this paper was first presented, and where I found an open and transformative space to discuss and engage critically with CVE with a wide range of participants. See Arshad-Ayaz, A & Naseem, M.A (2017) for further information. I would also like to thank the two anonymous peer-reviewers for their extremely helpful comments on earlier drafts of this paper.

## Foucault's Boomerang and the Security/Education Nexus

In his annual lecture series in 1975, Michel Foucault, explored the relationship between war, society and governance. In one of these lectures, he talked of a 'boomerang effect', whereby imperial policies and practices deployed abroad return home in surprising ways. Foucault noted that:

It should never be forgotten that while colonization, with its techniques and its political and juridical weapons, obviously transported European models to other continents, it also had a considerable boomerang effect on the mechanisms of power in the West, and on the apparatuses, institutions, and techniques of power. A whole series of colonial models was brought back to the West, and the result was that the West could practice something resembling colonization, or an internal colonialism, on itself. (Foucault 2003: 103)

*Michel Foucault, Society Must Be Defended*

The idea of Foucault's 'boomerang' was extended and applied in relation to post 9/11 'war on terror' realities in a fascinating book by Stephen Graham (2011), the critical geographer, who explored the way military technologies of surveillance and control, developed to fight wars in faraway lands, had returned to the Western homelands – with drones, as a memorable example, now being used by many Western police forces to monitor their own populations. This led me to reflect on work I had done on the securitization and militarization of international development assistance to education, post 9/11 (see Novelli, 2010,2013) and its connections to some of the recent counter-terrorism encroachments into education systems in the West, and the UK in particular. Our disciplinary and thematic foci often obscure relationships, and my own focus on 'international development and education' had avoided seeing and tracing some of these connections happening in the education system in my own country, the UK. This paper then seeks to begin the process of thinking through these interconnections between the education/development/security nexus 'abroad' and the education/development/security nexus at 'home'. In order to ground the later discussion, I want in this section to make a number of conceptual points that we can problematize through the empirical evidence.

The first point relates to the broad field of International Development, and by default the sub-field of 'education and international development' and its geographical focus. As several commentators have noted, the binary focus of our field on 'developing countries' in an unequal, uneven, interconnected and complex globalized world is becoming increasingly unhelpful in addressing the key questions of our time. Boaventura de Sousa Santos, drawing on the concept of the 'Global South' problematizes this through the idea of the 'south in the north' and the 'north in the south' to highlight that in pockets of the geographical 'South' there is wealth that rivals anything in the 'North' and vice-versa, in the 'North' we have pockets of deprivation, poverty and disease that mirror the experiences of many so called 'developing countries'. As a result, he calls for the use of the term 'Global South' to be used as a metaphor for those population groups effected by the 'systemic and unjust human suffering caused by global capitalism and colonialism' (Santos, 2015:134). This definition, I believe, can assist us in extending our geographical gaze beyond its traditional parameters, and help us to reframe International Development as a field of struggle and of academic study for challenging the economic, political,

social and cultural barriers to achieving global social justice for all (Maxwell, 2008; Unterhalter, 2007). Furthermore, issues of both 'global terrorism' and the current 'refugee crisis' have highlighted the complex interconnections between 'north' and 'south', and that what happens in conflict affected contexts in faraway places might have effects on security closer to home. All of this evidences the need for a much more fluid geographical approach to international education and development.

The second point I wish to explore here is the relationship between security and development, which is central to the focus of this paper. In mainstream development thinking, the birth of 'development' as concept and field is located in the post WWII period, and with the then US President' Truman's, now famous, Point 4, speech where he talked of 'development' as a new relationship between the West and the rest, with the US at its helm. A relationship based on 'democratic fair-dealing', whereby the US would support 'peace-loving peoples' toward fulfilling their hopes and dreams:

The old imperialism—exploitation for foreign profit—has no place in our plans. What we envisage is a program of development based on the concepts of democratic fair-dealing. All countries, including our own, will greatly benefit from a constructive program for the better use of the world's human and natural resources.

While many authors have debated the integrity of the speech's content (see Escobar, 2011; Rist, 2002) its timing reflects a period of transition from direct colonial rule to post-colonial independence for many 'developing' countries. An alternative reading of the roots of 'international development' traces it back to colonialism and highlights the way 'development' emerged as a mechanism to quell anti-colonial protest movements through a combination of social reforms (carrots) and repressive policing (stick), which resonates strongly with contemporary counter-insurgency strategy which we see in Iraq, Afghanistan and elsewhere today (c.f Duffield & Hewitt, 2013). These two readings of the roots of international development reflect both the upbeat idealism and the 'realpolitik' that continues to penetrate the field, with the USA both offering a helping hand whilst simultaneously developing a political and military strategy to ensure the reproduction of its own hegemonic position, as was clearly evidenced and documented during the Cold War (Christian Aid 2004). After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the relationship between western security interests and development resurfaced under the guise of 'humanitarian intervention' in Africa and the Balkans in the 1990s and has become increasingly intertwined since 9/11, where the link between conflict, security and state failure in some parts of the Global South was becoming increasingly associated with terror attacks in the West. Since then, more and more 'development' assistance has been targeted towards conflict-affected contexts in the Global South through peacekeeping, peacebuilding, post-conflict reconstruction and development assistance (see Duffield 2007; Novelli, 2010). Furthermore, after the 2008 global economic crisis, discourses around the necessity of development assistance to protect our own 'western' security, have increasingly been deployed in response to a sceptical media and electorate seeking to redeploy budgets closer to home.

Thirdly, while it is tempting to see Post 9/11 security encroachments on schooling – both at home and abroad - as a 'new' development, there is a broad and critical literature on education that sees mass-schooling historically as a mode of pacification, a vehicle for the reproduction of social inequality, a tool of colonial power, and as a

vehicle for militarization and violence (Harber, 2004). Reflecting on the foundations of mass schooling in the West, Green notes that:

The task of public schooling was not so much to develop new skills for the industrial sector as to inculcate habits of conformity, discipline and morality that would counter the widespread problems of social disorder' (Green, 1990: 59).

Similarly, moving beyond pacification and conformity, there is a strong literature on schooling as indoctrination, that notes its role in inciting violence from Nazi Germany, to Rwanda and to state's like Eritrea today (Harber,2004; Riggan, 2016). Furthermore, schooling has and remains a site for recruitment for military projects – whether voluntary or forced – from US military funded scholarships in lieu of enlistment, US military visits to schools, and non-state armed actors recruiting child soldiers. This instrumentalist understanding of schooling serving war can be backed up in the UK, by noting that the introduction of physical education into the UK schooling system in the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century was a direct result of a recognition by military leaders and politicians that the poor health of the British working class, had hampered their recruitment to fight on the frontline of the Boer War (Thorpe, 2003). Durodie (2016:21), reflecting on the 'Prevent' programme in the UK today, goes as far as to suggest that rather than seeing the security/education relationship as a one-way street, he argues that *'the language and practice of security appear to be being transformed by certain actions and assumptions already common to the world of education.'*

The fourth point, relates to the theory and definitional discussion around 'securitization' and what this means. Securitization theory emerged from the Copenhagen School of International Relations who had used the term to explore the way discourse was deployed to create the conditions under which the norms governing a social domain could be revised or suspended for security reasons (Buzan et al, 1998). This constructivist theory was used to explore how population groups could be persuaded to accept infringements on their rights in lieu of security. For the purpose of this work, securitization theory appears useful to exploring the way schooling has become caught up in Post 9/11 security strategy, both abroad and at home, and the discursive strategies used to justify this. Finally, moving beyond securitization as 'discourse' we also need to explore the complex ways that education and schooling have been drawn into the post 9/11 counter-insurgency and counter-terror strategies and their material and discursive effects, particularly on youth, who are often the central target of interventions. Helpful in exploring the North/South relations in the security/development/education nexus, is the work of Duffield, who suggests that while governance logics might be similar, governance strategies diverge significantly between North and South. Duffield (2007) talks metaphorically of two 'species beings' divided geographically, calling them the 'insured' and the 'non-insured' peoples, with the former provided with access to basic rights and necessities (social protection) and the latter required to be self-reliant and self-reproducing. As a result, mechanisms of regulation and control diverge between the two 'species beings', and what is acceptable to discipline those populations widely divergent. Furthermore, Duffield argues that interventions into the lives of the 'uninsured' are aimed biopolitically to induce social action – 'a new willingness to countenance a level of intrusion and degree of social engineering hitherto frowned upon by the international community' (Duffield,2002:1050), aimed at getting 'savages to fight barbarians' (Duffield, 2005).

Returning to Foucault's boomerang, the rest of the paper then will explore the complex inter-relationships between foreign policy abroad and education and national policy at home; trace the way education has become increasingly securitized and analyse both the intended and unintended outcomes of this process of securitizing education to support the war on terror and counter violent extremism (CVE).

### **The Imperial roots of Securitization, CVE and Education**

In earlier work I have traced some of the roots of the education/security relationships linked to post 9/11 military activities (see Novelli, 2010, 2013). Implemented during the Cold War, when communism and the Soviet Union was seen as the West's biggest security threat, Western governments' under the leadership of the United States armed and funded Afghani, Pakistani and foreign 'mujahideen' to fight against the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan. In education, this began with USAID's funding of a hate curriculum implemented in refugee camps for Afghani refugees in Pakistan and Pakistani Madrasa's. During this period, USAID paid the University of Nebraska U.S.\$51 million from 1984 to 1994 to develop and design textbooks, which were mostly printed in Pakistan. Over 13 million were distributed at Afghan refugee camps and Pakistani madrasas (International Crisis Group 2002: 13).

An example of the type of content developed is illustrated in a maths textbook for 4th grade children, which raises the following question (ibid: 92-93):

The speed of a Kalashnikov bullet is 800 meters per second. If a Russian is at a distance of 3,200 meters from a mujahid, and that mujahid aims at the Russian's head, calculate how many seconds it will take for the bullet to strike the Russian in the forehead.

This hate curriculum contributed to the production of a generation of radicalised youth, on both sides of the Pakistan/Afghanistan border, which as we now know, has had terrible unintended consequences for the West – a point which I will return to later when we explore contemporary CVE programmes. For our earlier discussions, what this intervention highlights is the Cold War roots of Islamic 'radicalisation', the pivotal role of the United States in that process, the place that education had in that 'radicalisation' strategy, and the unintended outcomes of the initiative when the global jihad switched from the USSR to the USA and used Afghanistan as the launching pad and training ground.

Moving forward to the aftermath of 9/11, education – particularly for girls – was evoked as part of the justification for the invasion of Afghanistan – and remains a justification of last resort as things collapse in 2017. The ex UK Prime Minister, Gordon Brown, back in 2009, noted that 'development' and within that 'education' were central planks in the UK strategy of both 'winning hearts and minds' in Afghanistan and protecting the UK from attack:

...when the Taleban ran the country, only a million children were in school, all boys. Today there are 6.6 million - with more than 2 million girls. With the help of British development funding, 10,000 new teachers were recruited from 2007 to 2008, with more expected in 2009. This is an investment in the future of Afghanistan, in its stability and its resilience against extremism - and therefore in our security (Brown, 2009:3).

Similarly, 'madrasa' education in Pakistan was singled out as a source for the production of radical jihadists in the wake of 9/11, and exaggerated and inflated claims of the number of children attending radical madrasas was accepted



unquestionably by Western governments looking for easy answers to the rise of jihadism in Pakistan and Afghanistan - though without any reflexivity on their own role in generating this. The binary production of Islamic Education vs Western Secular education has now expanded across many of the contemporary theatres of conflict (Somalia/Yemen/Iraq/Pakistan/Afghanistan/Kenya) with attacks on both students, teachers and institutions by both militants and national and international forces (e.g. Peshawar massacre, 2014; Chenagai Madrasa airstrike 2006) against their respective educational nemesis.

In Afghanistan, according to Human Rights Watch, education systems and personnel were attacked for three overlapping categories:

First, opposition to the government and its international supporters by Taliban or other armed groups; second, ideological opposition to education other than that offered in madrassas (Islamic schools), and in particular opposition to girls' education; and third, opposition to the authority of the central government and the rule of law by criminal groups (Human Rights Watch, 2006: 33).

Clearly in the case of both Afghanistan and Pakistan, education became a central battleground in the war and emphasizes the increasing dangers that all education personnel and students face there. The attack on Malala Yousafzai in October, 2012, became the most internationally visible example. This polarization also occurred in Somalia (UN, 2008) and Iraq (Bonham Carter, 2007; O'Malley, 2007). Most problematically, both sides in these contexts increasingly interpreted education provision as a battle between Western secular education and Islamic madrasa education, an unhelpful and incorrect binary (McClure, 2009), that obscures more than it reveals. However, what is clear is that education is not simply a casualty of the current war on terror, but plays a central and contested role for all key actors.

Education has also featured centrally in the West's counterinsurgency strategy. In Iraq, after the initial removal of Sadaam Hussein in 2003, and the de-Bathification process, the US began rapidly to lose control. US Secretary of State, Rumsfeld's strategy was failing and General Petraeus in 2006 was brought in as a widespread insurgency was expanding. Petraeus was a counterinsurgency scholar and from that point on a new counterinsurgency strategy was deployed, drawing on insights particularly from France's war against insurgents in colonial Algeria in the 1960s. This is where international development – and education - therein, and particularly related to Afghanistan and Iraq, became part of the strategy for 'winning hearts and minds' in a changing US-led counterinsurgency war (Duffield, 2008; English, 2010; Gregory, 2008; Hayden, 2009; Hoffman, 2009; Lopez, 2010; Mezran, 2009; Miller & Mills, 2010; Zambarnardi, 2010).

In this strategy, education became a tool in the counterinsurgency process – both in terms of school reconstruction programmes, de-radicalization strategies, technical and vocational skills training for 'at-risk' youth – all geared at complimenting particular and contingent military missions aimed at pacifying local populations, 'draining the swamp' in counterinsurgency language – whereby efforts are made to break the link between insurgents and the communities that protect them. Centrally, education became related to the 'security' of western military forces, rather than the 'security' of local communities, and generally tied to very short term objectives that were likely to be detrimental to long term and sustainable development. This strategy was consolidated with the establishment by the Western occupying countries in both Iraq

and Afghanistan of Provisional Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) that under the control of the military also carried out development activities such as the construction of schools.

In 2009 an alliance of NGOs operating in Afghanistan produced a strong report condemning the behavior of the Western occupying forces. They alleged that the military (particularly the US and France) were continuing to use ‘unmarked, white vehicles...conventionally used by the UN and aid agencies’ and were carrying out infrastructure work, including the construction of schools, traditionally done by development organizations as part of their counterinsurgency ‘hearts and minds’ strategies (Waldman 2009, p.5). All this, they argued, was producing a ‘blurring of the civil-military distinction... (and) contributed to a diminution in the perceived independence of NGOs, increased the risk for aid workers, and reduced the areas in which NGOs can safely operate’ (Waldman 2009, p.9.)

The activities of PRT’s were particularly critiqued for their focus on short-term security objectives using soft strategies such as school building and healthcare support, which would often later be withdrawn when the immediate security threat was resolved:

*Although touted as a marriage of equals between civilian and military actors, PRTs in Afghanistan are overwhelmingly military in scope and operation. The typical PRT consists of 80-100 soldiers, under the direct command of a military officer, focused heavily on force protection and security assistance. These figures dwarf the handful of individual representatives from State, USAID and the Department of Agriculture. More problematic than this imbalance in numbers is the generally poor development practice of PRTs and the relative lack of attention to promoting good governance and the rule of law. Where reconstruction activities have occurred, QIPs have often failed to take the longer-term development..., according to the U.S. interagency assessment of PRTs, “schools were built without teachers and clinics without doctors.” (Patrick & Brown, 2007: 6)*

Examples of the way education programming became utilized in counterinsurgency strategies are broad and varied. Captain Chad Pillai (2009) of the US Army argued for the expansion of literacy and vocational training programmes implemented in Iraq to Afghanistan. These adult literacy centers and vocational education programmes were funded through the US Army’s Commanders Emergency Response Fund (CERF), and implemented directly by the US military rather than development agencies. Pallai describes how in response to the low level of literacy of Iraqi police applicants and construction contractors in the cities of Tar Araf and Ar Ramadi, the military decided to develop an adult literacy program that would not only develop skills, but give youth alternative opportunities rather than joining insurgencies. Pallai (2009) notes that ‘*In addition to expanding Iraqi Security Forces, the adult education programs helped to ‘drain the swamp’ of potential insurgent recruits by providing alternative economic opportunities for the population’* (23).

The diagram below (figure 1) (Pillai, 2009, 23) reflects visually the way education planning became militarized – note the ‘target’ of ‘young men between the ages of 16-28’ and the overall objective of the programme to ‘reduce the number of potential recruits for Anti-Iraq Forces’.

INSERT FIGURE 1 HERE

While the article offers little concrete evidence of the impact of the programme, he asserts that:

...Ar Ramadi has become one of the most peaceful cities in Iraq. Although we cannot scientifically substantiate the importance of educational programs for adults, we also cannot ignore that it is the largest positive factor for our mission's success. (24)

In Afghanistan, education became one of the central battlefields of the conflict between the ISAF (International Security Assistance Forces) and the Taliban. This revolved around both the West's promotion of girls' education, their attacks on Madrasa and religious education and the way school construction, particularly in the Provincial Reconstruction Teams, had become a key mechanism for winning hearts and minds.

The dilemma for education aid workers was that the counterinsurgency and counter-terrorism strategies of the Western powers become the perceived major rationale for educational interventions and while activities may remain largely the same, their discursive representation means that they can be interpreted as part of the 'war effort': civilian modes of counterinsurgency, aimed at winning hearts and minds and producing certain types of subjectivities. In doing so they increased the danger for all involved.

In situations such as Iraq and Afghanistan it appears that humanitarian and development organizations became overwhelmed by the counterinsurgency agenda, making it almost impossible to distance themselves from the occupying forces and present a picture of neutrality. One researcher from Médecins Sans Frontières raised the question of the problem of carrying out humanitarian and development activities under the overarching rule of an occupying power, arguing that whether they directly engage with the occupying forces or not:

Over time, the resentment that often builds up within a population against foreign rule can lead to an equally violent rejection of all changes brought about by outside actors, their claimed neutrality notwithstanding. (Crombe, 2006:5)

Furthermore, the use of education as a weapon of counterinsurgency undermined the efficacy and long-term viability of educational assistance, politicized the education system, distorted and diverted resources away from more sustainable education assistance and reduced the credibility of aid to education.

Extrapolating from the empirical evidence above, what we can garner from the education/development/security nexus is firstly its *security logic*, which aimed at winning 'war', maintaining the status quo, and not addressing the root causes of the conflict. The use of education as a weapon of counterinsurgency turns it into a means to an end, rather than an end in itself. That is, as a means of recruiting informers, a domain of surveillance, a recruitment ground for collaborators, a mechanism for pacifying youth – keeping them busy, etc. – means which are not traditionally associated with the goal of education and development, and which served to undermine the potential transformatory role of the sector. Secondly, what we can also see is its *short termism* – aimed at fire-fighting, winning terrain at conjunctural moments, controlling, pacifying, recruiting, with little long term development thinking and planning. More generally it undermined the efficacy and long term viability of educational assistance, politicized the education systems, distorted and

diverted resources away from more sustainable education assistance and reduced the credibility of aid to education. Thirdly, the ‘soft’ strategy allowed for the ‘*co-option of a range of actors*’, such as NGOs/Humanitarian educators in the broader counter terrorism/insurgency strategy (whether willingly or not). All became part of the ‘combat team’ - to paraphrase a rather unfortunate speech form Colin Powell, in 2001:

Just as surely as our diplomats and military, American NGOs are out there serving and sacrificing on the front lines of freedom... NGOs are such a force multiplier for us, such an important part of our combat team. (Powell, 2001:3)

Fourthly, the strategy served to *politicise* education, leading to the sector, its institutions and practitioners, becoming caught in the middle of the conflict, and subject to military attention from both sides, breaking down relationships between the education institutions, educators and the community and compounding threat levels. Finally, the strategy served to *deligitimise* foreign actors working in the education sector, undermine their humanitarian imperatives and weaken any bonds of trust that they previously had with local communities.

### **CVE in the UK: ‘Preventing or Provoking Violent Extremism?’**

Having laid out some of the ways education became securitized through Western ‘war on terror’ related interventions abroad, we now turn to the way schooling in the UK has become caught up in post-9/11 homeland concerns. This will be done through an exploration of the ‘Prevent’ programme, which began in 2003 and in 2017 permeates the entire UK education system from pre-school to University, with institutions and educators now under a statutory duty to have ‘*due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism*<sup>5</sup>.’

‘Prevent’ was created in 2003 as part of a broader national counter-terrorism strategy known as CONTEST, which included the ‘four P’s’ of *Prevent, Pursue, Protect, and Prepare*. As its name suggests, ‘Prevent’ was seen as a strategy to identify potential terrorist suspects prior to any attack, with the 2009 counterterrorism strategy describing the Prevent strategy as aimed at ‘stopping people becoming terrorists or supporting violent extremism’ (Home Office, 2009). This evolution has to be contextualized within the broader development of the post 9/11 war on terror responses to security threats. This includes the fallout from the invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq, the concern with ‘homegrown’ terrorists after the 2004 Madrid bombings and the 2005, 7/7 London bombings, the rise of ISIS, the outbreak of war in Syria and increased concern that a significant number of UK Muslims have and continue to join the war in Syria. This period has also seen a shift from a Labour government (1997-2010) to a Conservative/Liberal-Democrat coalition (2010-2015) to a Conservative Party government (2015-date), which has also led to changes in the way the ‘Prevent’ programme has evolved, both in terms of conceptualization and resources.

According to the current website ‘Prevent’ seeks to:

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<sup>5</sup> Section 26 of the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015 (the Act) places a duty on certain bodies (“specified authorities” listed in Schedule 6 to the Act), in the exercise of their functions, to have “due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism”. This guidance is issued under section 29 of the Act. The Act states that the authorities subject to the provisions must have regard to this guidance when carrying out the duty. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/prevent-duty-guidance>

- respond to the ideological challenge of terrorism and the threat we face from those who promote it
- prevent people from being drawn into terrorism and ensure they are given appropriate advice and support, and
- work with sectors and institutions where there are risks of radicalization which we need to address.

David Omond, one of the founders of ‘Prevent’, noted in an interview that the founding objectives were linked to building and supporting better community integration:

Prevent was all about preventing violent extremism. So a useful parallel for Prevent work in the UK could be seen in earlier programmes to discourage young people from becoming a gang member – you are trying to stop the route into violence. Prevent is about persuading people that violence, including against innocents, is not a legitimate way in a democracy to promote your aims.... (OSF, 2015:22).

This early approach resulted in a large amount of resources directed towards Muslim organizations to try to promote better integration and community cohesion, alongside detection and referral strategies for vulnerable or at risk youth. In the Preface to the 2011 updated Prevent strategy, the new Conservative/Liberal Democrat coalition government challenged this earlier integrationist focus:

the Prevent programme we inherited from the last Government was flawed. It confused the delivery of Government policy to promote integration with Government policy to prevent terrorism. It failed to confront the extremist ideology at the heart of the threat we face; and in trying to reach those at risk of radicalisation, funding sometimes even reached the very extremist organisations that Prevent should have been confronting’ (Home Office, 2011, Preface).

The revised approach was focused on two key pillars: promoting British Values and increasing the surveillance capacities of institutions to detect potential threats. David Omond, reflects on this shift:

Notions which later crept in about the need to promote specifically ‘British values’, including equality for women, however justified, were not an explicit part of the CONTEST strategy to prevent violent extremism.... Policing is about upholding the criminal law, not about policing some concept of ‘Britishness’ in the community (OSF, 2015:22).

This emphasis on British Values, post 2011, has increased the feeling that ‘Prevent’ is aimed at non-traditional ‘British’ subjects, and particularly Muslims, with the implicit assumption that they need to modify their identity and attitudes. The notion of promoting ‘British values’ has itself been subjected to a variety of challenges, with questions relating to what is particular about British values, and who gets to define them. It has also been seen as a mechanism through which to attack multiculturalism and push a far more assimilationist agenda, which by its very nature stigmatizes immigrant communities:

Recent policy has created an environment in which teachers are now accountable for the agendas of national security and anti-terrorism and where Ofsted believes it is at liberty to police schools’ interpretation of what constitutes fundamental British values.... Education has become a conduit

through which the intersection of counterterrorism and the standards have resulted in the expectation that teachers will pursue and enforce a racialized security agenda (Elton-Cheltcraft et al , 2016:33).

The support for 'British Values' has been accompanied with a switch from the language of 'violent extremism' to the language of 'radicalization'. This appears to be underpinned by an 'elevator' or 'conveyor belt' theory of radicalization that the journey from alienated citizen to violent terrorist follows a number of stages from exposure to ideas through to action. Part of this literature, has focussed upon redefining terms such as 'radicalism', 'radicalisation' and 'extremism', including challenging perceived boundaries between violent and non-violent extremism (Schmid, 2013, 2014, Bale, 2013). Despite being widely critiqued, both in terms of what constitutes 'radicalisation' and the 'radical' and the difficulties in defining the term, and also in terms of the linear and epidemiological model, which appears to treat radicalization as an illness or a virus that can be treated (O'Donnell, 2016), it has nevertheless become the dominant approach.

For Kundnani the concept of radicalisation has become the master signifier of the late 'war on terror' (2012:3), arguing that it provides a means through which the causes of terrorism could be discussed in very restricted ways that focus down on the 'individual'. As Coppock & McGovern (2009:629) note:

A focus on 'radicalisation' establishes the a-priori assumption that the search for the 'causes of terrorism' is essentially to be found at the level of the attitudes and actions of the individual, the task at hand therefore established as the 'rooting out' of future terrorists rather than what might be thought of as root causes.

In a powerful article, Sukarieh & Tannock (2015) argue that what lies at the heart of the 'Prevent' strategy reframing of 'radical' is a desire not only to suppress radical Islam, but also to reclaim and subvert the broader transformatory potential of 'radical' education, just at a time when radical education is needed the most. By defining radicalization as negative and linking it to terrorism, they argue that the state is essentially trying to undermine youth aspirations for large scale, social transformations.

The Prevent shift, post 2011, has led to a much more systematic focus on schools and education institutions, aimed at making institutions and their staff responsible for identifying potential radicalization suspects, and promoting core British values throughout the institution. In 2015, this became a statutory duty with individuals and institutions subject to disciplinary/legal procedures if they fail to comply, and a duty to refer any possible subjects they deem vulnerable to radicalisation. This obligation has now been incorporated into OFSTED school inspection processes, with huge numbers of teachers and administrators undergoing training in their 'Prevent' obligations. This has led to a range of concerns about the student/teacher relationship of trust, coupled with a concern that the security apparatus were increasingly policing education institutions, their actors, and the contents of their classes. There has also been growing concern about the quality of the training and the capacity of the trained teachers to identify and deal with 'radicalization'.

The shift in focus has led to a spike in both the number of referrals to Channel (the counter-terrorism program that evaluates at risk youth), and an increase in referrals from education institutions. Between April 2007 and the March 31, 2014, there were a

total of 3934 referrals. However, in 2015, alone there was 3994 people referred, a number that had increased by 300% from the year before. According to The Guardian (2016) ‘of the 3,994 people referred under the Prevent strategy to the Channel programme in 2015, 1,319 reports came from the education sector’.

The article goes on to note that:

Although the NPCC does not routinely collect information on the religion of the individuals referred to Prevent, in 2015 1,394 identified as Muslim, 139 as Christian, 12 as Sikh, five as Buddhist, four as Hindu and three as Jewish. Ten people said their religion was other, while 19 said they had no religion.

That Muslims are the main target and perceived threat is indisputable despite more recent references to the dangers of far-right terrorism in Norway and elsewhere, and the subsequent inclusion of materials relating to the far-right in the training syllabus. The National Police Chiefs’ Council (NPCC) on its website notes that:

The greatest threat the UK currently faces is from terrorists who claim to act in the name of Islam, and who specifically target Muslims. Therefore Prevent activity such as the support offered through Channel predominately takes place in and with Muslim communities. However, the principles of Channel apply equally to other communities who may be the focus of attention from violent extremist groups<sup>6</sup>.

This increased focus of the Prevent programme on detection and surveillance, has also had some very high profile failures that have lost the programme a great deal of credibility. These include a 10-year old Lancashire boy being referred to Channel after mistakenly misspelling ‘terraced house’ for ‘terrorist house’<sup>7</sup>, and a four-year-old boy at nursery school who was referred after mispronouncing ‘cucumber’ and instead saying ‘cooker bomb’. While laughable, the stigmatization of Muslim communities is evident and worrying. What is of further concern is that of all the referrals to Channel, 80% of cases required no further action. How do those 80% of people feel after having been wrongly referred, and what does that mean for their attitude towards UK society and its state institutions?

As Guru (2012:1155) notes, more generally about Prevent and the way it stigmatizes Muslims:

Demeaning experiences are likely to produce defensive, ‘closed’ communities, as they attempt to secure cultural values and practices and foster a sense of ‘us’ and ‘them’, as self-serving agendas are promoted on both sides of the divide. Feelings of injustice are likely to fester as people develop a sense of low morale and low self-esteem, resulting in a lack of confidence to exercise their rights and obligations as citizens and to form formal and informal relationships within and across communities

Reflecting on Foucault’s earlier quote, there is a sense in some parts of the UK, where there is a substantial Muslim population, that they are under ‘siege’, placed under surveillance, securitized and viewed with suspicion. Nowhere was this felt more strongly than in Birmingham, during what became known as the ‘Trojan horse affair’, whereby school governors in several inner city schools were accused of being part of a plot to take over schools and radicalise the pupils. Multiple investigations found

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<sup>6</sup> See <http://www.npcc.police.uk/FreedomofInformation/NationalChannelReferralFigures.aspx>

<sup>7</sup> See <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-lancashire-35354061>

little evidence of these claims, but coverage in the press and media, and the comments of high profile politicians, severely stigmatized the city and its Muslim communities in modes reminiscent of colonial 'divide and rule' practices (Arthur, 2015; Clarke, 2014; Awan, 2014).

In the conclusions to an interesting study by the Open Society Foundation into 'Prevent', they note that:

there are serious indications that Prevent is counterproductive. The case studies show that being wrongly targeted under Prevent has led some Muslims to question their place in British society. Other adults wrongfully targeted under Prevent have said that, had they been different, their experience of Prevent could have drawn them towards terrorism, and not away from it (OSF, 2016: 6).

## **Conclusions**

Drawing together insights from the education/security nexus at home and abroad, I now want to reflect on some of the points of convergence/divergence emerging from this exploration. Firstly, it is clear that the education/security relationship has emerged as an important site of intervention in both the UK and those key sites of attention abroad. Yet the nature of that relationship appears quite distinct. In Iraq, Afghanistan, and Pakistan education has become a central battleground for attacks by oppositional forces, with curriculum reform, girls' education, madrassa education as central dividing lines between the warring factions. Schools have also been drawn into US/UK counterinsurgency strategy, with funding and school construction used as a mechanism for winning hearts and minds. In the UK, education seems to be seen much more as a site of surveillance and psycho-social intervention, particularly since 2010. Teachers and institutions are drawn into acting as state agents, legally bound to monitor the bodies of potential 'radicals' and to be agents for the promotion and defence of British Values. In Pakistan, Afghanistan and Iraq it is often humanitarian workers that have become to be seen as 'agents' of the state, working in tandem with foreign military forces. This has led to a sharp increase in violent attacks on aid workers in these regions as those lines between military and civilian become increasingly blurred (Novelli, 2010). While UK teachers have not been subject to such violent attacks, their surveillance role appears likely to change their relationship with pupils and their families, and raise the likelihood that Muslim children are less willing to express their opinions openly to them for fear of reprisals. Rather than preventing radicalization, this runs the risk of pushing discussion underground, and moving it to spaces where teachers and others are far less likely to be able to intervene.

In both cases, we can see the encroachment of security actors and logics into the internal affairs of education institutions and the breakdown of trust between humanitarian workers and target communities and teachers, students and their parents respectively. Both humanitarian workers and teachers appear to be feeling uncomfortable in this role, and spaces of resistance to the securitization of their role growing. Similarly, in their framing of the conflict and the resultant strategy and tactics – both at home and abroad – there is little evidence of genuine engagement with the long-term underpinnings of conflict and its structural dimensions. There appears little space for discussion over Western strategy in the Middle East, the military interventions in Iraq, Afghanistan and elsewhere or the highly unequal and exclusionary global political economy and polity that underpins uneven global



development and seems to drive conflict. Similarly, in the UK, the Prevent strategy currently avoids discussion over the conditions under which young Muslim's are integrated into UK society, Islamophobia and racism. However, while one is framed in the individualizing and psychologizing of the radical, the other is far more militarized. In this sense we can see divergence between what Duffield calls the 'insured' and 'non-insured' in the governance techniques deployed. This is not dissimilar to the conclusions drawn by Graham (2010) when talking of the use of unmanned drones at home and abroad. In Pakistan and Afghanistan drones were armed and utilized for military attacks on targets, while in the USA the drones were deployed for surveillance purposes, which while threatening and intrusive, are not lethal. In essence, what we are seeing in these divergent strategies is a reflection of the value placed on 'insured' and 'non-insured' life. At a more abstract level, in both spaces we are increasingly being trained to see 'the world as a battlefield' (Scahill, 2013) in a complex asymmetrical war that is fought out on multiple terrains and in many different ways, with the education sector increasingly becoming an important zone of engagement and contention. Crucially, in both contexts, there is little evidence to suggest that the securitization of education is contributing to the production of more peaceful conditions, within and outside the classroom, and often appears to aggravate tensions and conflict.

Ultimately, the security logics of interventions in education – both abroad and at home, reflect a broader reluctance on the part of its architects to openly engage in discussion and debate as to the root causes of conflict, and go beyond a pathological diagnosis that anyone that resists Western hegemony is either an enemy combatant, criminal or ill. A dialogical pedagogy that could open up this debate, sensitively and responsibly handled, would surely have more of a chance to bring fragmented communities together, rebuild relationships and work towards collective responses to redressing the structural inequalities and obstacles that currently underpin conflicts. Ultimately, as researchers, educators, practitioners and humanitarian workers we can choose to be shaped by these securitized agendas or resist them, but we can no longer stand at the sidelines, as the neutral ground has been taken away from under our feet.

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