The War of Ideas: Counter-radicalization Discourses in America and Britain

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Winning the War of Ideas

A Critical Reading of the Counter-radicalization Discourses in America and Britain

Introduction

The 9/11 attacks, believed to be perpetrated from Afghanistan and carried out by foreign nationals on American soil, frightened people globally, leading to the War on Terrorism. It rapidly changed the security priority of several countries. Today, as America has identified and killed Osama Bin Laden and several other al-Qaeda leaders, the world is recognizing a new kind of threat. Terrorism is no more implanted by some unknown alien foreigner clandestinely entering a foreign country. With the mounting number of home-grown terrorist attacks, radicalization is becoming an important security priority. With the sudden spurt in home-grown terrorism perpetrated by a new breed of terrorists born and radicalized in their country of residence, conceptions of terrorism have changed and so have conceptualizations of radicalization.

While the incidences of centrally planned large-scale attacks against the United States and its allies has fallen, there is an increase in 'Jihadization' and 'DIY terrorism'[1] by home-grown extremists. They are known to be often influenced by Islamist ideology – similar to that of radical left terrorists of the 1970's and the anarchist *Fin de siècle* terrorists.[2] In the global War on Terrorism (WoT) over the past decade several tough lessons have been learned about the root causes of terrorism. One result of 'upstream reconnaissance'[3] is radicalization which is identified by some as a precursor to terrorism. Radicalization, a process by which 'a person comes to adopt an extreme political, social or religious idea,'[4] is often accepted as a root cause for the 'ideology-driven' opponent in the WoT.

Though the concept is barely disputed[5], the term radicalization often lacks conceptual clarity and is susceptible to numerous understandings, which will be studied in greater detail in this paper. There are several causes and mechanisms of radicalization, and there can be no single way to effectively counter all forms of radicalization. For policymakers and journalists, radicalization 'can anchor an interesting news agenda;'[6] it sensationalizes terrorism and thus legitimizes a policy response to counter such a danger. Official terrorism discourse often uses the term 'sudden radicalization' to describe the 'unexpectedly swift process of the conversion of a young person to the cause of terrorism.'[7] The association of radicalisation with the internet helps it cause great anxiety. The notion of the internet as a double-edged-sword complicates the problem.

Western strategies used to counter Islamist home-grown radicalization are often criticized for discriminating or alienating Muslim communities in America and Britain and 'official oppositions to radical Islam' and support for religious alternatives are viewed as 'generating friction with the Establishment Clause and the values that it enshrines.'[8] While critics of the past engagement-based American counter-radicalization approach point out that the selection of engagement partners is flawed,[9] some media and policy experts are now increasingly blaming the Obama Administration for choosing 'political correctness over accurately labeling and identifying certain terrorist attacks appropriately.'[10] Both the current and earlier British *Prevent* and the past American strategies have been

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accused of stigmatizing and alienating the Muslim community. The present *Prevent* strategy is a result of a detailed review of past approaches, yet it is criticized for its lack of clarity and contradicting views about radicalization and how to prevent it.[11]

While ideology-driven counter radicalization efforts are widely criticized by British Muslim activists,[12] recently American Muslims rallied in support of the NYPD model of radicalization that has been used for legitimizing intelligence gathering among Muslim communities. While Muslim communities earlier protested against the same model of radicalization the recent rally is certainly indicative of 'a division among the faith's adherents' about how far the government can intrude into at-risk communities.[13] In the meanwhile, Congressional Democrats condemned the NYPD spy program as 'throwback to "dark chapters" in U.S. history.'[14] While governments have been intervening in the domestic lives of Muslims within the cloak of national security and are increasingly depending on law enforcement and community based approaches to counter violent extremism,[15] the debate on the role played by non violent Islamist organizations still remains inconclusive.

Islamic radicalization has sparked significant academic and policy debate. Some prominent terrorism scholars argue that radicalization is unpredictable and analyze the lack of connection between terrorism and religion, whereas the religious conveyor belt theory and the well-known practice-led NYPD model support a theory that suggests a predictable trajectory of radicalization, driven by ideology. An ever-present argument in the radicalization discourse, observable in popular academic and political texts, is the question of whether or not to link religious ideology with radicalization.

Policymakers do not explicitly attribute their understanding to any specific theory or model. After a review of literature, this thesis explores how U.S. and U.K. counter-radicalization strategies have or have not been influenced by different academic theories or models of radicalization. By way of discourse analysis, the thesis aims to understand the different policy representations of radicalization and analyze the corresponding policy consequences.

There are some important limitations to this thesis paper, as with any study. The discourse analysis focuses only on a few official policy documents, and reviews a few prominent academic models, think tank narratives and media discourses which specifically are seen as influencing the policy discourse. As a result, the analysis and conclusions also focus heavily on those limited insights. Though the counter-radicalization discourse of the two countries is not limited to these many documents, the latest and most important ones were chosen due to their topicality.

While Critical Discourse Analysis studies often pay attention to all dimensions of a discourse, including grammar, style, rhetoric, schematic organization, speech acts, pragmatic strategies and those of interaction, the present study focuses broadly on the language and the social world surrounding the discourse. A much more detailed analysis could uncover much more than the present study aims to. While it is beyond the scope of the present study to analyze why policymakers utilize academic knowledge only to a limited extent, it tries to provide a few recommendations for academicians, policymakers, and for future research in this direction.

Literature Review

The chapter is organized in four sections. In the first section, the origin of the 'radicalization' concept in the wider terrorism discourse is traced. The second section covers a critical appraisal of some of the studies on the lines of the current research by other research scholars. After which a short lineage of the discourses taken for study is provided in the third section. In the conclusion, the implications of using a discourse analytical approach to achieve the objectives of this study is discussed

The origin of 'radicalization' in terrorism studies

Edward Said, the renowned Palestinian academic who developed Orientalism, once mentioned that he finds the 'arsenal of words and phrases that derive from the concept of terrorism both inadequate and shameful.'[16] His views certainly hold good for the usage of radicalization in terrorism discourse. Faulty assumptions and mistaken deductions infect the discourses on radicalization too.

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The word radicalization has been popularly used in policy circles, ever since the Madrid (2004) and London (2005) bombings. In 2005, the European Commission first defined the term in its report, entitled 'Radicalization Processes – Leading to Acts of Terrorism,' where it identified 'violent radicalization' as radicalization leading to Jihadist terrorism – in simple terms 'socialization to extremism which manifests itself in terrorism.'[17]

Terrorist acts such as the Oklahoma City bombing, 9/11, a reported 2005 plot to bomb synagogues in Los Angeles, and the foiled car bomb plot at Los Angeles International airport inspired the legislation of the Violent Radicalization and Home-grown Terrorism Prevention Act of 2007.[18] However, it was identified as a 'thought crime bill.'[19] As Peter Neumann, Director of the International Centre for the Study of Radicalization and Political Violence agrees, radicalization simply refers to 'what goes on before the bomb goes off.'

Though research into root causes of terrorism dates back to the 1970s, it suddenly became difficult immediately after 9/11. It was initially viewed as a war against the West, leading to a military response and Operation Enduring Freedom (colloquially referred to as the U.S. war on terrorism). As terrorists were identified as ruthless mass murderers, hard counter-terrorism policies were welcomed, without a necessity of evaluating the root causes. With the introduction of the term 'radicalization' in terrorism literature, policymakers were able to get back to identifying the root causes of terrorism. However, the usage of the word has often invited criticism, specifically because radicalization could be used to 'criminalize protest, discredit any form of 'radical thinking' and label political dissent as potentially dangerous.'[20]

Review of existing studies on radicalization

Radicalization has posed significant challenges to politicians, policymakers, social science researchers and terrorism experts. Questions of why radicalization occurs, what triggers an individual to engage in it and why some people get radicalized while some others abandon it half way through, arise in academic and political debates. There are nearly sixteen known empirical and non-empirical theories of radicalization,[21] over six to seven conceptual phase models developed based on some of those theories[22] and over twelve mechanisms[23] of radicalization, of which none have been explicitly repudiated by the Western governments considered for the current study. Yet, some academicians have knowingly or unknowingly influenced policymakers. While the American discourse makes no reference to have been influenced by any empirically validated theory on radicalization, the British discourse makes several explicit references to academic resources on the subject.

Though the literature on radicalization is often assessed[24] and counter-radicalization policies are critically appraised for their effectiveness,[25] seldom have the two been linked. In fact, even a recent review by the Centre for Strategic and International Studies concluded that a lack of consensus among conceptual models 'might render us incapable of developing robust counter-radicalization plans.'[26] Yet what also comes into view is that there are a few valuable insights that reappear in a few academic theories and models, while different terrorism scholars at times give importance to a diverse range of radicalizing factors – which could be categorized as sociological, individual and group factors. Of which, empirical literature pointing to group-level variables appears to have insightful inputs for combating radicalization in the West.

Though experts agree on the assumption that radicalization involves transformation, they disagree on several areas, including the role of extremist organizations in the process of radicalization. There is a constant debate on whether the radicalization is a top-down or bottom-up process. With the lack of consensus among academicians, there is barely any full-fledged study that analyzes the degree of academic influence of radicalization on counter-radicalization policy, through the lens of discourse analysis. For instance, the Brennan Centre for Justice in the report entitled 'Rethinking Radicalization,' analyzed the flaws in the past American counter-radicalization discourse, pointed out the influence of empirical research and of a few 'simplistic' theories on counter-radicalization policies.[27] The report pointed out that some theories which promote the idea that radicalization is easily predictable and often tend to apply too general characteristics to identify people prone to radicalization and those who are currently radicalizing. In the process, it argued that such measures stigmatize and discriminate the very communities the policy seeks to embrace. However, the report only identified the explicit acceptance of flawed 'religious conveyor belt' theory and the practice-led NYPD model built on that and analyzed the negative implications of believing in a single trajectory of

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radicalization. While the study just about mentioned the influence of empirical research, or the lack of it, the present study aims precisely to analyze the influence of academic knowledge on policy discourses.

While the past American approaches have been proved faulty by the Brennan discourse analyzing the influence of flawed theories of radicalization, it has also shaped the latest strategy developed by the Obama administration in August 2011, to a great extent. It is substantially different from the earlier ones. Yet, it is extensively criticized for adopting a politically-correct language while failing to reveal a robust understanding of the problem. As the changed language of the counter-radicalization discourse explicitly indicates a different conceptualization, a discourse analytical approach is useful in uncovering the 'unsounded' theories in the discourse. On the other hand, a conference by the same name, 'Rethinking Radicalization,' hosted by Tim Parry Johnathan Ball Foundation for Peace, explored the various understandings of radicalization in relation with the recent *Prevent* strategy. Though the conference brought together key experts working with the British government, and discussed the different aspects of *Prevent*, it hardly analyzed the influence of academic literature.[28]

Policymakers are fully aware of the 'complex and highly individualized nature' of the radicalization process. They certainly recognize that no one strategy fits all cases.[29] A majority of the models acknowledge that radicalized individuals are often part of the Muslim Diaspora, mostly well-educated, second and third generation immigrants, or recent converts, who may or may not have a criminal background.[30]

To date, several prominent terrorism experts, including Marc Sageman, Quintan Wiktorowicz, and Randy Borum have come up with empirically validated models that point out the lack of direct proportionality between Islam and radicalization. The confusion between Islam and Islamism often leads to faulty policies. Moreover, some academicians, including Sageman, point out that 'a counterterrorist focus on Islamic ideology is dangerous.'[31] Yet, the debate over whether ideology must be used as a predictor for violence still continues.[32] While academicians often point to alienation and discrimination as the most obvious radicalizing factors, and identity crisis as a major psychological factor, most counter-radicalization policies are also built on this understanding. However, what exactly have Western policymakers done to reflect this understanding? The question remains unanswered.

Though there is neither a single definition nor any harmony among existing literature on factors leading to radicalization, it might be certainly sensible to outline a counter radicalization policy based on the diverse factors – albeit with a limited degree of success. Failing to acknowledge and fully understand a handful of academicians who indicate the influence of structural factors such as political tensions, Western policymakers are still debating about the problematic notion of Islamic radicalization – an idea promoted by a few evidence-lacking models that lay importance on the linkage between religion and radicalization.

After a critical reading of prominent practice-led[33] and empirically-verified[34] academic models, this thesis assumes that such empirical literature will certainly help create winning policies. This study aims to find out through a discourse analytical approach, how much of an influence academic understanding has on the current Western counter-radicalization policies taken for the study.

Tracing the genealogy of present policy discourses

While Islamic radicalization started to surface in British discourse as early as 2005 similar attacks found expression in the American homeland several years later, leading to a full-fledged counter-terrorism policy just last year. Traditionally, the American counter-terrorism approach has been predominantly based on engagement, law enforcement and diplomatic paradigms, totally ignoring the 'ideology' discourse.[35] The past strategy was criticized as 'largely grievance-based and barely contributed to reducing radicalization.'[36] Further, the government is known to have reached out only to a handful of Muslim groups, who often used it to 'push their own agenda.'[37] Community policing has achieved a reasonable amount of success in cities like New York, Chicago, Boston and San Diego, among others.[38]

In September 2010, a report by the National Security Preparedness Group, *Assessing the Terrorist Threat*, concluded that the lack of a coherent approach towards domestic counter-radicalization has exposed Americans to a

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'diversifying but intensifying' threat.[39] With the strengthening of U.S. border control, the numbers of foreign terrorists reduced to a large extent, making space for more home-grown terrorists.[40] Prior to that, when radicalization was rarely recognized as a security issue, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) tested theories of radicalization.[41]

By the end of 2010 proposals for a shift in the American counter-radicalization approach through 'building partnerships with the community' started to surface.[42] Early in 2011, a discourse focusing on *Asserting Liberal Values* sought to influence American and British counter-radicalization strategies.[43] In June 2011, National Security Preparedness Group (NSPG) released a report which focused on developing a national security strategy to diminish extremism 'through engagement, outreach, and communication with at-risk Muslim communities.'[44] The official document was published in August 2011.

On the other hand, there were two main oppositions to the initial British *Prevent* engagement strategy. Though it was capable of eliciting an 'immediate effect,' some viewed it as being 'distasteful' to engage with individuals advocating extremist ideologies.[45] Others considered it to be 'excessively short-sighted.'[46] Policy think tanks such as the right-leaning Policy Exchange, widely known for its extensive research on the subject of engagement with Islamists, expressed concern over the criteria for selecting certain Muslim groups as partners.[47]

The discourse against 'engaging with extremists' was increasingly present among media and policy circles, predominantly to put an end to the faulty policy that lacked a clear understanding of the real problem. Amidst increasing tensions surrounding the debate on choosing partners, Demos conducted a study examining the difference between violent and non-violent radicals in Europe and Canada.[48] A detailed review initiated by the Conservatives that followed is known to have influenced the present *Prevent* policy. Though the British approach is reflective of meticulous planning, has a relatively wider range of objectives, their conceptualizations are still hazy and underdeveloped.

Implications of using discourse analysis in terrorism studies

The fundamental nature of terrorism being a 'social construct' it lends itself to interpretivst epistemology. 'Terrorism [and radicalization] is not a 'given' in the real world; it is instead an interpretation of events and their presumed causes.'[49] The oft-quoted statement that 'one person's terrorist is another person's freedom fighter' reminds us that the definition of terrorism is based on how it is being constructed by an individual or state. 'The meaning of 'terrorism' varies depending on the context, available cultural resources, and combinations of people involved.'[50] In fact, there are nearly 109 different contextual definitions of terrorism.[51]

Terrorism does not exist outside subjective understandings. Constructivism and related epistemologies remind us that terrorism is a social fact, 'which requires human institutions for its existence.'[52] A fast-growing field such as terrorism is filled with an assortment of labels, narratives and assumptions – a nuanced understanding of which calls for a discourse analytical approach that reflects on the social, academic and political effects of it.

Discourses made by several policy analysts, academic researchers, security experts, law enforcement officials, policymakers and the Muslim community at large, have all sought to influence the policy documents chosen for study. However, only a discourse analysis can provide insights into why certain discourses have emerged socially dominant, while others have not.

Research Methodology: A Case for Discourse Analysis

This thesis uses Discourse Analysis as a methodology[53] – an approach often used within a variety of social science disciplines, and within a range of interpretive epistemological paradigms. The use of discourse analysis can be seen in famous works of Jacques Derrida, Michael Foucault, Jacques Lacan and even the 17th century philosopher Gottfried Willhelm Liebniz. This approach is a technique for interpreting texts and understanding the knowledge produced in the context of social and political phenomena surrounding it.

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There is no mainstream definition of discourse analysis or a generally accepted understanding of what it means. Just as how discourse analysis itself makes several interpretations of a discourse, there are several understandings of what a discourse analysis is. Discourse analysis provides immense benefit to policymakers, as it pays attention to how discourses transform social reality making it possible to understand their consequences.

Discourse analysis is used to understand the implicit meaning lying within different discourses facilitating identity construction of the discourse producer.[54] In this approach, the researcher rejects the assumption that there is only one precise version of a participant's action, words and belief. From a social constructivist perspective, the researcher understands that it is always possible to reveal different hidden meanings of a discourse through interpretation.

Discourse analysts start with the assumption that that there is no single reading of the 'external world.' Instead, they produce several perspectives of knowledge about a subject, through a limited lens. Often there are conflicting discourses within a field, because such alternative discourses shape future discourses – where academic, policy, think-tank and media discourses produce different knowledge about the subject. Discourses are produced through, influenced by and transform the social world surrounding it.

Discourse analysts are not interested in understanding the minds of discourse producers; rather they step out of the discourse and concentrate on the use of language and the consequent production of knowledge. They are interested in finding what different strands of understanding exist within a text, what kind of judgments can be made on these various strands, and how they are used to construct different representations of the subject taken for study.

The characteristic feature of discourse analysis useful in the present thesis is its ability to contribute to better understanding of the different representations and therefore, to contribute to the analysis of the level of interconnectedness among alternative discourses. Though discourse analysis can 'blind us' to the interpretations within our 'limited experience', it provides the researcher with an opportunity to deconstruct the obvious constructs of the discourse and to 'rebuild a full and explicit understanding of them.'[55]

According to Foucault, discourses are based on a few basic assumptions, statements or unspoken theories and they fundamentally determine the language and use of vocabulary of the discourse. These underlying assumptions that build the discourse provide clues of how the discourse is developed, or how a problem is addressed and what limits the discourse. Foucault points out that the limitations within a discourse, triggered by the underlying theories, fundamentally restrict possible explanations of the problem.[56] The present study endeavors to find these underlying assumptions which lead to different representations of the problem produced by the different discourses.

In essence, this thesis starts with the assumption that discourses are certainly not a product of an individual's creation. With the passage of time, they are influenced by the social world in which they are developed and fashioned by the alternative discourses developed in the past. Therefore, they are only a result of history and not something which is intended only by the person constructing it. Discourses are a series of ideas expressed in different written and spoken texts. These texts usually consist of symbols, labels, assumptions, narratives and an arrangement of vocabulary in a particular way intended by the discourse maker. Of which, labels and narratives are crucial in interpreting political discourses, like the ones taken in the current study.

Taking a social constructivist approach[57], it is assumed that the radicalization discourse does not exist outside our 'inter-subjective understandings, 'and are instead formed through inferences of alternative discourses. Radicalization is what we make of it and counter-radicalization policies are shaped by constructions of radicalization. A state's representation of radicalization is based on how it sees its own self and the extremist other, through its shared cultural understandings that 'arise out of interactions' within each other. Constructivists believe that 'states will act differently to friends and enemies' based on their 'threat perceptions' which are developed through their discourses.[58] As the extent of threat inflation can be seen in the intensity of their policies to counter and prevent the threat, this discourse analysis tries to understand the different layers of threat perceptions which have led to certain policies. Anyhow, the underlying objective is to identify the dominant academic discourses that influence the policy discourses.

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Research Technique

The thesis uses a genealogical analysis to study the roots of the discourses and employs a Critical Discourse Analysis to study the dominant narratives and analyze the influence of other prevailing discourses. It involved a careful reading of the text of policy documents and asking a set of questions, to facilitate interpretation of the different layers of the discourse. This was done in three main steps.

The first step, involved delimiting the texts. Following the methodology adopted by Iver B. Neumann, texts were chosen based on the extent of power it exudes. Starting with the secondary literature circulated in the media, relevant 'canonical texts,'[59] were identified. After carving out the central texts out of the social world, the process entailed reading the central texts, the secondary texts which cited it, and also texts – of media, think tanks and academicians, which shaped the discourse delivered by the central texts taken for study. Grouping together the data about similar phenomena further facilitated easier analysis and interpretation.

The recent and first comprehensive national strategy evolved in response to the threat of radicalization, entitled 'Empowering local partners to prevent violent extremism,' to address radicalization in the American homeland,' was chosen as the central text to understand the American counter radicalization policy discourse. Along with it, a critical reading of the transcripts of recent Congressional Public hearing on the subject was done to find its influence on the policy paper. After an in-depth analysis of the 'canonical' text, the relevant academic discourses, related media discourses and think tank discourses were also looked into to understand the policy discourse better and to find out how they influenced the production of knowledge in the policy discourse. Explanations of why a particular text was chosen for analysis will be specified along with the corresponding interpretations.

To understand the British counter-radicalization policy discourse, the recent 2011 and older 2007 & 2009 *Prevent* documents were chosen as central texts. Other texts chosen for the British discourse analysis include a few relevant academic discourses – mentioned earlier in the review of literature, a few important media discourses and influential think tank discourses whose significance will be explained when a reference is made.

The second step involved a close engagement with these texts to analyze the language, comprising key words, terms, phrases and labels within the central texts. However, the same was not applied to academic, think-tank and media discourses analyzed alongside the main ones. As the influence of these discourses could be seen only through adopting an idea conveyed through language, the corresponding representations of these alternative discourses were compared with the central ones.

The final step involved analyzing how the various policy representations which were shaped by representations developed through alternative discourses legitimized the current policies. Through this process it was possible to identify the representations of the various discourses facilitating a further interpretive analysis of how alternative discourses influence each other. It also made it possible to understand the representations within a wider social context.

The discourse analysis aims to answer a few questions: What are the various American and British representations of radicalization and what are the similarities and differences between the two actors? Have academic representations of radicalization shaped counter-radicalization policies, and if so how and to what extent?

Analyzing discourse

This chapter deals with how America and Britain construct counter-radicalization discourses within the overall discursive field of counter-terrorism. The discourse is critically analyzed in different parts. After a genealogical analysis that studies the roots of the radicalization discourse, a critical discourse analysis will be applied to identify the underlying theories behind the different representations of radicalization, and 'expose the perspectives that the discourse fails to acknowledge.'[60]

In this analysis, the representations are constructed within a limited scope and the discourses of the two actors dealt

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separately. This is to facilitate an individual focus on the repetitive themes in the discourses of the two actors. While the analysis entails studying the central policy texts in great detail, each section will also determine the influence of media, think-tank and academic narratives in developing the 'unsounded theory,' that Foucault refers to. Due to the limited scope of the study, a detailed Critical Discourse Analysis will not be applied to the other discourses.

Finally a comparative language analysis of the two discourses will be done, in order to comprehend the similarities and differences in their approach, judge the amount of influence of one on the other and analyze the inherent troubles that have been worrying Western policymakers. The intention of this discourse analysis is not to analyze the consequences of the policy or critically appraise the policy measures, but to see how different constructions on the same theme can be shaped by social, academic and political contexts.

Genealogical Analysis

Though discourses produce specific meanings through its language, a genealogical approach helps us understand how the current knowledge on the subject is produced over time. While a short genealogical outline of the American and British discourses was referred to earlier, the current analysis looks at how past discourses have created 'discursive foundations' for the present discourse and points out recognizable traditions followed by the discourse.

The present American discourse derives many of its cultural assumptions from the wider terrorism discourse. Particularly in the way it portrays American Muslim communities, the present discourse draws on a longstanding policy practice of the Obama administration that has tried to remove all reference to Islam and Islamic ideology from debates regarding terrorism and political violence. Drawing the ire of a few terrorism experts, Obama drops such references because 'linking Islam to terror … feeds the enemy's propaganda.'[61] Further, the discourse draws from past experiences in community initiatives. Moreover, the construction of enemies and the Muslim 'other' are built around a long tradition of engagement stereotypes and analytical think-tank narratives that encourage community-led interventions.

On the other hand, the cultural premise of the present British discourse originates from past *Prevent* discourses. Unlike the Americans, the British policymakers have been facing a more severe threat from self-radicalized extremists ever since 2004. Naturally, the British discourse is long-winded with policymakers having a fairly better understanding of radicalization, leading to what outwardly looks like a more detailed strategy in comparison with the American strategy. Their lineage is also much longer. The central labels, narratives and discursive constructions of the *Prevent* discourse is well within the wider framework of *Contest*, the British counter-terrorism policy.

Though the earlier *Prevent* programme, 'inherited' from the Labour government, was considered 'flawed' by the Conservatives, their policy heavily draws from the past experience. A majority of assumptions and successful practices of the past *Prevent* has been effectively absorbed, except that the new *Prevent* heavily focuses on confronting the ideology of violent and non-violent extremists.

Critical Discourse Analysis of the American discourse

The 2011 strategy to counter radicalization entitled 'Empowering *local partners* to *Prevent* Violent Extremism' is considered for the current analysis. It is the first of its kind to address the 'ideologically inspired' violence in the United States. It highlights the importance of community engagement in counter-radicalization efforts and lays emphasis on three areas: enhancing federal engagement and empowering local at-risk communities, building government expertise on the subject and countering violent extremist propaganda. [62]

While trumpeting the existing policy knowledge about the importance of building relationships with community and not getting to the details of implementation, it appears to be a basic framework for developing a vigorous plan to counter the threat of radicalization. However, a deeper language analysis of the eight-page plan certainly exposes the implicit intentions of the American government and helps build an American 'identity' revolving around the discourse.

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The analysis is done in several parts to facilitate a detailed interpretation of the dominant narratives emerging from the discourse. Further, the words, phrases or narratives considered for the analysis are highlighted for easier reading. As the extent of inflation of the threat can be seen in the intensity of the corresponding counter radicalization policy, the analysis begins with examining how the threat of radicalization is discursively constructed in the policy document.

Constructing the Threat of Radicalization

Based on a discourse constructed by intelligence experts, the American policymakers perceive the threat of radicalization as being small, though past two years have seen more American citizens inspired by al-Qaeda ideology. According to Intelligence sources, on an average, about six prosecutions were made per year since 2001, and more than half of the arrests occurred within 2009 and 2010. Most notably, one in five cases was arrested based on clues coming from the American Muslim community. [63] However, since 9/11, only four of the planned home-grown plots got transformed into an attack, resulting in 17 deaths.[64] Surveys reveal no trend of growing support for militancy among American Muslims.[65]

Despite the fact that the threat is apparently low; Islamic radicalization is adequately legitimized through media discourses[66] and the NYPD is the only law enforcement agency that argues that Islamic radicalization poses significant threat.[67] Prominent policymakers who express serious concern are Senator Joseph Lieberman, the Chairman of the Senate's Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee and Representative Peter King, who recently chaired a series of hearings on domestic radicalization. Though the radicalization discourse became intensive after 2009, the Obama administration came up with its full-fledged policy to prevent extremism only in August 2011.[68] While the U.S. government morphed several U.K. approaches into its policy, it is widely criticized for not being robust, timely and ignoring the ideology factor in the war against ideas.

Though several conflicting assessments and the recent hearings on domestic radicalization[69] argue that Islamic radicalization poses a significant threat,[70] the government discourse seldom makes any reference to Islamic radicalization. In doing so, it lies parallel to a series of think tank narratives that point out the flawed approach of the NYPD model[71] and assess past American counter radicalization approaches and intelligence activities that were influenced by the NYPD model.[72] As 'misinformation of threat can harm security,'[73] the government narrative doesn't comprehend radicalization through the lens of the NYPD model.[74]

The model looks at how *Jihadist* ideology acts as a 'driver' and inspires youngsters into engaging in violence and sometimes sacrificing themselves for the cause of *Jihad*. Pointing out to the existence of a single trajectory of radicalization the NYPD model indicates that the process comprises four phases namely 'pre-radicalization (which constitutes 'conversion'), self-identification (where the individual accepts the ideology), indoctrination (where the individual develops a 'conviction' to commit acts of violence) and jihadization (the actual act of terrorism) – each of which have 'specific signatures.' It indicates how an individual becomes susceptible to extremist ideology, slowly develops the inclination for action and gets ready to commit acts of violence.[75]

Though the model doesn't serve as a constructive guide to intelligence agencies to predict who will follow the path of radicalization into *Jihadist* terrorism, it has predominantly linked radicalization to Muslim religious behavior and provided the intelligence community the authority to spy Muslim communities.

Anyhow, the language of the present policy ignores the NYPD model and purposefully avoids pointing out the American Muslims as the ones at the risk of getting radicalized. Besides, it doesn't make any reference to Islam as it views radicalization as 'threatening [American] fundamental values of religious freedom.'[76] Further, the concern that radicalization has the 'potential to divide us [Americans],'[77] erupts from America's inclusive society approach.

In communicating that the government is working to prevent 'all types of extremism,' the policy has accommodated other communities, which are potentially at the risk of getting radicalized by other extremist groups like the 'Neo-Nazis and anti-Semitic hate groups,' which have existed in the past. Consequently, the policy has embraced a think tank narrative[78] that also recognizes 'radicalization threat is nothing new.'[79] Even while targeting other forms of

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extremism, the policy maintains that al-Qaeda poses a major threat and recognizes that its narrative is predominantly propagated through 'videos, magazines, and online forums.' The American policymakers recognize online self-radicalization as a threat; but fail to provide an elaborate plan to counter it. The lack of an effective plan reflects the faulty sensitivity to the threat.

Analyzing the language of radicalization

The liberal, politically-correct counter-radicalization language of the American discourse comes with a cultural tradition of the United States being a 'more pluralist nation and a society that embraces diversity.'[80] It is built on the modern wave of immigration, commonly referred to as the 'melting pot.' Further, the perception of the American dream and the United States as a land of opportunities, has significantly contributed to the language of the discourse, perception of threat and also largely to the reduced incidence of threat.[81]

Though the Bush administration adopted an arguably Realist approach to terrorism, radicalization was recognized as a security threat only during the Obama administration. The White Paper is simply an extension of Obama's political rhetoric and anti-terrorism discourses which have continuously ignored any reference to Islam. The language, narratives and labels, certainly communicate the government's focus on 'asserting liberal values.'[82]

Further, the labels of terrorists used by the American counter-radicalization discourse are based on the understanding that 'dropping religious labels denies Al-Qaeda and its affiliates the religious legitimacy they severely lack and so desperately seek.'[83] This is precisely the reason why Americans 'consider the implications of using "Islamic" language when discussing terrorism-related issues.'[84] The American discourse is deliberately constructed to earn the trust of the American Muslim community.

Analyzing the American conceptualization of radicalization

While the policy does not explicitly define the term radicalization, different attributions made to extremists and ideology give details about its conceptualization. The policy identifies extremists as 'individuals, who support or commit "ideologically-motivated violence" to further political goals,'[85] however it refuses to define ideology clearly. The absence of conceptual clarity clearly explains the doubts lingering within the American policy circles.

Yet, the government's conceptualization of radicalization can be understood by looking at the definitions of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and the National Counterterrorism Center (NCTC), the federal government's lead counter-terrorism agencies. They acknowledge that radicalization is 'a fluid process in which a variety of factors can play a role.' The current policy is congruent to this understanding and aims to counter a string of radicalizing factors.

Discursively Constructing the Muslim 'other'

A critical glance of the policy suggests that the American government looks at Muslim Americans as partners and not as terrorists and identifies communities as best placed to recognize and confront the threat of violent extremism. This also resonates within a discourse developed by law enforcement and security experts on the subject.[86] The vocabulary used in the policy further calls attention to its intentions.

Firstly, the White Paper entitled 'Empowering '*local partners'* to *Prevent* Violent Extremism' constructs the Muslim 'other' as partners. By not referring to it as 'Empowering local "Muslim" partners', the language of the policy reiterates the government's unbiased treatment of American Muslims. As Lorenzo Vidino warns 'against "securisation" of the relationship between government and Muslim communities,'[87] the policymakers emphasize the role of the 'at-risk' community by stressing that government is not the only one responsible in protecting them from getting radicalized. Further, the policy also makes an explicit acknowledgement that 'best defences [in the past], were well informed … by [Muslim American] families.'[88]

The language of the policy discourse is without a doubt based on an undeclared theory constructed upon a few of

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Marc Sageman's recommendations, although no policymaker makes any direct reference to him. Sageman's 'four prongs' model points out that 'alienating Muslims' will turn counter-productive and consequently, the language used in the American policy has been constructed in a way not to alienate its Muslim community. Sageman further reinforces the need for consistency of action with words and 'fair treatment' of Muslims. This idea is communicated in several ways throughout the policy.

The 'local partner' narrative within the policy is further emphasized through a media discourse that cited it and also quoted White House spokesman Nick Shapiro as saying: 'Muslim Americans are not part of the problem; they're part of the solution and have repeatedly condemned terrorism and forged partnerships at the local, state and federal level to help prevent violent extremism and terrorist attacks.'[89]

Moving away from the Problematic Islamic Terrorism Discourse

The language of the discourse has been greatly reluctant to deeply engage with 'ideology,' fundamentally because of an aversion to engage in religious debates. Moreover, the American policymakers assume it would spur controversy and alienate the Muslim community. Though the policy makes a passing reference to 'confronting extremist ideology,' the lack of stress could also be attributed to increasing dependence on academic literature that shows radicalization is far from linear, and has no connection to religion.[90]

In fact, the present approach also suggests that it has utilized the inputs of Quintan Wiktorowicz who is presently the *White House's* new director for community partnerships. His theory clearly demystified some of the 'stereotypes' existing within the Islamic radicalization discourse.[91] His study found not only who was vulnerable to being radicalized, but most importantly, who was the most opposed to being radicalized. Wiktorowicz pointed out that people who did not have a good grounding in the religion were most likely to be attracted by radical Islam and very religious Muslims were 'most resistant' to the process of joining an extremist group.[92] Moreover, existing research 'does not support the view that Islam drives terrorism or that observing the Muslim faith is a step on the path to violence.'[93]

While Obama's loyalists have been careful with their usage of the word 'Islamic' and have made sure that the West is not at 'War with Islam,' critics point to the lack of reference to ideology as a blatant error in the strategy. While most think-tank narratives, academic models and media discourses address three factors – grievance, ideology and socialization, American policymakers refuse to make any effort to counter the ideological threat posed by radicalization. Their hesitation understandably emerges from the concern about appearing to be in opposition to Islam.

Analyzing the Discourse on 'community engagement'

The central agenda of the counter-radicalization policy is to address radicalization through engagement. The following analysis suggests how the policymakers have purposefully constructed 'the self and the other' in a particular manner as the first step in the process of embracing the community. In fact, the narrative on the 'strength of communities' emerges dominant in the discourse on engagement.

This initiative noticeably arises from its past experience with communities based initiatives. By discursively constructing 'the self' as a 'facilitator, convener, and source of information,'[94] and 'the Muslim other' as ones who 'can readily identify the problem as they emerge,'[95] the policy is seeking the important role of the communities in confronting the ideological narrative of the extremist.

While the policymakers' perception of radicalization is unclear and its underlying theory hidden, the policy clearly reveals that the government's engagement strategy is based on existing successful models such as the 'comprehensive gang model, building communities of trust initiative, and the safe schools/ healthy students' initiative.'[96]

However, by citing these models, policymakers communicate that they view the threat of radicalization in the same

lines as gang violence. Though applying an approach used to counter gang violence might not be the right one, it is used based on the assumption that 'American street gangs are becoming increasingly radicalized,' a narrative dominantly emerging from academic knowledge regarding gangs and terror groups.[97]

Further, the policy makes a mention that it indirectly seeks to counter the extremist ideology by 'refusing to limit [its] engagement to what [the state] is against.'[98] The policy's support for 'engagement in civic and democratic life,'[99] is heavily swayed by Peter Neumann's recommendations on similar lines.

Overall, the strategy is implicitly based on terrorism expert Marc Sageman's cautionary statements of how engagement strategies have to be carefully drawn, without alienating Muslim communities. According to him, an engagement strategy specifically targeting the Muslims is likely to 'send the message that we are only interested in Muslims because they are potential law breakers.'[100]

Analyzing the Narrative on 'countering extremist propaganda'

The third main agenda of the policy deals with 'diffusing narratives that feed on grievance'[101] Countering the ideology of the narrative is more important than actually countering the extremist ideology. This idea of countering the 'War with Islam' narrative of extremists – which most Muslims 'sympathize with'[102] also appears in several academic discourses and counter-radicalization approaches of other Western countries.

Though several academicians conclude that an ideological narrative not necessarily influences an individual into an act of violence,[103] the emphasis on countering this narrative arises from the result of numerous surveys, which communicate the idea that U.S. WoT is viewed as U.S. 'War on Islam.' American policymakers hope to challenge this problem through a counter-narrative, which 'promotes religious freedom and pluralism,' which 'Al-Qaeda violently rejects.'[104] The language of the discourse has taken the first step in countering the narrative, as it is constructed keeping in mind that 'actions and statements that cast suspicion toward entire communities, promote hatred and division.'[105]

Predicting the Influence of Discourse against Muslim Radicalization

In March 2011, Congressman Peter King convened a series of public hearings to examine the threat of radicalization within the Muslim-American community,[106] which was received by hundreds of protesters and a few supporters.[107] They analyzed the extent of the radicalization threat in American Muslim communities, specifically in U.S. prisons, and among military communities and also looked at radicalization and recruitment ties between Al-Qaeda and its affiliates. However, some American Muslims identified it as a 'political hearing to stir up animosity.'[108] Moreover, a recent statement released by Faiza Patel of Brennan Center for Justice, questioned the factual basis of the hearings.[109] The controversial hearings on the subject barely had any influence on the policy paper. Given that the document was in the process of development for about a year, even before the hearings commenced, it was unlikely to persuade the 2011 policy.

However, given that the strategy paper has itself recognized the need for constant improvement, the hearings could possibly sway future policies in its way. A broad language analysis of the transcripts of five hearings suggests that it is unlikely to have any great influence on American policymakers, who are interested in asserting 'liberal values,' especially because it makes an assessment of the threat, based on the flawed NYPD model, which is not recognized by the policy discourse.

Conclusion: Mixed Representation and the Influence of Alternate Discourses

The FBI defines violent extremists as 'U.S. persons who appeared to have assimilated, but reject the cultural values, beliefs, and environment of the United States.'[110] Yet, FBI's wide use of the flawed NYPD model contradicts with its conceptualization of the problem. On the other hand, the DHS and NCTC have shied away from suggesting any identifiable markers of radicalization and the NCTC specifically repudiates that there are visible signs of radicalization.

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Further, through the discursive construction analyzed above, it is evident that the counter-radicalization agendas have been built upon a conceptualization that echoes clarity on some lines, but appears blurred on certain other aspects of radicalization. Therefore, the policy itself recognizes the need to analyze ongoing research on the subject, while not openly linking its understanding to any academic model or theory developed thus far.

However, through the discourse analysis, it has been possible to recognize that some of the policymakers' conceptualization is strongly analogous to the narratives developed by academic scholars on the subject. However, the policy discourse does not reflect any clear understanding of one particular academician. Instead, it has used from a concoction of academic literature. In fact, several agendas within the policy are also heavily influenced by think tanks discourses on the subject.

Critical Discourse Analysis of the American discourse

The core objectives of the latest *Prevent* strategy have not changed a lot since 2007.Yet the 2011 strategy has a better assessment of the threat and shows signs of a finer understanding of the factors influencing radicalization, thereby enabling a more 'holistic' approach. However, criticisms linger. The main condemnation of the previous *Prevent* strategy emerged from its 'failure to recognize the importance of ideology in the radicalization process.'[111]

The overhauled strategy which focuses on 'an ideology that sets Muslim against non-Muslim'[112] is reflective of the understanding that 'radicalization lies at the intersection of grievance and ideology,' as defined by Matthew Levitt, a senior fellow and director of The Washington Institute's Stein Program on Counterterrorism and Intelligence.[113] The corresponding objectives of the strategy are to confront the ideology, support 'at-risk' communities and work with key sectors that are susceptible to radicalization, such as education, health, faith, criminal justice and charities.[114]

An approach similar to that of the American discourse analysis is applied here. Analysis is done with an intention to uncover the underlying assumptions of the past and present British counter-radicalization policies. The analysis is done in several parts to assist a detailed reading of the central narratives. Further, a comparison of the language of the past and present strategy documents is also done to identify the different theories on which the discourse was constructed. As the degree of threat sensitivity constructed by a government discourse is reflected in the intensity of a counter radicalization policy, the language analysis begins with examining how the threat of radicalization is discursively constructed within the policy documents.

Constructing the Threat of Radicalization

Given that the British experienced home-grown terrorism as early as 2005, their threat perceptions were far more consistent and constructed based on intelligence reports. While the threat of Islamic radicalization is relatively new in America, an MI5 threat assessment report suggests that Britain faces a deadlier threat. Academic literature on the subject shows that both countries face similar challenges. Consequently, the British like their American counterparts also recognize the enormity of the threat posed by Al-Qaeda. Claiming to have 'more information about radicalizing factors,'[115] the British policy judges that radicalization is 'driven by an ideology which sanctions the use of violence.'[116] Though it reveals the conceptual clarity among British policymakers in some areas, it indicates the need to 'collaborate with other countries and continuously improve understanding of radicalization.'[117]

Ideology (religious or political) is often identified as a key radicalizing factor by several academicians. However as some of them point out the lack of link between radicalization and religion, *Prevent* insists that 'the ideology of extremism and terrorism is the problem; legitimate religious belief emphatically is not.'[118] Nevertheless, the British narrative on ideology is barely supported by any empirical evidence.

The policy report makes a thorough assessment of radicalizing factors of other forms of terrorism like Northern-Ireland terrorism and extreme right-wing terrorism. While still focusing on al-Qaeda-led radicalization, the strategy acknowledges that both right-extremists and radical Islamist groups increasingly share important similarities with al-Qaeda-influenced terrorism: 'both are driven by a supremacist ideology, and both define themselves by their

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opposition to each other: that opposition facilitates radicalization and recruitment.'[119]

However, the British policymakers quote a finding that contradicts with the above statement. They say that 'extreme right-wing terrorism is less developed than work on terrorism associated with al-Qaeda.'[120] This legitimizes their 'allocation of resources [that] will be proportionate to the threats we [the British] face.'[121] Though the new strategy makes efforts not to appear to be focusing on Al-Qaeda, yet most of 'priority' *Prevent* areas are selected based on the above criteria.

Like the Americans, the British recognize that terrorist groups are 'promoting [their ideology] frequently on the internet.' Correspondingly, a section in the document also focuses on countering online radicalization through effective 'counter narratives' and 'positive messaging.'[122] A deadlier threat combined with a much better understanding of the problem has led to more focus on what is widely spreading the extremist ideology. The strategy's primary focus is on 'increasing the confidence of civil society activists to challenge online extremist content effectively and to provide credible alternatives.'[123]

Comparing Language of past and present *Prevent* Discourses

In the present British discourse, within *Prevent*, the word is illustrative of 'factors and characteristics associated with being susceptible to radicalization'[124] and also means 'intervening to stop people moving from extremist groups… into terrorist-related activity.'[125] The language of the latest *Prevent* is not substantially different from the past discourses in 2007 and 2009. The main objectives of the 2007 strategy included 'challenging ideology, disrupting extremist activity, supporting susceptible individuals, increasing resilience and addressing the grievances that ideologues are exploiting'[126] – most of which are also covered in the 2011 strategy. It is very much an extension of the old one, except for focusing on ideology of violent and non-violent extremists. As the past *Prevent* strategy has been condemned as 'disproportionate', 'intrusive', and 'restricting free speech', the 2011 *Prevent* emphasizes the commitment to 'protect freedom of speech.'[127]

The revised strategy also incorporates a more comprehensive definition of extremism which is 'vocal or active opposition to fundamental British values, including democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect and tolerance of different faiths and beliefs.'[128] By this, it aims to make the process of selecting engagement partners easier. Yet, it has stirred controversy among Muslim activists from whom public funding has been withdrawn as a result of the changed definition. Further identifying extremist organizations as 'recruitment magnets,'[129] the policy clearly states that it will 'not fund or work with extremist groups.'[130]

The narrative on 'partnership with communities'[131] emerged as a dominant idea in the 2007 *Prevent* strategy. It also sought to prevent violent radicalization by equipping 'communities with a counter-narrative'[132] to that of al-Qaeda and other extremist groups; however, media discourses widely criticized it as 'propagating MI5 Islam.'[133] After funding more than 1000s of projects and actively involved in imparting good Islam, the past Prevent strategy was identified as counter-productive as it managed to 'stigmatize and alienate' the very Muslim communities it wanted to engage with[134] and turned out to be 'a cash cow which any enterprising Muslim group could tap into.'[135]

In fact, the current government's review points out that all government funding had reached 'the very extremist organizations that *Prevent* should have been confronting.'[136] The present strategy therefore aims to 'avoid seeming to endorse a particular kind of state Islam'[137] Moreover, as the past *Prevent* programmes have been reportedly used to spy communities, the 2011 document makes it clear that *Prevent* aims 'not be used as a means for covert spying.'[138]

Analyzing the change in British conceptualization of radicalization

Since 2007, there hasn't been a lot of change in the conceptualization of radicalization. All 2007, 2009 and 2011 *Prevent* strategies have been persistent with their understanding of radicalization influenced by a mixture of factors, some of which are ideology, radicalizers and their networks, vulnerable individuals, poorly equipped communities,

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grievances.[139] To this list of 'interlocking factors,'[140] the 2011 strategy has emphasized on the role of the internet, and have identified prisons and university campuses as major radicalization incubators.

Though no one particular model is explicitly linked to the conceptualization, the 2011 strategy paper acknowledges the use of 'academic intelligence'[141] on the subject. The 2007 strategy explicitly mentions that it believes there is 'no single profile of a violent extremist or a single radicalization pathway.'[142] The 2011 strategy on the other hand stresses on the ideology factor, without providing any evidence. Overall, the inbuilt language of the present *Prevent* policy is a highly simplistic and problematic understanding of the process of radicalization. The perception of radicalization is comprehended as being linear and predictable – a theory that lacks empirical evidence. As media discourses also point out, its language shows traces of influence from the so-called conveyor belt theory of radicalization[143] – the same one that led to past flawed American approaches, mentioned earlier in the American discourse analysis and also reviewed in detail by the Brennan report.[144]

The current *Prevent* discourse incidentally makes a mention of social movement[145] and social network theories which emphasize that 'radicalization is a social process …prevalent in small groups'[146] and individuals are essentially self-recruited. Social movement theory explains radicalization by 'examining the political environment in which the individual lives, the resources available, and the ideological framework they adhere to.'[147] Working within this framework are scholars such as Quintan Wiktorowicz and Marc Sageman, who have come up with 'empirically-based theoretically informed insights'[148] about radicalization. Their influence can also be widely seen in *Prevent*, though not completely.

Though the present strategy is developed based on an understanding close to the 'conveyor belt model', the British security agencies still don't agree with it. An empirical investigation undertaken by the British MI5 security service established that there was no typical profile of the British terrorists,[149] and the conclusions of MI5 were reportedly largely consistent with the analysis of Marc Sageman's *Leaderless Jihad.[150]* The British MI5 Study explicitly debunked the popular 'religion-terrorism' link,[151] but the 2011 strategy contradicts this understanding.

Moreover, a recent secret MI5 document entitled 'Radicalization of Muslims in the United Kingdom – A developed understanding,' shows that it continues to believe in the lack of connection between religion and extremism. It also believes the main causes of radicalization to be 'trauma, migration, criminal activity and prison',[152] some of which are incorporated in the 2011 *Prevent* document.

Discursively constructing the Muslim 'other'

The previous *Prevent* approach used the Muslim 'other' to destabilize myths about extremism and engaged in promoting a 'stronger understanding of [the Muslim] faith' by specifically working with Muslim community 'to help strengthen religious understanding.[153] However, this turned counter-productive, with the British government viewed as pro-Muslim. As in the present American strategy, the 'local partner' narrative was prominently found in the 2007 *Prevent* policy paper, but not in the 2011 strategy.

Yet, unlike the Americans who have tried to embrace all communities, the British policymakers did not. Instead of treating Muslims as part of the British community, they were treated in an isolated manner, which led to alienation. While the previous *Prevent* strategy was to some extent constructed based on Sageman's assertion on the religious disinclination of current generation terrorists, it did not reflect upon a complete understanding of Sageman's suggestions in relation to community engagement.

Analyzing the Discourse on Campus Radicalization

The discourse surrounding British universities dates back to the 1980's and 90's when Islamic groups, such as Hizb-ut-Tahrir operated within campuses.[154] The revised *Prevent* agenda argues that universities are one of the primary incubators of radicalization which are likely to attract 'at risk' individuals 'in the absence of appropriate checks.'[155] Further, based on the observations of the Centre for Social Cohesion,[156] it believes that removal of extremist organizations such as Hizb-ut-Tahrir and Al-Muhajiroun is crucial. Though politicians have been exaggerating the

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threat of radicalization in campuses,[157] media narratives argue that universities 'are not hotbeds of radicalization.'[158]

The 2007 *Prevent* made a passing mention of the importance of 'promoting good campus relations.'[159] Though the 2009 *Prevent* identified '40 English universities' at the risk of getting radicalized, there was barely any cooperation from these universities.[160] Past work aimed to support the student community, albeit only to a limited extent. However, the present *Prevent* seeks to inform universities about 'the risk of radicalization on and off campus,'[161] but doesn't dwell on the subject.

Prison Radicalization Discourse

Though prison is categorized as one of the key *Prevent* areas even in past discourses, the 2011 strategy looks into the problem at much greater detail. A 2007 National Institute of Justice study established that prisoner radicalization was 'happening in prisons mostly through personal inmate relationships.'[162] The classification of prisons as a *Prevent* priority area clearly originates from the academic understanding of Wiktorowicz and Sageman who emphasize that 'interpersonal relationships and group interactions [which are highly probable in prisons] as facilitating radicalization.'[163] In fact, both university campuses and prisons are identified as key incubators due to the same reason. Further, Neumann also specifically identifies prison, mosques and the underground as incubators of radicalization.[164] Though past approaches have reportedly provided training 'to identify signs of radicalization,'[165] no details were given how. However, 'progress has been slower,' predominantly due to the lack of a methodology to deal with the risk.[166]

Analyzing the discourse on online radicalization

Both past and present *Prevent* discourses have acknowledged the importance of countering the online extremist propaganda and are working on making the Internet a more 'hostile environment for extremists.'[167] However, neither 2007 nor 2009 *Prevent* strategies made any sufficient advancement towards this objective. The 2011 strategy which has drafted a plan to counter online self-radicalization is heavily influenced by a prominent think-tank recommendation, made by the International Centre for Radicalization Studies.[168] Consequently, a series of ministerial narratives in the media warn about the threat of online radicalization, and are promoting the idea that 'the internet now plays a greater role in radicalisation than prisons.'[169]

Multiculturalism debate: Expanding the horizons of *Prevent*

The main criticism of the previous *Prevent* strategy arises from the 'multiculturalism' debate, highlighted by the political discourses and think-tank narratives on the subject. In his Munich speech in February 2011, British Prime Minister David Cameroon blamed 'multiculturalism' for the rise in Islamic home-grown terrorism. State multiculturalism he said has 'encouraged different cultures to live separate lives.' As a result, it has led to more segregation of communities thereby 'weakening our collective identity.'[170] Previous *Prevent* work has also sometimes given the 'impression that Muslim communities as a whole are more vulnerable to radicalization than other faith or ethnic groups.'[171]

This debate has predominantly shaped the 2011 *Prevent* policy that intends to target all forms of extremism. The narrative on similarity among extremists, developed at a summit against Violent Extremism sponsored by Google Ideas and Council on Foreign Relations (CFR) recently brought together more than sixty former extremists. What was unusual about the summit was that 'they [the sixty extremists] shared a similar story whether they were from a suburb in the Midwest or a village in Africa.'[172] This in-turn motivated research in lines of finding similarities between Al-Qaeda terrorism and other forms of terrorism. This in-turn legitimized a policy response of targeting all forms of extremist organizations, though Al-Qaeda posed significant threat.

Conclusion: Incongruent representations & influence of variant discourses

Riddled by a few unsound assumptions and contradictions in the communication, the 2011 *Prevent* document

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doesn't offer a substantially new vision for addressing the problem of radicalization. While some criticisms of the past *Prevent* approaches identified in the review have been nullified in the current policy, with an ideology-driven representation of radicalization, sufficient empirical evidence in favor of a counter-radicalization focus on ideology is not offered. The revised policy puts an end to a notorious debate over the role of multiculturalism promoted by Prime Minister David Cameroon and embraces other ethnic minorities. Yet, the policy doesn't emerge as a very convincing one.

The language of the present *Prevent* policy is constructed with a motive to correct the faults of earlier approaches; but it does not accomplish the objective fully. While the new strategy is attempting to get away from the impression that Muslim communities are 'more vulnerable,' as a think-tank criticism points out, until now '25 priority areas'[173] are still selected on 'the basis of Muslim demographics.'[174] Though the strategy aims to target the threat posed by all forms of terrorism, allocation of resources are still 'proportionate to the risks we [British] face,'[175] which is chiefly identified as coming from al-Qaeda-led terrorism. The contradicting usage of extremism and terrorism is worth mentioning. Further, the review also points out that earlier *Prevent* programmes have 'failed to recognize the way in which terrorist ideology makes use of ideas espoused by extremist organizations'[176], but the 2011 policy doesn't make any effort in this route.

Most of the underlying assumptions of the 2011 *Prevent* discourse are based on the works of academicians such as Marc Sageman who recognize the radicalization process as 'becoming part of a protest-counter culture.' Contrary to popular belief, he is convinced that it is 'not a product of poverty, various forms of brainwashing, youth ignorance, lack of education or lack of employment.'[177] Sageman's conviction is verified by an MI5 study. Moreover, *Prevent* also 'found evidence to support [social movement] theory [which indicates] identity and community are essential factors in radicalisation.'[178]

The *Prevent* discourse, however, doesn't completely reflect upon any one academician's understanding. For instance, while Sageman clearly points out that radicalization does not require the assistance of an established group like the al-Qaeda, the *Prevent* strategy specifically talks of a phenomenon such as 'al-Qaeda-related terrorism,' and considers al-Qaeda as one of the key radicalizers. Moreover, several academicians including Marc Sageman in his book *Leaderless Jihad* insists that 'a counterterrorist focus on Islamic ideology is dangerous.' Yet, the central focus of the latest *Prevent* is on the 'ideology' factor. Empirically-verified models indicate that radicalization is not predictable; however, the *Prevent* discourse is built on the premise that there are indicators. The improper assimilation of academic knowledge leads to contradicting representations.

Comparing the language of American and British discourses

While both the actors have a great deal in common in their latest strategies, and also share some terms, assumptions and narratives, their discourses have been shaped by different conceptualizations. Both actors have evolved strategies to 'prevent' radicalization. The British have likewise named their strategy *Prevent* and the Americans call theirs 'Empowering '*local partners'* to *Prevent* Violent Extremism in the United States,' similar to the *Prevent* strategy of 2007, which was called 'A guide to *local partners* in England.' The present American counter-radicalization language is very similar to the 2007 *Prevent* strategy.

Both actors have a narrow underdeveloped understanding of radicalization. While the American policies and representations of radicalization are heavily influenced by their European counterparts, specifically British policymakers, they are still at a stage where the government and law enforcement agencies are building their knowledge about the extremist propaganda to effectively counter it. On the other hand, the representations of radicalization constructed by the British are partly based on empirically validated data gathered by state-owned MI5 agency and academic literature constructed upon social movement theory. Yet, the influence of the political rhetoric can be evidently felt.

While both the British and Americans make several references to the term 'ideology' in their discourses, the Americans refuse to sufficiently define religious 'ideology' per se and al-Qaeda ideology in particular. In contrast, the British discourse emphasizes that ideology is a major contributing factor to radicalization. In fact, 'challenging the

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terrorist ideology,' which 'sanctions the use of violence'[179] is the fundamental objective of the current *Prevent* strategy. Past *Prevent* strategy contains a reference to 'grievance' as another major radicalizing factor, which extremists use to reinforce their messages. But, the present American discourse asserts that 'there is no single issue or grievance that pushes individuals toward supporting or committing violence.'[180] In contrast to its initial grievance-based engagement approach, the American discourse has now taken a broader vision of radicalization.

The British discourse is admirable in terms of identifying key drivers of radicalization and should be applauded for offering a sophisticated review of previous failed *Prevent* approaches. However, the review of past approaches and the conclusive assumptions made thereafter contradict the policy measures in the current policy. Apart from laying emphasis on the ideology factor, the current *Prevent* is not adequately different from that of 2007.[181]

While both American and British discourses start with the assumption that radicalization poses significant challenge to national security, there still exists a lack of clarity about the extent of threat posed by extremist ideology.

Most importantly, both actors are moving away from the troubled concept of Islamic radicalization. Yet both American and British discourses consider the al-Qaeda 'network' to be the primary group that leads to radicalization and extremism. While avoiding any derogatory reference to Islam, the American policymakers have clearly communicated that Muslim Americans are not causing the problem, but undoubtedly will play a role in countering the problem.

On the other hand, the language of the recent *Prevent* does not explicitly or implicitly try to avoid alienating Muslim communities, though it has embraced other minority faith groups. While the government insists on having developed a more all-encompassing approach to radicalization by targeting different forms of radicalization, including those promoted by the al-Qaeda ideology, they have communicated otherwise. Their focus on Muslim communities, and increased public spending in areas with Muslim demographics, has led the British Muslims to believe that the government is interested in them only because they are identified as would-be terrorists.

The narratives of the present *Prevent* identifies the previous Labour government as being heavily influenced by the myth of 'radical multiculturalism.'[182] The Conservatives have reflected on it and understood that the failure of multiculturalism has led to further radicalization. This understanding is clearly evident in the present *Prevent* policy that intends to spread a theory of 'muscular liberalism.'[183]

Finally, the current American policy clearly makes efforts to communicate that the West is certainly not engaged in a 'War against Islam.' On the other hand, the British discourses do not make any effort in this direction, though they have also identified the above narrative as an influencing driver. However, both have tried to call attention to the fact that 'religious beliefs should never be confused with violent extremism'[184] and have communicated that an entire community cannot be blamed for a handful of extremists.[185]

Inferences of the discourse analysis

What emerges from the above discourse analysis is that American and British policymakers are marginally influenced by academicians who have developed empirically-validated models of radicalization on the basis of social movement theory and framing theory, a sub branch of the former. Moreover, the academic knowledge has been applied in different ways by the two countries, predominantly due to their diverse political and social climates. The language of the American policy communicates the government's intentions to maintain a diplomatic standpoint. For instance, the Americans have thus far ignored the 'ideology' factor in their strategy, predominantly because of their fear of appearing to oppose the religion of Islam. Consequently, their policy shows signs of approval of Sageman's research, which proves kinship and friendship bonds, have a greater power than the ideological narrative of extremists.

While Sageman agrees that ideology plays a central role in converting any new entrant to become the follower of a faith, he reiterates that religion actually has not played any major role in the conversion of an individual into a terrorist. Consequently, the British policy mentions that 'the ideology [it seeks to confront] is the problem; legitimate religious belief emphatically is not'[186]

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However, the language of the British policy simultaneously accepts and rejects the insights of Sageman. Though it agrees with Sageman that religion has nothing to do with radicalization, it does not approve of his recommendation that a 'counter-terrorist focus on Islamic ideology is dangerous.'[187] Heavily focusing on the ideology factor, the British policymakers are more interested in preventing radicalization rather than building communities of trust.

However, the British policymakers have made several explicit references to social movement theory which is known to have influenced the models of Sageman and Wiktorowicz. In addition, the empirically-verified British MI5 report is highly consistent with the analysis of Sageman. Several assumptions made in the policy are visible in the academic narrative. Yet, the policy does not reflect a complete understanding of Sageman's inputs. Sageman points out that the process of radicalization does not require the assistance of religious imams. But the British policymakers categorize al-Qaeda and its affiliates as key radicalizers, according to a model developed by Wiktorowicz, who works within a sub branch of social movement theory. While Sageman claims that radicalization is a leaderless activity, Wiktorowicz insists that extremist organizations are actively involved in radicalizing individuals, or at least attracting individuals into the process.

It's quite the reverse in the case of American policymakers. Though the policy shows signs of approval of Sageman's recommendations on some lines, it is not consistently faithful to his inputs. For instance, in an attempt to avoid discrimination, the policy aims to treat Muslims in a fair and consistent manner. The engagement strategy embraces other communities, including American Muslims. This way, the government narrative reduces the focus on Muslim communities, thereby avoiding further alienation.

However, a great deal of academic knowledge is being ignored by the American policymakers. For instance, the policy hardly emphasizes on incubators of radicalization; the prison radicalization narrative which emerges in scholarly works[188] and media narratives[189] hasn't found a place in the policy. In fact, academicians have focused on the role of prisons.[190] On the other hand, *Prevent* shows a lot of signs of approval, but fails to completely translate its assumptions into policy measures. Take for instance *Prevent's* narrative on community engagement. Like the Americans, it embraces other minority communities in order to appear diplomatic, yet priority areas are still identified based on Muslim demographics. This way, the government narrative alienates the very communities it seeks to hold close. Moreover, *Prevent* seeks to build trust, but doesn't make any explicit effort in that direction.

The British have also ignored a lot of other valuable recommendations. For instance, the 2007 *Prevent* attempted to counter the narrative of extremists by imparting what they referred to as good Islam. While making an argument against counter-terrorist efforts to confront Islamic ideology, Sageman indicated that it is certainly 'not the role of the West to tell Muslims what is Islam.'[191] The British have taken nearly four years to correct their mistake. In fact, British policymakers have overlooked many other essential suggestions, especially in lines of public debate, political activism, and genuine engagement of British Muslims in politics. Neither have they made use of non-violent Salafi groups to assist grassroots' initiatives. On the contrary, they have only earned their displeasure.

In short, the present American policy is heavily influenced by the past British practices. Eventually the American policymakers have been seen as adopting the same academic theories that have influenced the British. However, the Americans have only partially referred to their British counterparts, and the British have only partially communicated their understanding of academic knowledge . In essence, both policies are only marginally shaped by academic knowledge on the subject.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Radicalization is certainly complicated, difficult to comprehend and tricky to address. However, understanding the different sides of radicalisation is fundamental to developing a sound strategy. Though plenty of academic literature covers the different aspects of radicalization, the present American and British counter-radicalization strategies have been created based on hazy representations developed through incomplete understanding of academic knowledge on the subject. Superficial readings of academic literature can barely help policy making. This is undoubtedly one of the reasons for policies, which are not holistic. Policymakers should not identify academic literature to strengthen

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their argument; instead they should start with an intention to find theories that could make appropriate observations about radicalization and lead to effective counter moves. While both Britain and America predominantly use academic insights that look at radicalization as a group phenomenon, seldom do they target individual and sociological[192] factors.

It is quite easy to dismiss academic models and theories as lacking consensus, but each of them offer a helpful conceptualization,[193] and often one complements the other. While some models believe radicalization is a linear process, others insist that individuals don't pass through all the stages. Deprivation, alienation, discrimination, identity crisis and glorifications of *Jihad* emerge as most obvious radicalizing factors. Some academicians insist that radicalization might arise from the difficulty of handling two identities simultaneously. However, others point to a 'prevailing lack of public Muslim debate about justification of violence.' Moreover, Western policies against Muslim communities that expose double standards are also often identified as a major external factor leading to the process of radicalization.[194]

While an in-depth analysis of all models and theories on the subject can provide useful insights for policy making, even the indicators mentioned above can be a good starting point for both researchers and policymakers. The problem of radicalization is continuously evolving and getting increasingly unpredictable – a reason why different academic scholars are building different models, highlighting a different array of radicalizing factors. However, in order to increase the use of academic knowledge in policy making, their work must be critically assessed by social scientists, who study related areas.

It is time academicians started taking on the obligation of ending an episode of evidence-lacking radicalization models and theories. Critical discourses against radicalization models often point out that they often suffer from a selection bias and major methodological and substantive shortcomings.[195] They are often criticized for basing their understanding of radicalization only on radicals turned terrorists. As even the smallest of errors in academic analysis could lead to faulty policies and legitimize uncalled for surveillance, academicians should aim at more objective, data-driven empirical research on the process of radicalization and how to prevent it. Though calls for empirical validity in terrorism studies are nothing new, in order to increase the use of academic knowledge , academia will have to promote the significance of their theories, whilst policymakers should raise their concerns about areas where they lack clarity. The two must work hand-in-hand. Moving forward in this direction, here is a speculative list of doubts that exist in the minds of policymakers.

1. As the degree of influence by extremist ideology is not clear, is confronting it the right way to prevent further radicalization? Can countering the ideology guarantee that radicalization will not ensue?
2. Is it useful to prevent this 'context-bound' radicalization by targeting individual, sociological, psychological or group factors, or all?
3. While several academicians point to numerous radicalizing factors that attract or force an individual into the process, how are these propagated by extremists? How can they be countered?
4. What makes some individuals more vulnerable to engaging in terrorism?
5. What counterterrorist measures can cause further radicalization?

While it is impossible to develop a single theory that addresses the array of radicalizing factors, an accurate perception of the threat posed by a variety of extremist organizations coupled with a detailed understanding of applicable academic knowledge can certainly facilitate better policies.

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[193] For instance, empirical studies like Nesser, P. (2004) provides insights into a series of different types of activists, different roles they perform and also points out different personality types of individuals engaging in radicalization. Slootman & Tillie (2006) calls attention to the 'intersubjective nature' of the process, which depends on peer influence, rather than Imams or even the internet. Yahya Birt of Change Institute. (2008) who has analyzed the rise of '*Jihadist* tendencies' in Britain, recommends the government to 'strengthen the potential within the Muslim community to respond, reinforce mainstream Islam, and reassure the general public.'

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