

Ceza Hukuku ve Kriminoloji Dergisi Journal of Penal Law and Criminology

Research Article

 Open Access

Security Measures or Islamophobic Policies? A Systematic Review Using the WPR Approach



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Abstract

This study systematically reframes problem representations within the UK's counterterrorism policy by applying Carol Bacchi's (2009) innovative 'What is the Problem Represented to be?' (WPR) approach to policy analysis, with a specific focus on the 'CONTEST' strategy and its pivotal component, Prevent. This article revisits the consistent construction of the 'problem' within policy frameworks through a retrospective analysis of policy documents and existing academic literature, rather than proposing a new argument. By tracing the genealogy of Islamophobia as represented in these policy texts, this study reveals the dominant portrayal of Islam and Muslims as underlying 'problems', highlighting the implications for governance practices that shape both policy and societal perceptions. The analysis identifies three recurrent problems in successive versions of CONTEST—namely, the perceived failures of Multiculturalism, surveillance deficiencies and concerns around Radicalisation—demonstrating how these framings reinforce the depiction of the so-called 'Islamic terrorism' and the Muslim 'Other' as central to security initiatives. By systematically reframing existing academic and policy discourse, this review underscores the influence of these representations on shaping security-oriented perceptions of Islam and Muslim communities in the UK.

Keywords

Problem Representation • Counterterrorism • Islamophobia • Power Relations • Security Discourse



“ Citation: Onay, Ö. (2025). Security measures or islamophobic policies? a systematic review using the WPR approach. *Ceza Hukuku ve Kriminoloji Dergisi–Journal of Penal Law and Criminology*, 13(1), 85-104. <https://doi.org/10.26650/JPLC2024-1520359>

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Introduction

This article systematically examines how manifestations of Islamophobia are evoked in UK policy texts, including CONTEST, the name given to the government's overarching counter-terrorism strategy, and its Prevent component, which aims to address all forms of extremism and engage with individuals deemed vulnerable to radicalisation (Choudhury & Fenwick, 2011; Lowe & Bennett, 2021). By employing a specific form of Critical Discourse Analysis known as WPR (What is the problem represented to be?), this study investigates how Islamophobia is perpetuated and amplified through the language and framing of these policies. Despite aiming to improve state engagement in Muslim communities and community cohesion, this paper argues that Prevent strategy has triggered more disengagement and furthered the construction of Muslims as a 'suspect community' in the UK context (Abbas et al., 2023, p.720, emphasis mine). By analysing data from consecutive government documents from the 2011 version of the CONTEST, This article conducts a systematic review of existing research on counterterrorism policies, utilising a novel methodology to analyse the literature. Rather than introducing original perspectives or new findings, this study reframes and synthesises established arguments to provide a fresh analytical lens on the existing body of literature. In addition to policy documents, this paper benefited from the insights and analyses provided by journalists and commentators who have delved into the nuances of CONTEST, including its Prevent strand. The use of media texts in the manuscript serves to provide a broader perspective on the issue of Islamophobia and its impact on surveillance practices, multiculturalism and the criminalisation of Muslim minorities in the context of radicalisation in the UK (Allen, 2014). This adds depth to the analysis and helps to contextualise the policy text analysis with real-world examples and experiences. One article from The Guardian analysed in the manuscript is the UK's Prevent counter-radicalisation policy 'badly flawed', published on 27 October 2016. This article examines the criticisms of the Prevent strategy, providing insights into how it is perceived and its impact on communities. The last piece of data added to the former is a comprehensive report titled 'Hate Crime Project' (2018) by the Home Office- UK's primary agency for immigration, security, and public safety—addressing various aspects of hate crime within communities. The 'Action Against Hate' report from October 2018 outlines the UK Government's progress on the 2016 Hate Crime Action Plan, which aimed to tackle hate crime through five themes: prevention, response, reporting, victim support, and understanding. The update highlights successes like improved victim support, increased reporting, and community engagement, while also emphasising ongoing challenges, including underreporting and the need to address online abuse, with a renewed focus on victim-cantered policies and legislative updates (Action Against Hate, 2018). Its inclusion in this paper not only provides up-to-date insights but also enhances the legitimacy of the analysis by using authoritative government sources. This allows for a broader context and a more robust foundation for the analysis presented in this paper.

This article is structured as follows: First, an overview of the CONTEST framework is provided, detailing its evolution and the integration of various public sector efforts. Next, the Prevent strategy is examined, focusing on its origins and its emphasis on countering extremist ideologies. This section is followed by an outline of the methodology, which highlights the use of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) combined with Carol Bacchi's 'What is the Problem Represented to be?' (WPR) approach as key analytical tools. This methodological combination offers a unique lens through which anti-Muslim sentiments are embedded in UK counterterrorism policies, providing a novel perspective on the representations of Islam and Muslims within policy frameworks. The analysis then focuses on policy documents, tracing the emergence of Islamophobia within counterterrorism narratives and its impact on Muslim communities. Subsequently, the broader implications of radicalisation discourse on national security and social cohesion are discussed, with particular attention to surveillance practices. The article highlights the biases inherent in the UK's

counterterrorism strategies and their consequences for multiculturalism and Muslim communities' societal perceptions.

I. Contest

The CONTEST strategy, Britain's broader Counter-Terrorism strategy, focuses on reducing the risk to the UK and its citizens and interests overseas from terrorism (Home Office, 2018). It comprises four main elements: Pursue (to stop terrorist attacks), Prevent (to stop people from becoming terrorists or supporting violent extremism), Protect (to strengthen our protection against terror attacks), and Prepare (where an attack cannot be stopped, to mitigate its impact) (Heath-Kelly, 2013; Home Office, 2018). Following the Manchester Arena terrorist attack in 2017, an updated CONTEST framework was circulated, and in its foreword, then Prime Minister Theresa May emphasised the importance of enhanced systematic coordination across the public sector (Grant, 2021). She highlighted the need for increasing powers of the police, as well as reviewing Britain's counterterrorism strategy by integrating efforts not only among intelligence agencies but also involving local authorities, healthcare providers, and other public bodies. This comprehensive approach aimed to disrupt the planning and execution of terrorist activities by creating a more cohesive and responsive network (Home Office, 2018, p.4).

The updated and strengthened CONTEST (2018) strategy reflects a fundamental review of the four 'P' strands proposed in the previous CONTEST (2011). One of the changes in the 2018 version's counter-terrorism (CT) approach is the inclusion of a step-change in domestic investigative capabilities through implementing MI5 (the UK's domestic counter-intelligence and security agency) and CT Policing's Operational Improvement Review (Home Office, 2018). The updated discourse in CONTEST equally emphasises the integration of the transnationalism governmentality of the 'war on terror' - a framework that, as observed, has sometimes fuelled anti-Muslim sentiment and contributed to the stereotyping of Muslim communities (Rashid, 2013). The updated discourse in CONTEST also highlights the evolving focus on radicalisation as a central concern, shifting from a focus on highly organised Al-Qaeda-affiliated networks to a broader issue of lone-actor or self-radicalised individuals. As Knudsen and Betts argue, the nature of the terrorist threat has shifted, with the rise of the Islamic State (IS) and the increasing identification of radicalisation pathways that involve a more diverse array of individuals, including those with criminal backgrounds or mental health challenges (Knudsen & Betts, 2024).

Monaghan and Molnar (2016) argue that the broad range of indicators suggested as drivers of radicalisation has led to discriminatory practices and unjust targeting of the Muslim community as the 'usual suspects.' This critique aligns with the definition of so-called 'Islamic terrorism' in the latest CONTEST (2023), which describes it as the threat or use of violence to establish a strict interpretation of an Islamic society (Home Office, 2023, p.12). Such definitions can reinforce biased perceptions and discriminatory practices against diverse Muslim communities in the UK. The current approach has unfairly generalised an entire community, implying an unjustifiable connection between ordinary Muslims and the alleged 'Islamic terrorism'. CONTEST's agenda (2018) primarily focused on understanding the motives behind individuals turning to terrorism, particularly within the context of so-called '*religious extremism*' (Sian, 2017, emphasis added). This approach perpetuates harmful stereotypes and can fuel discrimination against the Muslim community, highlighting concerns about the fairness and efficacy of counter-terrorism measures. This underscores the need to address the systemic issues of cultural and structural racism (Abbas, 2020).

II. Prevent

The Prevent strategy, one of the three strands of the government's broader counter-terrorism approach, CONTEST, was officially launched in 2006 in response to the 2005 London bombings (Sian, 2017). This initiative primarily targets the dissemination of 'extremist ideology', 'radicalisation' and 'terrorism', concepts that remain nebulous and ill-defined by loosely defined groups, and individuals labelled as 'Islamic extremists.' It seeks to identify such ideologies and detect early signs of terrorism (HM Government, 2011, p. 1).

The primary goal of Prevent is to 'stop individuals from becoming or supporting terrorists and violent extremists and guide them through the deradicalisation process' (ibid). In line with this aim, the UK government's strategy for preventing violent extremism (PVE) has been strongly defended by several government officials, who highlighted the strategic allocation of PVE funding to areas with large Muslim populations. This approach is framed as an opportunity for collaboration between authorities, police and local communities to build resilience against extremism and effectively manage individuals suspected of radicalisation (Rashid, 2013, p. 14). PVE funding was primarily directed at Muslim communities, which contributed to a sense of being treated as a 'suspect community' and generated resentment from other groups, ultimately undermining social cohesion. There was also widespread concern that the allocation of PVE funding led to the exaggeration of radicalisation threats to secure resources, with some areas facing issues of lack of transparency regarding funding distribution. Moreover, there were critical concerns about the lack of focus and clarity regarding the objectives and scope of Prevent (Choudhury & Fenwick, 2011, p. 66).

As Qurashi notes (2018), despite appearing inclusive, the Prevent strategy, within the context of the 'war on terror', primarily targets the Muslim 'Other'. This frame the definition of so-called terrorism around this group, creating the basis for counter-terrorism measures. Consequently, this approach could contribute to the stigmatisation of ordinary British Muslims. The latter point is particularly important for this paper, which goes on to show how the current securitised context, targeting Muslims has been a great concern within the measures of Prevent with greater emphasis on Stop and Search on the streets or airports, PVE (or Prevent) funding and the use of surveillance cameras led to stereotyping and profiling of Muslims (Awan, 2012; Choudhury & Fenwick, 2013; O'Toole et al., 2016; Qurashi, 2018).

III. Methodology

A. Critical Discourse Analysis

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) serves as a crucial framework for researchers focused on social practice and justice, offering conceptual and methodological foundations. It enables an in-depth examination of how discourse and power relations are intertwined and perpetuated through written and spoken texts, bare the social inequalities that constrain human capabilities (Fairclough, 2003). Discourse extends beyond language. It is a socially constructed form of knowledge that dictates the boundaries of acceptable thought, expression, and writing concerning a given social object or practice (McHoul and Grace, 1993). Although often accepted as truths, these discourses are powerful fictions that are subject to interpretation and contestation. The analysis in this study delves into official government texts and policies, dissecting concepts such as 'race' and 'Islamophobia,' recognising them as abstract labels laden with contested meanings (Bacchi, 2000). As expounded by Fairclough (2003), critical discourse analysis focuses on the intricate connections between discourse representation and power relations among social actors. This shifts the focus from mere

language analysis to understanding texts' causal and ideological effects on power struggles within social practices, processes, and relations (Araujo & Carmo, 2019).

This study unravels how social realities and political subjectivities are shaped through the use of analytic constructs like discourses and representations. Rooted in poststructuralism and especially influenced by Michel Foucault (Van Dijk, 1980), CDA conceptualises language and discourse as constitutive elements of social and psychological realities. The omnipresence of discourse raises questions about the extent to which individuals are 'discourse users' or are constituted within discourse, leading to fragmented subjectivities rather than unitary and coherent identities (Burr, 2006). Linked to that, this study delves into how issues such as the 'ills' of multiculturalism, radicalisation amongst young British Muslims and 'the alleged lack of surveillance items' are represented in discourse, often demystifying power relations in British society since 9/11 or the onset of the war on terror, and attributing responsibility to individuals, ordinary Muslims in particular in this paper, for their own 'failures.' This analysis aligns with Bacchi's (2000) notion that discourses maintain an optimism about the possibility of 'change' for social inequalities by emphasising contradictions and creating space for challenge. Building upon the arguments of Niewolny and Wilson (2007), CDA acknowledges the constitutive features of discourse, recognising its heterogeneous and historicised nature (Foucault, 1972). This study, however, goes beyond identifying taken-for-granted 'truths' in policy texts. It employs a specific method of critical discourse analysis, the WPR (What is the Problem Represented to be?) approach, derived from Foucauldian-inspired poststructuralist analysis (Bacchi, 2012). This approach opens a crucial conversation about the role of theory in shaping British politics.

IV. WPR Approach as a CDA Strand

This article provides a systematic review of existing research on counterterrorism policies, offering a new analysis of the literature through a novel methodology, rather than presenting original perspectives or new findings. A systematic review is designed to gather evidence by identifying all relevant primary research and critically appraising and synthesising the findings to provide a comprehensive understanding of the topic. Such reviews may combine data from various studies to produce an integrated result or conclusion, or they may bring together different types of evidence to explore or explain the meaning behind the data (Pollock & Berge, 2018). In this case, the review maps out existing research on the UK's counterterrorism policy to trace the genealogy of Islamophobia, offering a synthesis of evidence but without contributing new arguments or theories.

In this research, I use a novel method called the *What's the Problem Represented to be* (WPR) approach to understand the UK's counter-terrorism strategies, particularly through policies such as Prevent and CONTEST. WPR, as a mode of critical discourse analysis, engages in 'thinking problematically' about both the 'objects for thought' and the forms of problematisation produced within practices (Bacchi, 2021). Despite being a relatively new method of discourse analysis, WPR has been applied to a diverse range of research, including obesity, economic policy, migration, transport policy, drug and alcohol policy, and gender equality (Ball, 1990, 1993; Watts, 1993/1994; Philips, 1996; Torgerson, 1996; Goodwin, 1996; Bacchi, 1990) or by implication (Beilharz, 1987; Jenson, 1988; Yeatman, 1990; Shapiro, 1992). This methodology is particularly useful for analysing the language of policy texts to shed light on how concepts such as Islamophobia and 'Islamic terrorism' are constructed to justify specific counterterrorism measures. By applying the WPR approach, I aim to uncover how successive counterterrorism policies in the UK—framed around security concerns—intersect with wider discourses that challenge multiculturalism and support the expansion of high-tech surveillance.

The purpose of WPR is to critically examine the underlying definitions of problems in government policies and documents by asking, 'how is the 'problem' being framed?' It challenges the assumption that 'everyone

knows what the problem is,' particularly in the context of counter-terrorism policies. This approach reveals how ordinary Muslim individuals in the UK are affected by constantly evolving policies that stigmatise their religion and stereotype Muslims as either terrorists or susceptible to radicalisation. Utilising the WPR approach as an analytical concept and method of policy analysis facilitates the delving into deep-seated assumptions and interrogates the 'problematization' presented in policy texts. As Foucault (1978) eloquently expressed, it is not only the creation of such texts that matters, but also the real-life impact, which initiates crucial discussions on various influences, obstacles, and tactics, as well as policies and so forth (cited in Bernauer, 1992). The WPR approach states that it is possible to use public policies and policy proposals as starting points to access problematisations through which we are governed (Bacchi, 2012). One key theme highlighted in the literature—analysed in the following sections using the WPR approach—is the perceived incompatibility between Islam and Western societies, particularly in the British context. This leads to a revaluation of how those in charge handle the Muslim community and their values, prompting a potential need to change current strategies or modes of rule (Allen, 2016). Another key point to highlight at this point is that the WPR is informed by Foucault's governmentality theory, which aims to uncover how the values and norms are 'truths', not in the absolute sense but in the sense that 'truths' become embedded within governing practices (Bonfatti, 2014). Foucault's work is useful for arguing how power operates through 'governing strategies, means of discipline and other kinds of social technologies' that could be mobilised by various institutions and social actors. The WPR approach uses six interrelated questions to study the discourse of policy (Bacchi, 2009, emphasis added):

1. *What is the problem represented to be in a specific policy?*
2. *What presuppositions or assumptions underlie this representation of the problem?*
3. *How has this representation of the problem come about?*
4. *What is left unproblematic in this problem representation?*
5. *What effects are produced by this representation of the problem?*
6. *How/where has this representation of the problem been produced, disseminated, and defended?*

The primary goal is to recognise that it is not the specific issues within societies that are important, but rather the way these 'problems' are depicted and perceived in government policy discussions. This must be challenged to denote the underlying 'real' problem. With this approach, WPR begins by analysing 'practical texts', primarily national policy documents, to gain a deeper understanding of how governance operates (Bacchi, 2009). Another significant reason why the WPR approach is selected for 'policy text' analysis is how, although the state is the game maker in many senses, other agencies and groups, in the wake of implementing or adopting policies acts, are involved in establishing order and set ideologies according to the WPR approach, be it *the planners, supervisors, teachers or the experts* (Bacchi & Goodwin, 2016, emphasis mine). Foucault would have arguably added psychiatrists to this list. The parties engaged in policymaking have a voice to set the rules for the construction of discourse. Extracting what is often hidden or unvoiced, one of the key objectives of the WPR approach is to 'de-inevitabilise' existing accounts of the global present, a present so organic that we are blindly naturalised into it (Bacchi & Goodwin, 2016)

The main objective of employing the WPR approach is based on the fact that the potential implications of racist/Islamophobic discourse are implicitly incorporated in policy texts, enabling researchers to work backwards from concrete occurrences such as alleged "Islamic terrorism" embedded in CONTEST and Prevent. The term "Islamic terrorism" or 'Islamist extremism' refers to the label associated with terrorist actions committed by individuals 'allegedly' from the Middle East or those identified as Muslim (Johnson, 2007; Roy, 2017). The attacks carried out in the name of Islam have arguably led to a problematic representation: the emergence of a moral panic resulted in ordinary Muslims becoming contributors to terror. These

instances collectively indicate how the political framing of the Muslim body as the racialised homogenous body has functioned as a tool (Nayel, 2017), both in the past and currently, to uphold the dominance of whiteness, Western superiority and alleged British values, if not having led to gradually stifling versions of the CONTEST. Within the context of evolving security measures and societal reactions, this article does not present a new argument but aims to revisit and critically assess these longstanding representations to answer the following key research question:

How do the UK's constantly changing counter-terrorism policies, particularly within the CONTEST framework and its Prevent component, frame and influence perceptions of Islam and Muslim communities, and what are the broader societal and governance implications of these representations?

This paper uses the WPR approach to put counterterrorism texts under critical scrutiny to understand the underlying motives and themes, providing answers to the main question of this research. Documents are dissected to tease out specific examples that implicitly or explicitly Islam, 'Islamic terrorism', Muslims, and British Muslims. In addition, direct quotations were drawn from the texts. The iterative process of independent analysis followed by discussion initiated through and mediated by WPR Questions was repeated for each of the subsequent WPR questions/steps indicated by Q1, Q2, Q3, Q4, Q5, and Q6 within the course of the analysis below.

V. Islamophobia, Multiculturalism, and Counter-Terrorism: Dissecting the Impact of Prevent Duty on Muslim Communities

In a central London speech, then-Home Secretary Sajid Javid introduced the government's new counter-terrorism strategy. He briefly acknowledged the ongoing threat of terrorism in Northern Ireland, stating, 'As we look across the UK, we must not forget that terror in Northern Ireland does pose a continuing danger too' (HM Government, 2019). However, he stressed that the predominant threat comes from 'Islamic terrorism', particularly from groups such as Al-Qaeda and Daesh. For one thing, this focus has instigated the perception of Muslims as inherent threats and deviants (Awan, Spiller, & Whiting, 2018). Javid's statements, therefore, exemplify how policy narratives on counter-terrorism have wittingly or unwittingly tended to associate radicalisation with 'Islam', Muslim communities and based on what is allegedly 'Islamic'. Such policy-bound discourses have facilitated presumptions over the past two decades that any Muslim subject can be vulnerable to radicalisation. This has led to framing ordinary Muslims as the primary targets for scrutiny and intervention (Abbas et al., 2023, p.720, emphasis mine).

Bacchi (2016) argued that policies implicitly frame such problems. Javid's statement suggests a need for change by labelling terrorism as Islamic and implies that multiculturalism may be unsustainable. This perspective overlooks equality in accommodating religious beliefs and protecting against discrimination (Modood et al., 2010). As evident from this, various portrayals of Muslims associated with radical ideologies and extremism have recapitulated the Prevent strand of counter-terrorism policy as imminent and viable (Sian, 2017, p.3). A closer look at Qureshi's (2015) work backs up the preceding point, stating that negative portrayals of Muslim and anti-Muslim narratives based on assumptions subvert the political expression/identity of individuals by turning them into potential threats. Evidently, Muslims' perceptions in the UK are very much 'clouded by a counterterrorism narrative that does not permit them to look beyond the fear of unknown threats' (ibid, p.181). These examples all point to how the development of Islamophobia as a form of governmental discourse (Mourad, 2022) achieved the problem status and was taken up on a policy agenda.

Islamophobia, characterised by exclusionary practices against Muslims or those perceived as Muslims, became more prevalent following the events of 9/11, the 7/7 terrorist attacks and the perceived 'war on

terror'. Sayyid (2014) defined Islamophobia as a manifestation of racism triggered by the problematisation of Muslim identity. Whether manifesting socially, politically, economically, or as a combination of these factors, Islamophobia shape perceptions of Muslims and Islam in the British context. Allen (2013) noted that such perceptions are most impactful when they permeate everyday cultural interactions in settings like classrooms, offices, factories, and social media (p.196). If we revisit the beginning of this section, we can see that the implementation of the 2018 version of CONTEST and its previously amended component, Prevent (2011), highlights the fact that Islamophobia has been used as a crucial ideological tool to legitimise the discourse of security for everyone. After thoroughly examining both policy texts, three main issues common to both texts were identified.

1st Problem Representation: Multiculturalism has been deemed the culprit for the challenges related to integrity, cohesion, and radicalisation in Britain.

2nd Problem Representation: Related to security or lack of surveillance measures.

3rd Problem Representation: Related to radicalisation or the grooming and incitement of British youth to commit acts of terrorism.

Muslim bodies are consistently subjected to Islamophobic practices and unjustly labelled as problematic (Sian, 2017, p.3). One of the fundamental assumptions of the CONTEST is that 'terrorists aim to divide us apart' (Home Office, 2018, p.5), around which the notion of a 'crisis of multiculturalism' has been justified in Britain (Q2). On the face of it, one problem representation identified in CONTEST is how terrorism creates division among people from different backgrounds. Instead of exclusively concentrating on the changing landscape of terrorism, it is crucial to understand how these structures unfairly criminalise and politicise ordinary people in the given context, be they Black, Irish, or Muslim individuals. For example, the Windrush scandal—the wrongful detention, deportation, and denial of rights to members of the Windrush generation by the UK government—impacted numerous black and minority ethnic British individuals and was a result of the Home Office's immigration policy failures (Slaven, 2022). This points to the possibility that past injustices and shortcomings of previous UK governments, rather than 'terrorism' per se, could be contributing to driving us apart and creating a sense of alienation from one another. To illustrate the previous point, Muslims are commonly depicted as irrationalists, exemplified by the book burning during the Rushdie affair¹ (Abbas, 2005). Additionally, in the wake of 9/11 and Britain's role in the global 'war on terror', ordinary people who are visibly Muslim have been increasingly linked to terrorism (Gabriel, Gomez, & Rocha, 2012). Such changes in how immigration, immigrants, Islam, and Muslims ensure that security policies and relevant implications in a given society are constantly revised in both temporal and spatial contexts, and in the current context, pre-empting the security-related concerns while disproportionately affecting British Muslims if not securitising them (Q3, Q5).

Multiculturalism, once considered a source of pride, has recently been criticised as a symbol of a divided nation and a underminer of unity in Germany, France and Scandinavia. According to Eva-Maria Asari, Daphne Halikiopoulou, and Steven Mock (2008), in Britain, a 2004 report by the Commission for Racial Equality criticised the failure of multiculturalism to promote Britishness and integration, with Trevor Phillips warning that 'we are sleep-walking into segregation' because multiculturalism fosters separatism (Q1). This report played a key role in establishing a hegemonic norm, enabling successive British governments to manage societal differences while avoiding the recognition of formal and informal equality (Q3). It has been re-evaluated as fostering fragmentation among Britain's racially, ethnically and culturally diverse communities rather than non-discrimination, equality, respect and recognition in relation to various dimensions of difference

¹The Rushdie affair refers to the controversy surrounding Salman Rushdie's novel *The Satanic Verses* (1988), which led to protests, calls for its ban, and a fatwa issued by Iran's Ayatollah Khomeini, leading to threats against Rushdie's life.

(Modood et al., 2010). Challenging British multiculturalism emerged as the government's response to the disruptions following 9/11, as well as the violent street confrontations in Bradford in 2001 and the London bombings of 2005. During these events, Muslim communities were often associated with abject status, with tolerance extended only to what was perceived as difficult, unwanted, or foreign (Q2) (Brown, 2012; Jackson, 2017). According to Yegenoglu (2012), the presence of millions of Muslim bodies being 'tolerated' may have crystallised the deep-seated Orientalist anxieties about Islam in Europe. This may have ultimately led to multiculturalism's perceived 'failure' (Q2). The concept of 'tolerance discourse' was dismissed when it became difficult to define what/who was considered acceptable and welcomed. The struggle to regain control over what and for whom is tolerated has become a key issue, particularly in the tense relationship between British Muslims and the state (Abbas, 2005).

Muslim communities cannot be homogenised and demarcated as highly variegated communities. They cannot speak with a unified cultural or racial voice because their background values originate from distinct nationalities and cultures. These voices were constructed as distinct as possible under the assets of multiculturalist discourse to make them as 'disparate' as possible from the majority within (Modood, 2020). Thus, within multiculturalism, as Yuval-Davis (1997) argues, the more traditional and distanced from the majority culture the voice of that distinct community, the more 'authentic' it would be perceived to be with such a construction. Once appreciated under multiculturalist governmentality, Muslim communities have been pervasively marked as a homogenous body as a legitimate basis to render a community quite diverse in themselves as altogether 'different' from the white British majority (Werbner, 2005) (Q2). Once associated with the politics of recognition and inclusivity, Multiculturalism as a state policy has no longer been part of the solution, particularly with the onset of the war on terror in the UK context. It has been problematic with its effects of creating crisis and allegedly producing homegrown terrorists (Rehman, 2007).

In response to these concerns, the CONTEST strategy has shifted its focus to national unity. Successive versions of CONTEST frequently employ first-person plural pronouns— 'we,' 'our,' and 'us'—to foster collective identity. For example, the 2018 strategy states, 'In the face of terrorism, we, as a society, must act together, using all the tools at our disposal to protect the public and uphold our shared values' (Home Office, 2018, p. 14). The choice of such a position is one of several discursive strategies, and it is typically used to refer to the ingroup of the current speaker deictically (van Dijk, 1991). In this way, the speaker creates a safe atmosphere to ensure that the recipients of the text are open to input that is yet to be come. It is for this reason that the binary of 'we vs. them' is a common discursive structure adopted in CONTEST and Prevent (Q2). 'We are the multiculturalists/ supporting diversity.../but... diversity ('they' are living according to their values and cultural heredities) is blamed for underpinning the failure of multiculturalism) (Q1, Q3). Through the we vs. they binary discourse of the spread of 'tolerance' and, hence, the isolation of communities that were once embraced as a necessary component of multiculturalist governmental policy has been blamed for the failure of multiculturalism over the last two decades. In the CONTEST strategy, tolerance and multiculturalism as dominant discourses of governmentality are positioned as a means to foster a more cohesive and integrated community, reflecting a shift in policy that seeks to achieve national unity and security (Q3). To explore the broader implications of the radicalisation discourse, the next section will examine the impact of Prevent on Muslim communities and national security, highlighting its focus on social cohesion alongside counter-terrorism efforts.

VI. Impact of Radicalisation Discourse on Muslim Communities and National Security

Due to its inclusion of a more holistic agenda, CONTEST has addressed a range of challenges, not only singling out radicalisation or security but also the protection of the values of liberal discourse ('liberal values' is mentioned 13 times in CONTEST) (2018). The current breadth of focus of Prevent, updated as of December 31, 2023, focuses on addressing the ideological roots of terrorism, early intervention for those at risk of radicalisation and rehabilitation for those already involved in terrorism. This guidance is intended for senior leadership, dedicated Prevent and safeguarding personnel, resource managers and frontline workers in specified authorities across England and Wales (Prevent Duty, 2023). Islamophobic by proxy, the strategy retrospectively called upon theologians, academicians and communities to mobilise Muslim communities in a way to handle radicalisation robustly (Iqbal and Abbas, 2024) (Q6). This is clear in the document 'Preventing Violent Extremism (PVE)—Winning Hearts and Minds':

"The government should not intervene in theological debates. However, there is a role for the Government in providing support where it is needed. We will support the development of strong faith institutions and leaders capable of effectively engaging all members of Muslim communities."

In the foreword to Prevent, Prime Minister Theresa May stated, 'Experience tells us that the threat comes not just from foreign nationals but also from terrorists born and bred in Britain' (May, 2011; Norris, 2015). This framing of so-called 'Islamic terrorism' as linked to ordinary Muslims has, since 9/11, contributed to the proliferation of an Islamophobic narrative, which has eroded trust between the white British majority and Muslim communities (Awan, Spiller, & Whiting, 2018). Such policies often construct Muslims within binary categories of either victims or threats, positioning them as antagonistic to key British values such as democracy, rule of law, respect, and tolerance (Goodhart, 2004; May, 2011; Norris, 2015). This framing facilitates the portrayal of Muslims as potential militants or enemies of liberal democracy within the UK government's governmentality. Through both discursive and non-discursive mechanisms, including racial profiling, stop-and-search practices, and representations of de-radicalisation programmes (Law, Sayyid, & Easat-Daas, 2019), Muslim communities are often homogenised. This process contributes to the emergence of new categorisations, such as religious extremists, immigrants, asylum seekers, and welfare dependents, thereby reinforcing a hierarchical and exclusionary framework.

Based on Richard Jackson's work in 'Religion, Politics and Terrorism: A Critical Analysis of Narratives of 'Islamic Terrorism'', the concept of 'Islamic terrorism' gained prominence in political and academic discourse in the late 20th century. This was particularly accelerated by the 'war on terror' post-9/11, as narratives surrounding terrorism began to link Islam and Muslims to violent extremism and radicalisation (Q3). While patterns of terrorism involving Muslim groups were observed before this period, the term 'Islamic terrorism' itself had not yet been developed (Q2). Within the context of the prolonged 'war on terror,' discursive strategies surrounding 'Islamic terrorism' and 'radicalisation' have been primarily framed in relation to the perceived failure of Muslim communities to integrate into British society (Q2). This framing reinforces the narrative that links the security of the nation-state to the assimilation of minority groups, thereby positioning Muslims as a homogeneous threat to social cohesion. The ongoing and often unchallenged amendments to UK security policies, which include discriminatory practices such as the disproportionate use of stop-and-search powers against Black and Asian individuals (Equality and Human Rights Commission, 2010; Modood et al., 2012), have exacerbated a backlash. This backlash, marked by extremism and resentment, has been projected onto these communities, attributing their alleged failure to integrate as a primary source of social and political instability (Q2). 'Radicalisation' as the third problem represented in unity with

alleged Religious-oriented groups has been explicitly put forward in Prevent (Strategy, 2011), although, on the face of it, it was introduced with the seemingly positive goal of preventing radicalisation and terrorism in the UK, and political leaders claim (out of necessity) that it targets all threats of terrorism and extremism. However, counter-terrorism practices disproportionately target Muslim bodies, often without any suspicion or evidence of criminal activity (Cohen & Tufail, 2017; Versi, 2017). The radicalisation of Islamic groups worldwide, along with its perceived impact on the 'West,' is framed within a narrative that positions these groups as threats to Western interests, liberal values of modernity and internal state security (Q2, Q3). The underlying problem represented in CONTEST and Prevent appears to refer to the lack of democracy, personal liberty, and human rights in Al Qaida and Daesh (now IS) and indirectly in those who live by Islamic values (Q1). This setting the stage for the next section, which explores how successive iterations of CONTEST have normalised surveillance practices that categorise and construct 'others' in the UK.

VII. Surveillance and the Construction of 'Otherness': Implications for British Muslims

This section examines how successive versions of CONTEST have introduced security measures, including airport checks, surveillance of Muslim students on university campuses, and media and political discourses that have framed Muslims as a suspect community (Choudhury & Fenwick, 2011). The 2023 document suggests that these measures could intensify social divisions, disproportionately impacting British Muslims (Q5) (Home Office, 2023).

Bacchi explains that studying policy-as-discourse is premised on the notion that specific problems are created and shaped by the proposals offered as 'responses' (2009). Using surveillance to manage and contain a population provides detailed knowledge and response to 'see' it and break it down into governable units to challenge their underlying assumptions and consequences (Haggerty, 2006). According to Fiske (1998), surveillance gaze allows for a population to be known, which is a prerequisite for it to become a site of action: identifying the 'risks' that need to be neutralised, the unacceptable, abnormal behaviours and ideas that need to be disciplined by way of extending social norms to mould ideas and behaviours. As in his panopticon model, Foucault (1975) identified it as a process of 'soul training' aimed at the automatic functioning of power. The main objective of the panopticon is to transform individuals so that their acts align with prescribed social norms to the point where 'Other' is ultimately realigned with what is acceptable and 'normal' in a given society (Foucault, 1991; Lyon, 1994). Surveillance is the product of history and the heart of colonial projects. Qurashi (2018) argued that monitoring the extent of adoption and resistance to imposed European ideals and practices and monitoring traces of indigeneity that threatened colonial projects enabled the capitalist colonial project of expansionism. The strategies of containing Muslim agency are based on the European colonial era of controlling and ruling 'others'. In that sense, the ongoing 'war on terror,' lacks a singular, defined enemy, relying instead on ideologies (Abbas, 2004), further entrenching these historical patterns of surveillance and suspicion.

The categories of minorities associated with varying rights have been subjected to different managerial and surveillance practices in the UK, including the 'life in the UK' test or the imposition of biometrics. Surveillance is not only based on ensuring security and order in a direct manner but also targeting self-surveillance and self-regulation. Although surveillance assets have always been present on British soil to varying degrees, only after the onset of the 'war on terror,' i.e., 9/11, has it been a mundane feature of the routines of everyday life across public and private spaces (Q3) (O'Neill & Loftus, 2013). In the UK's 'war on terror,' the Prevent strategy has been used to create surveillance infrastructure that connects Muslim communities to numerous local authority organisations (Qurashi, 2018). One of those local projects is named

'Hate Crime Project' (Home Office, 2018), which ran in the London Borough of Tower Hamlets and empowered 38 young people from primary and secondary schools to increase their confidence to educate others, who were representatives for Muslim communities (Eseverri-Mayer, 2024) normalising the intervention through shaping Muslim school children assuming that problem of extremism and terrorism is closely tied to young Muslims and Islam as a religion (Q2). Surveillance is deeply embedded into policies and practices—culturally and psychologically—but the way it is adapted to privileging alleged 'Islamic terrorism' is not reflected at an institutional level. This is clear in the words Rt Hon Sajid Javid (2018) asserted in the foreword of the CONTEST:

"We do not live in a surveillance, nor do we want to; our responses must therefore continue to be proportionate, inclusive and subject to strong oversight".

The emphasis on 'not living in surveillance' is the implied problem in CONTEST (Q1). Preceding this saying, Sajid Javid mentioned that it will never be possible to stop every attack, followed by 'surveillance as a security means', which is of no concern. The assumption here might be associated with an implicit understanding of a 'problem' of what needs to be 'changed' under the rationale that 'we are doing this for your own good' (Q2). In consequence, the discursive implications of ideological terror, not least its escalation in the UK's war on terror discourse, are shaped by the very proposal it denotes: one of the strategies to be used to prevent terrorism is the deployment of 'surveillance assets' which purports to be 'limited' / 'not enough', therefore does not help prevent terrorist attack appropriately (Q2, Q3). By using this approach, the aim is to analyse Islamophobia at an institutional level, incorporating it into policies and practices and precipitating a kind of universalising essence of Islam (Allen, 2015) as the infidel enemy and Muslims as barbaric and threatening (Q3). The effects of such social engineering, including organising local projects to 'manage' and 'keep under control' the 'them', the terror makers, have underpinned the surveillance technologies increasingly implicated in security-related policy texts such as Prevent and CONTEST (Q3).

The new heights of sophistication have been equally normalised. The technologies of surveillance are moved towards being more zoned in ways that ensure the management of religious minorities by adopting internet tools and biometric technologies. Project Champion in Birmingham, a surveillance scheme in the United Kingdom, involved the installation of covert and overt Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) cameras in predominantly Muslim areas of the city (Lewis, 2010; Walker, 2014) (Q5). In Prevent, any future funding for tighter monitoring and evaluation was mentioned with an emphasis on monitoring internet tools to target terrorist profiles (Strategy, 2011). Internet as a word appeared 22 times in Prevent and 76 times in CONTEST. The CONTEST is highly predicated on the prevalence of internet usage among terrorist groups 'to subvert our way of life through simple and brutal violence' (Home Office, 2018). Internet monitoring is one of the main methods of communicative surveillance, which can arguably lead to self-censorship or hesitancy to engage in society (Communicative Surveillance, 2018). This approach denotes that 'going online' is a potential threat through which terrorist plots are organised; thereby, holding the artefacts of technology is a requirement so that they may be able to nip in the bud (Q2). The UK employs the threat of 'Islamic terrorism' to legitimise disciplinary measures and other social technologies that can be mobilised by various institutions and social actors (Kretsedemas, 2011). Both Prevent and CONTEST are designed to justify the expansion of surveillance technologies as essential for maintaining national cohesion and safeguarding against alleged 'Islamic terrorism,' with the absence of such measures being framed as a potential cause of terrorist incidents in the UK.

Taken together, the data that emerged from the two policy texts suggest that the point of departure while arriving at problem representations varies, and there are deep-seated presuppositions underlying 'these' representations of the above-determined problematisation. The following section will discuss what is left

unproblematic in multiculturalism, radicalisation and the lack of surveillance assets as security measures, as well as the silences and whether these ‘problems’ could have been conceptualised differently. In addition, what effects are produced and highlighted by the ‘already analysed’ representations of the problems, and how and where have these representations been produced and disseminated?

VIII. Effects of Policy Problem Representations: Silences in CONTEST and Prevent Duty

The problem representations in policy documents are preconceived as ‘natural’; they are designed to address issues immediately, thus becoming a reality. The policy is a mere mask for ideology, Althusser (1975), who asserted that silence is indeed a presence. Remember the following text: What was left unsaid is just as important as what was spoken, if not more so. Analysing policy texts involves interpreting both what is present and what is absent, focusing on the art of persuasion rather than just surface evidence. Radicalisation is presented as the central issue in CONTEST and previously in its Prevent aspect. The manner in which discourse presents radicalisation among individuals from majority Muslim countries like Pakistan or Bangladesh is linked to the solutions also presented in the discourse. Policy as a form of discourse can be used for positive political action (struggle, resistance, and contestation) and even as a critical tool. However, the power to challenge the issues raised by policy texts must be thoroughly examined. In this regard, the following addresses the three issues identified in Prevent and CONTEST through the last three questions of the WPR approach.

Q4. What is left unproblematic in this problem representation? What are the silences? Can the ‘problem’ be conceptualised differently?

The policy should be the government’s best attempt to deal with problems. Policies give shape to them; hence, rather than reacting to ‘problems’, governments are active in creating (or producing) policy problems. Because all policies make proposals for change, they contain implicit and explicit representations of problems. The rationale behind this question is to propose ways in which language, more broadly discourse, sets limits upon what can be said (Bacchi, 2009). To illustrate this point, the emphasis on the new post-Brexit point-based system is based on the decrease in the number of low-skilled immigrants, which ignores the possibility of increasing workforce participation among the under-employed.

Q5. What effects (discursive, subjectification, lived) are produced by this representation of the ‘problem’?

The notion of ‘lived’ effects refers to how policies create representations of problems that impact our lives materially (Bacchi, 2009). Discourses produce truths through constructed problem representations, prompting the question: how are issues such as ‘radicalisation’ and ‘multiculturalism’ discursively elaborated? These issues are not fixed across time and space; thus, their meanings differ in various contexts. The definition of problems can shut down debates in one place, while multiculturalism may still be valued elsewhere. The subjectification effect of problem representation shapes how individuals see themselves. In policies like Prevent and CONTEST, the use of ‘we’ illustrates how such discourses position individuals within social relationships and identities (Bacchi, 2009).

Q6. How and where has this representation of the ‘problem’ been produced, disseminated and defended? How has it been and how can it be disrupted and replaced?

The idea of political language dates back to Aristotle and the tradition of rhetoric (problem complexes related to language and politics (Pagden, 1987). One contribution of particular significance is the essay by Donald Schön, ‘Generative Metaphor: A Perspective on Problem Setting in Social Policy’. Schön argued that social policy is less a matter of problem-solving than a matter of the problem sets. His essential proposal

is that we construct social problems (and thence policies) in specific ways that we then socially understand as 'natural' and 'obvious' (Schön, 1979). Such proposals are disseminated not only in official policy texts like Prevent and CONTEST but also through numerous other means, such as newspaper reports, digital platforms, and social projects, with extensive educational sources hinging on disseminating a confident attitude.

Three problem representations are identified in Prevent and CONTEST, which foreground the alleged radicalisation of Muslim youth and the formation of a suspect community, (lack of) security (to counter 'Islamic terrorism' thoroughly), and multiculturalism (as it does not serve the power discourse anymore). As Cobain (2016) argued in a Guardian article, the UK's Prevent counter-radicalisation policy suffers from inherent flaws that risk infringing on the human rights of young Muslims. According to the article, the Open Society Justice Initiative's report, 'Eroding Trust,' highlights several critical issues: Prevent's focus on 'pre-criminality' and 'non-violent extremism' lack a scientific basis, resulting in discrimination and stigmatisation of Muslim communities. These practices have led to a climate of fear rather than security, triggered counter-productive outcomes, and incited British Muslims to question their British identity.

The portrayal of Prevent as both discriminatory and ineffective has resulted in a critical perception of government policies. Additionally, this portrayal risks polarising public opinion about security measures, with some seeing them as necessary but flawed, while others view them as fundamentally problematic (Awan, Spiller, & Whiting, 2018) (Q5). To illustrate, proposing the 'Anti-Muslim Hatred Working Group' as a part of the Prevent programme resulted in the reluctance in participation of certain individual Muslims due to the fear that the group's inquiry was based on the Prevent strategy and rendered Muslim communities wary of government interventions. The establishment of such a group aims to counter hate towards Muslims; however, some scholars argue that this approach may inadvertently reinforce perceptions of victimhood, exacerbate tensions, and underscore disharmony between Muslim communities and the white British mainstream society (Abbas, 2007; Kassimeris and Jackson, 2012) (Q4). The Prevent strategy's association with so-called Islamic terrorism is evident in political discourse, as reflected in speeches by British politicians. For instance, MP Gavin Robinson (2016) addressed this connection when questioned about Northern Ireland's exclusion from the counter-extremism strategy, highlighting potential inconsistencies in the strategy's application:

"Do not push the issue too far. It is really a counter-Islamic strategy,' (Robinson, 2016)"

Since 1970, there have been at least 3395 terrorist-related deaths in the UK, the highest number in Western Europe. Most deaths were linked to the Northern Ireland conflict (Home, 2018). However, the vulnerability of radicalisation among Northern Ireland youth was not mentioned in the Prevent (Q4). Prevent has funded numerous youth organisations established by Muslim individuals, particularly young people. The funding allocations to Muslim associations have allowed the government to directly engage with those who regularly participate in events at Islamic clubs or organisations that might not have been able to operate otherwise (Busher, Choudhury, Thomas, & Harris, 2017) (Q5).

Prevent workshops in cities such as Leeds and Birmingham, where Prevent-funded centres were established, appeared to be foster a culture of surveillance targeted at Muslim youth. Prevent officers, police officers and counter-terrorism officials were invited to deliver talks on radicalisation, framing the discussions in a securitised manner that implicitly encouraged monitoring behavioural changes among young individuals (Qurashi, 2018). Significant funding was allocated to engage with local Muslim groups, often exceeding initial requests. This allocation arguably contributed to normalising and disseminating suspicion and fear towards Muslim communities while reinforcing the dominant terror discourse associated with the broad framing of the 'war on terror' (Q6). Qurashi (2018) argued that surveillance through financing, delivering talks on radicalisation and monitoring ordinary people participating in the events held by prevent-

funded organisations has been an everyday experience and produces fear and apprehension as it monitors and records young people's performance of 'Britishness' (Q5). Having concerns about terrorism in any nation rightfully leads to taking certain precautions to prevent it. However, can attempts to control future actions through intruding into the daily lives of ordinary Muslims and deploying intelligence product backlash lead to reverse consequences in the daily lives of Muslim communities? (Q4). The representation of problems within policies frequently categorises certain groups in ways that marginalise others, positioning Muslim communities in contrast to mainstream British society. This process is dynamic and contingent, reflecting the shifting nature of policy frameworks and societal narratives.

The argument posits that the concept of 'problems' is not inherent but rather a construct derived from 'problem representations'. This construct adopts a falsely universalist stance to influence individuals who share similar views. Authorities or technologies (order, ideologies, etc.) of power in Foucauldian terminology primarily dictate the identification of 'problems' and subsequent regulation of societies, those of elite status, and a limited subset of voices, thereby reflecting their populist inclinations. It is contended that policy documents and strategy texts serve as mere facades for ideology, where the unspoken components are as imperative as the expressed content. The construction of a security vs. terror discourse has played a pivotal role in justifying actions under the 'war on terror.' Some scholars have argued that the attribution of alleged radicalisation as either the cause or effect of 'Islamic terrorism' has intensified Islamophobia (Abbas & Awan, 2015; Abbas, 2019). The 2023 iterations of CONTEST outlined that religious-oriented groups predominantly targeted Western nations, including the United Kingdom, for attacks. It asserts that these groups are driven by ideological beliefs that are portrayed as conflicting with Western values and aims, framing such attacks as a means to advance their objectives (Q1, Q2) (Home Office, 2023). This narrative serves to perpetuate Islamophobic sentiments while also providing a rationale for the expansion of surveillance and control measures targeting Muslim communities, framed as necessary for national security. Initiatives such as 'Anti-Muslim hatred projects' and educational programs like 'EqualiTeach' ostensibly aim to address hate crimes but can inadvertently contribute to the stigmatisation and marginalisation of Muslim communities. This distraction from real issues not only fails to address the root causes of extremism but also risks further alienating and stereotyping Muslims, thereby reinforcing discriminatory practices and policies (Q5). Rooted in narratives of 'terrorism,' empowerment (EqualiTeach), and substantial funding (PVE), the government's surveillance of Muslim communities under the guise of terrorism prevention has been critically examined (Fenwick & Fenwick, 2020). Such criticisms are central to the objections raised by schools and teaching unions regarding the Prevent duty; they have also led certain Muslim civil society groups to argue that Prevent functions as a totalitarian measure aimed at undermining Islamic cultural values, or 'de-Islamising' Islam (ibid, p.12) (Q6). The government's efforts to address Islamophobia, exemplified by initiatives such as targeted funding and anti-discrimination programs, have been met with limited success. Despite these measures, there has been a notable increase, from 49% to 59%, in students who believe school administrations fail to act against religious bullying (Tippett, Houlston, & Smith, 2010). This underscores a potential shift away from tackling discrimination and racism based on religion in the UK (Q5), towards initiatives that focus more on reshaping Muslim identity through cultural change.

Conclusion

The intricate interplay between counter-terrorism strategies and the issue of Islamophobia reveals significant biases within the UK's approach to multiculturalism, radicalisation and security. The then-updated counter-terrorism strategy (2018), as announced by Home Secretary Sajid Javid, places a pronounced focus on alleged 'Islamic terrorism', overshadowing broader societal and class-related concerns especially faced

by racially minoritised communities, including British Muslims. The emphasis on 'Islamic terrorism', driven by events like the 9/11 and 7/7 attacks that precipitated the 'war on terror,' has entrenched a perception of Muslims as inherently deviant or threatening. This framing, as Sayyid (2014) articulates, positions Islamophobia as a form of racism that questions Muslim identity, converting what was once a celebrated policy of multicultural tolerance into a source of division. This transformation mirrors a broader trend in which diversity-feeding multiculturalism, once seen as a unifying policy, is now perceived as contributing to societal fragmentation.

Central to the Prevent strategy and its encompassing CONTEST framework are representations highlighting three main concerns: (ills of) multiculturalism and tolerance, security and radicalisation. However, these representations, as noted by Sian (2017), disproportionately target Muslim bodies, thereby perpetuating Islamophobia through UK counter-terrorism policies like CONTEST and one of its critical strands called Prevent. The concept of 'tolerance' has evolved from a cornerstone of multiculturalism into a mechanism that marginalises British Muslim communities by casting them as different and potentially dangerous (Khan, 2015). Through the lens of the WPR as a theoretical framework and the policy analysis method, it becomes clear that hostile attitudes towards British Muslims are deeply embedded in counter-terrorism policies of the prevailing power institutions in the UK context. The Prevent strategy's explicit and implicit framing of Muslims as potential terrorists not only sustains but also exacerbates Islamophobia (Garner & Selod, 2015). This approach facilitates and strengthens the securitisation of Muslim communities, causing alienation, undermining trust and simplifying complex socio-economic issues.

An analysis of counter-terrorism policies through the WPR approach illuminates how discriminatory practices and attitudes towards British Muslims are interwoven with security discourses. This interconnection ultimately deteriorates community relations and hampers social cohesion. The Desistance and Disengagement Programme within Prevent, aimed at mitigating terrorism risks, inadvertently reinforces discriminatory practices and disproportionately affects Muslim communities. This necessitates a re-evaluation of policies that extend beyond a security-centric framework. Furthermore, the analysis reveals the normalisation of surveillance technologies, as exemplified by initiatives like Project Champion and internet monitoring under Prevent. The discourse around the supposed 'lack' of surveillance assets reveals implicit biases and assumptions about the need for increased surveillance, reflecting, once again, broader societal prejudices over British Muslims. In conclusion, the discourse surrounding Islamophobia unveils the underlying biases and discriminatory practices embedded in the UK's counter-terrorism strategies under successive versions of CONTEST. Addressing these issues requires a more nuanced approach that transcends surveillance-centric policies, fostering genuine inclusion and understanding of the multifaceted dynamics contributing to radicalisation. Only by shifting from a security-focused perspective to one that embraces the complexity of multicultural dynamics can we hope to create a more inclusive and cohesive society.



Peer Review	Externally peer-reviewed.
Conflict of Interest	Author declared no conflict of interest.
Grant Support	Author declared no conflict of interest.

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