



is received. My - and our - interest lies in reducing this mismatch. We are, after all, handling one of the most sensitive and tricky policy areas facing us today, tackling terrorism inspired by religious extremism.

### Introductory points

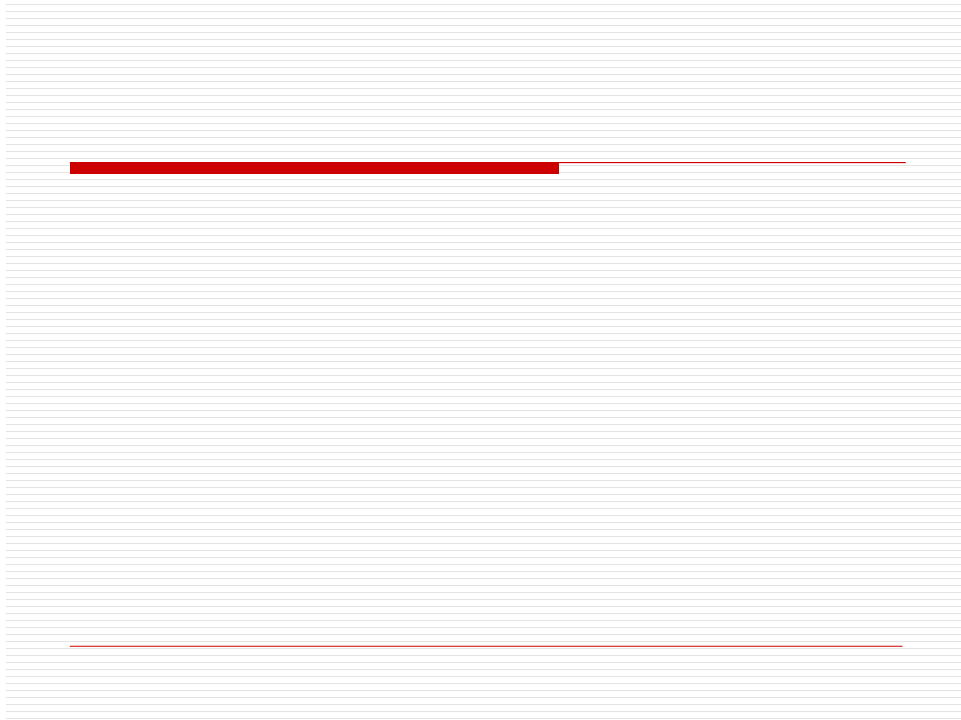
What is the scale of Muslim religious extremism, including violence, in Britain today? And how should we respond to this challenge? These questions, in short, are the theme of this lecture. I should, incidentally, clarify that the myth attaches to the scale of extremism - one per cent or otherwise - and not to the fact of religious extremism.

There are various takes on both the estimate and indeed the definition of extremism. The gap in understanding has become a serious matter, serious enough for me to warn, as this lecture does, that we are collectively working to an ill-conceived model. This model has the consequence of creating and nurturing an atmosphere of benign neglect, at best, and, at worst, looking only for a security solution to a security problem. Frankly, such a solution, the evidence suggests, is improbable.

Let me start with Lord Stevens. Shortly after the July 2005 bombings, Stevens, formerly London's policing supremo, estimated that about one per( )Tj 3.78106 0 Td (a)Tj 7.084 0 Td (r)Tj 6.24352 0 Td (e)Tj 6.2435



**There are some practical illustrations for my concern. For example, a Populus poll of attitudes among British Muslims, carried out for *The Times*, at the height of the Danish cartoons controversy, reported some alarming results. Some 7 per cent of the weighted sample signed up to the statement that, and I quote: “There are circumstances**



Mapping such sentiment onto population numbers is tricky methodologically. But, by using the Federation's own calculations, suggests that the fifth who would not take pre-emptive action could be as high as 18,000 students. By any reckoning, this is a colossal figure.

The sample of Muslim students was not naive, it must be said. Some 43 per cent accepted that, in general, society's perceptions about Islam had worsened after the London attacks; and 90 per cent reported a worsening of perceptions about Muslim students. Well, given sentiment about calling 999 to avert a bomber, such a deterioration is not so surprising, I guess.

Of course context is everything, and we need to keep in mind the reasoning behind such grassroots sympathy for violence. Survey after survey reveals that deeply held resentment over British and American policy in Iraq stands out in a long list of grievances. Some 30 per cent of Muslim students believed that the war in Iraq was the single biggest cause of extremism; and 38 per cent attributed this to a misunderstanding of Islam in the west. Media and judicial bias against Muslims ranked just behind. For instance, a quarter of British Muslims believed that Abu Hamza had not received a fair trial.

So, to what degree would such a group be willing to support violent behaviour, albeit indirectly? A number of detailed studies have tried to probe this point, all of which end up grinding to a messy halt of imprecision. The evidence does point, however, to a long-ish tail of soft, unintentional acts of omission within and across communities that can serve to support men of violence. This is my first conclusion then: that we have focused too heavily on narrow conspiracies of violence, and have thus taken our eyes off those who surround, and tacitly support, violence and its perpetrators.

### Tacit terror

Let me move on to what this might mean.

The evidence on Irish, Basque and Quebec violent nationalism is

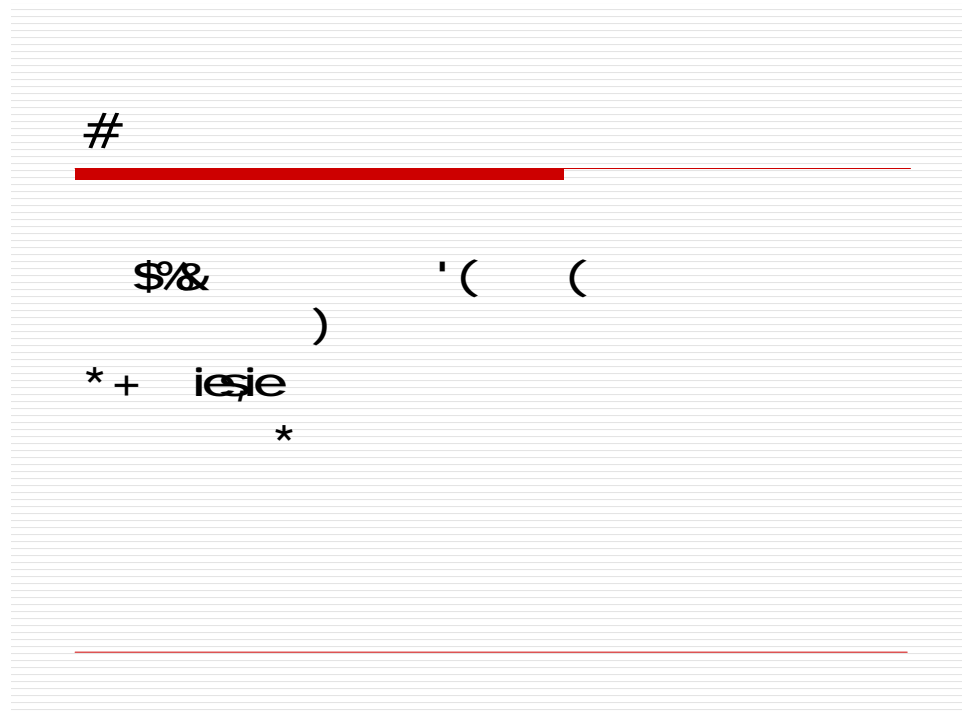
**violent and peaceful British Muslims is simplistic to the point of**

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guys next door, so-to-speak - to switch channels when a grainy, yet familiar, black-and-white CCTV photo is shown on the late evening news. Turning in one of their own, especially when they represent, however misguidedly, a common cause, is too great a sacrifice. Too great in the sense that the law enforcement agencies do not carry sufficient trust and credibility within particular communities who already feel under pressure. Co-operating in the pursuit suspects requires Muslims to break ranks at a time when press stories, many believe, have been pre-written about them. Their help, they conclude, can probably wait.

In essence, zero-sum calculations normally prevail. Little weight is given to the effects of artificially externalising the costs of non-cooperation. Perhaps not surprisingly, the price, over time, impacts on the reputation of the group.





**Thus violent extremists - the red dot - are tiny element in a much larger sea of non-violent moderation. The world, as it really is, of course looks more like the right-hand graphic. Understanding, persuading and, if need be, challenging the blue group is at least as big a job as bearing down on the red group. Success with the blues is, in addition, a key path to reducing the scope of the reds. The objective must be to return to the simplicity of more greens and fewer reds - and no blues (i.e. the left-hand model).**

**As noted earlier, these are all human reactions, and not the behaviour of a indelibly violent minority. Similar fence-sitting prevailed for decades in Northern Ireland. British security policy there very rarely managed to engage the tacit supporters of the violent nationalism or unionism. In fact the evidence suggests that tacit backers were only moved to act when the costs of misguided action by others became all too apparent. A year ago, the MacCartney Sisters led a spontaneous campaign against the culture of silence among Catholic communities about the role of the IRA. Their obvious and immediate success has had far-reaching consequences - by showing that tacit backing for violence had shrunk to a tiny rump where, before, it had been commonplace.**

**At this moment the supporters of General Ratko Mladic have begun to realise that evading law enforcement in Serbia comes at a cost to ordinary members of the nationalist community. Mladic, nevertheless, continues to be a perfect hero in the remote mountains of north-west Montenegro, close to his birthplace, where no-one would dream of turning him in. But several hundred metres lower down, in the populated valleys of Serbia, a realpolitik has begun to bite. For a new generation of Serbs, persisting with tacit support for suspects in cases of ethnic cleansing, has to be balanced against the forces of transparency and democratic accountability.**

**Post-Apartheid South Africans, white and black, have experienced a similar dilemma. Support for one's kith and kin, in the face of closure and accountability about unspeakable horror, has come at a price. Lowering that price by creating incentives to turn against men of violence has been difficult but, nevertheless, it has been possible.**

**Parallels exist all around. A substantial literature on the social pathology of gangs reveals the enormous grip of internal loyalty. There is, crucially, also plenty of evidence to show that brothers, sisters, neighbours and others act to provide a soft Praetorian Guard**

around gang members and leaders. The Met's long-running campaign - Operation Trident - to tackle gun crime in London is a tangible example. It has relied not so much on a belief that hardened gangsters are about to turn in their arsenals, but rather in a well-placed effort to incentivise others to draw away from the gun culture. Anonymous tip-off 'phone lines, among other things, really have worked to penetrate the circle of silence.

Threats of religious and political extremism can be mapped from two main sources. The first has to do with the proximity of international Islamic political grievance. There has been a rapid absorption of collective grievance, in turn distilled into a common bond of faith. Thus, conflict in Israel/Palestine is linked to Kashmir, and to Aceh, Chechnya, Bosnia, and beyond - all in the a click of a mouse.

The other main source, as I have emphasised in this lecture, has been the circle of tacit support, where extremist behaviour is condoned or accepted in some way. For example, after the May 2003 suicide attacks at Mike's Place, a Tel Aviv seaside bar, *The New York Times* ran the following quote from a 23-year-old Pakistani Muslim man from the West Midlands. He said:

“When you see what's going on in Israel, something comes into your mind, something just goes.”

As we now know, members of the family of Omar Sharif, one of the bombers, were cleared late last year of charges of knowing about his mission and failing to alert the law enforcement authorities before the attack. Fears about such a trial amounting to collective punishment, with risks of further alimentation of Muslims, arguably played a major part in the final verdict. This is a curious logic, to my mind, whereby the potential, intangible reactions of others tomorrow is equated with the facts about the actions, or inactions, of individuals yesterday.

In 2004, Jenny Tongue, then a Lib-Dem MP for Richmond, found herself sacked from her party's front bench for appearing to condone such attacks. Her precise words were as follows, so perhaps it is best if you judge for yourselves. She said:

"I was just trying to say how, having seen the violence and the humiliation and the provocation that the Tj 3.96224 0 Td 24



**furthering a reputation for even-handedness. My own view is that prominent figures continue to add to a disaggregated debate, without interest or regard for the bigger picture that necessarily involves them assessing how their thoughts will be received in some circles.**

**In other words, the signal sent cannot be guaranteed to be the signal received. It is a pretty big risk, to my mind, where the consequences of misjudgement can easily escalate massively. And frankly, the notion that the pursuit of martyrdom is the consequence of hatred born of despair, is one that the vast majority of British people would not accept.**

### **Muslim grievance politics**

**I now want to turn to look at the basic grievance or grievances that are now associated with western Muslim communities.**

**There is, regrettably, plenty of scope for stereotypes to take root on all sides. A clash of civilisations, Huntingtonian style, can be detected in perceptions held by Muslims and non-Muslims in many western countries. It would not be too much of an exaggeration to suggest that British Muslims are rapidly emerging as a new, national pariah group. Bluntly speaking, 1.6 million Brits today enjoy a public reputation paralleled by Catholics in the seventeenth century. Echoes can also be heard in the story of Anglo-Jewry about a century ago.**

**There are three basic complaints that are regularly heard. Firstly, that British Muslims experience such high levels of social disadvantage that their plight goes beyond that of other excluded groups. Secondly, that anti-Muslim bias in the media, and in elite and mass attitudes, warps public policy. This is also dubbed as “Islamaphobia” by some. Finally, that the volatile dynamics of global Islam produce a steady stream of causes that sustain victimhood.**

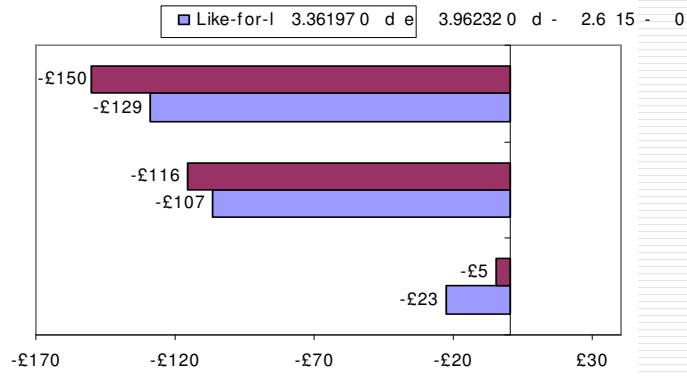
**Concentrating on the first charge, the evidence shows that, on some counts, many British Muslim communities are endemically part of a left-behind fringe. On other counts, the evidence is more ambiguous.**

**The economics of British Muslims are a mixed picture. On one hand, by concentrating purely on Pakistani and Bangladeshi origin Muslim**

**communities, the position of other Muslim groups gets relegated to the periphery. Most data has been collected on these two groups, who together only account for two-thirds of British Muslims. Indian Muslims, for instance, perform significantly better in the labour market than Pakistanis or**



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**but only partial, explanation. Other factors are also**



**attitudes. He has gone on to say that British Muslims cannot afford such a luxury, and he has made several concrete proposals to promote wider public buy-in. His observations are equally pertinent to members of the government, some of whom have appeared to be pursuing a national Government Muslim Policy.**

**In addition, agitation and disquiet within and between British Muslims has served to complicate the role of government even further. The general election campaign last May, for example, saw the first overt demonstration of radical opposition to the moderate MCB. The gap be**

**In answer to the question “Who is angriest?” it is clear that these groups and communities are near the top of list. So too, incidentally, are large pools within the white working class, whose parents all too typically lost their moorings via industrial decline in these places.**

**At the very least, the poor economics and inward-facing postures of these places need to be tackled with more innovative use of traditional social inclusion policy levers. The charge has been that traditional policy has achieved rather little. Well, may be. There is plenty of scope to go further. DWP’s current batch of employment targets for marginalised or vulnerable groups are an excellent start. However, using the Spending Review to pin down fresh PSA targets, possibly for British-born, Pakistani and Bangladeshi women, would be a sensible adaptation of what already exists.**

**The long tail of dismal performance among some of these groups in the compulsory schooling system is another priority area. There is, to my mind, considerable scope to build on the existing floor target machinery for schools and LEAs to target at-risk groups. Social exclusion problems therefore require better informed and finer grained policy responses in schools, employment and communities.**

**Beyond economics, the evidence also points to three further causes of alienation and extremism: isolated networks, oppositional cultures, and the dyna**





**example from the world of financial services regulation, an area where I have been involved previously. Today, British regulatory policy leads the way in Islamic personal and commercial banking and in the development of new financial markets in the Middle East and beyond. Using technical expertise, regulatory innovation and political will in equal measure, it has been possible to deliver a model outcome. There is scope to apply policy learning and borrowing to other countries and also to o**

**the ratchet of mutual mis-understanding. But being able to describe a better future is a pre-requisite to attain one.**

**So learning from the experience of other *de facto* pariah groups may be instructive. A generation, as a society we had nothing remotely good to say about East African Asian refugees. Today we treat this smallish group as paragons of hard work, industry, resilience, religious observance, commitment to social good, and above all, loyalty to Britain. This is an excellent synopsis of the CV of any immigrant or immigrant-descended group, especially since it was not predicted. It would be an excellent target to aim for among the next generation of British Muslims.**

**Achieving this is unlikely to happen by accident. For sure, it will be important to remember that along with engagement and dialogue also comes the right to challenge. The atmosphere today is worrying in which respect for Islam is confused with fear. Respect for a religion or religious community cannot be demanded or imposed by a liberal state. It can be made more likely through better informed public policy driven by pragmatism and facts in equal measure.**

**To my mind, and in a sentence, the reality today for British Muslim communities calls for the politics of reputation management and not for grievance politics. This is the signal sent - I trust that it is signal received.**

**Thank you.**

**ENDS**



