

COUNTERING VIOLENT EXTREMISM: *COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT PROGRAMS IN EUROPE*

BY: **STEPHEN WHITE & KIERAN MCEVOY**
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CONTENTS

Abstract	8
Part I	10
Introduction	10
Community Policing and Violent Extremism	11
Countering Violent Extremism Europe	16
CVE and the European Union	16
The United Kingdom (of Great Britain and Northern Ireland)	18
The Netherlands	21
Spain	23
Denmark	25
Sweden	27
Summary	33
Part II: Two UK Case Studies	36
Case Study I: Northern Ireland	36
The Counter-Terrorism Context in Northern Ireland	39
Community-Based CVE Programmes in Northern Ireland	41
The Role of Former Combatants	43
Coiste Na N'Irachimí: Safe Spaces for Critical Dialogue	45
Community Restorative Justice and Challenges Cultures of Violence	51
From Prison to Peace: Ex-Combatants and Citizenship Education in Schools	58
Conclusion - Lesson and Transferability of the Northern Ireland Experience	61
Case Study II: Countering Violent Extremism in Great Britain	62
The Role of Former Combatants	68
'Signing Up' to British Standards and Values	69
Conclusion	72
Bibliography	74
About the Authors	84
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Welcome

We are delighted to present this very impressive research paper by Stephen White and Kieran McEvoy, on Countering Violent Extremism: Community Engagement Programmes in Europe. This is the first paper released as part of Phase II of our study into Countering Violent Extremism, and aptly sets the tone for the quality of reports that will follow.

Phase I, which was unveiled to international claim at Interpol's 79th General Assembly held in 2010 in Doha, Qatar, investigated strategies that countries have developed to meet the challenges of releasing terrorist suspects back into society. Phase II undertakes further exploration of the issues resulting from Phase I through three research papers, and also undertakes a year-long study investigating how countries can counter the narratives that terrorist groups use to recruit.

While CVE programs have generated a great deal of international interest, very little is known systematically about whether they work, how they work, and how they should be evaluated. There is a critical need for information sharing, cross border and cultural collaboration, and a venue that can explore and assist with strategies that are in the interest of public safety. We're proud that QIASS has taken a leading role in this field, and we offer ourselves as a resource to countries seeking guidance.

- The Qatar International Academy for Security Studies
Doha, February 2012

Abstract

Countering violent extremism (CVE) is likely to be most effective when characterized by a partnership approach involving law enforcement, intelligence agencies, other statutory organizations, and community-based non-governmental organizations with grassroots credibility. The principles of meaningful partnership in this domain must include mutual respect, acknowledgment of respective strengths, skills, and expertise between agencies and community-based organizations, and a willingness, in appropriate circumstances, to take calculated risks to ensure that so-called hard-to-reach groups are approached by those with the required local knowledge and technical capacity.

In Part I, this paper draws on examples of such initiatives from several countries. The key question addressed here is: how have community-oriented policing strategies for CVE evolved throughout Europe to deal with increasingly diverse populations? The intention is to identify methods used and lessons learned in order to determine if certain strategies or practices may be transferrable to other areas.

In Part II, the paper also offers two in-depth case studies from the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland as examples. The first highlights how community-oriented policing strategies evolved in Northern Ireland to more effectively work with (pro–United Ireland) Republican groups and paramilitary Loyalist groups (pro-British and traditionally opposed to Irish Republicanism). The second demonstrates how community-oriented CVE policing strategies have evolved in England to work with vulnerable Islamic youth.

Part I

Introduction

During 2010 and 2011 the Qatar International Academy for Security Studies (QIASS) commissioned two separate studies on countering violent extremism. A report on the 2010 research, “Risk Reduction for Countering Violent Extremism,” was presented at the 79th General Assembly of Interpol, held in Doha in November 2010. Findings from the 2011 research will be published in 2012.

The core mission of QIASS’s CVE work is “to develop and disseminate evidence--based practices for (i) preventing terrorist engagement and (ii) facilitating disengagement among individuals, groups, and communities globally.”

The authors of this paper participated in both QIASS studies, which included site visits to various cities around the world—including Belfast, London, Paris, Stockholm, and Oslo. National strategies, multi-agency practices, security service policies, and non-governmental organization (NGO) efforts were examined in an effort to determine the range and effect of various approaches to countering violent extremism and reducing the risk of extremism.

This paper complements the QIASS studies with desk research, professional experience, and field observations focussing on holistic, community-based approaches and the potential role of partners. It focuses on those prevention programmes that could be described as examples of “community policing” in the widest sense. Community policing is defined; its elements explored; and some of the challenges of “reducing risks in partnership” are identified and discussed in theoretical terms.

There then follows analysis of a number of European programmes (including two in-depth case studies in Part II) in order to illustrate the variety of approaches that are and can be taken to address CVE. Finally, some principles and practices are developed which, the authors argue, may be transferable and applicable elsewhere. Acknowledging the wide variety of political, historical, social, cultural, and religious variables that may contribute to young people becoming radicalised and drawn into violence in different parts of the world, the paper nonetheless suggests that there are some common themes that emerge

from the community policing and partnership approaches to CVE examined herein, which are of broader relevance and interest.

Community Policing and Violent Extremism

Many police and law enforcement agencies around the world aspire to deliver services that are based on the principles of community policing. Although there are multiple definitions, common principles of community policing usually include: problem solving; organizational reorganisation or decentralization of the police; and crime prevention by the police and community working in partnership (see, for example, Bratton 1997, Adams, Rohe, & Arcury 2002; Skogan 2004, Chappell 2009).

Problem solving is based upon the premise that the police respond to real concerns expressed by neighbourhood residents rather than police priorities. Organisational changes such as decentralization of authority and attendance at community meetings should encourage a closer relationship between police officers and the neighbourhoods they service. Community engagement means real partnership with the community, designed to stimulate and empower residents in preventing crime and disorder (Miller and Hess 2008). As Trojanowicz and Bucqueroux (1990:5) have suggested, community policing is a view of policing that

...is based on the concept that police officers and private citizens working together in creative ways can help solve contemporary community problems....The philosophy is predicated on the belief that achieving these goals requires that police departments develop new relationships with law-abiding people in the community, allowing them a greater voice in setting local police priorities and involving them in efforts to improve the overall quality of life in their neighbourhoods. It shifts the focus of police work from handling random calls to solving community problems.

In short, it is an approach to policing that emphasises the role of police from a force that “does policing to the people” to a service that “works for and with the people.” Over the past two decades perhaps the key element that has come to the fore, in assessing how exactly the police work for and with people, is the notion of partnership (Wilson and Bennet 1994, Palmiotto 2011). We believe that is the theme most relevant in assessing where community policing, radicalisation, and countering violent extremism intersect.

Not surprisingly, some of the main findings and observations that were highlighted by the QIASS researchers and considered by interested parties related to community policing and forms of multi-agency partnerships that adopted a more comprehensive approach to the prevention of terrorism in the widest sense. This is no surprise, as the challenges of reducing risks and countering violent extremism are too complex and wide-ranging to be left to law enforcement alone. Around Europe in particular, police and politicians have, it seems, realised that the security services cannot simply “arrest their way out” of the current threats and must employ community policing practices.

As national CVE strategies become more comprehensive and pay more attention to prevention (as well as protection from and preparation against terrorism and the pursuit of those engaged in its commission), many “prevent” strategies are becoming more sophisticated in terms of community engagement and involvement. Consequently, partnerships and community engagements have become key components of long-term, comprehensive strategies aimed at countering violent extremism.

QIASS reported the following in its first (2010) report:

- Systems and interagency relationships are critical to the effective delivery of prevention programmes aimed at CVE.
- It is essential to follow sound principles and good practices of community policing, as there is a real risk of failure if community support and engagement is not maintained.
- Principles that underpin best practice include partnership formation, dialogue, and collaboration.
- Success depends on trust, mutual understanding, and respect—within broader society and within the world of policing.
- Approaches should be “context-specific,” taking into account prevailing culture, threats, legislation, and other local factors. Local knowledge (a cornerstone of community policing) is of fundamental importance.

- Intelligence-led approaches and community policing strategies are not mutually exclusive. However, if intelligence gathering is perceived by the community as the state's primary objective, barriers may occur.
- The more comprehensive and multi-faceted the partnership(s), the more potential for success exists. Many disciplines and perspective can, and do, contribute to CVE efforts.
- Partnerships can be institutional and organizational (for example, government agencies such as police departments, security services, corrections/prison officials, and probation/parole boards—as well as non-governmental organisations such as community organizations—can be involved). Partnerships can also be comprised of individuals within families and societies—for instance, religious leaders, community representatives, former combatants, and prisoners.
- Partnerships exist in many forms: formal and informal; pre-offence, during detention, after release; and personally tailored or more generic.

A key lesson identified by the first QIASS study is the importance of understanding, valuing, and supporting others' contributions to CVE efforts and of recognising the potential side effects of actions. An ill-thought-out intervention can damage relations with community, partners, and individuals.

None of the above findings should be surprising, as community policing practices for several decades have been recognised as the “new orthodoxy for policing” (Grinc 1994). For example, in 1995 Brogden and Nijhar reported that “support for community policing has been clearly expressed by governments, police leaders and communities in the UK and in places as disparate as South Africa and Canada, Holland and Singapore, USA and Sweden.”

Community policing has become the recognised approach for preventing crime, and, as this paper will demonstrate, it is becoming increasingly recognised as a critical method of preventing radicalisation, which can lead to engagement or re-engagement in violent extremism. However, the nature and extent of the challenges should not be underestimated with regard to using community policing approaches to counter violent extremism in so-called hard-to-reach communities. Often in such contexts there may be

traditions of distrust of and hostility toward the police among the community and parallel barriers within the police themselves (not to mention parallel criminal justice systems). In particular, while the gathering and use of intelligence will always be a vital part of counter-terrorism, there are real dangers if intelligence becomes the main or only priority for police. Certainly in such a context, effective partnerships are unlikely to develop.

The two principal challenges identified by police practitioners and scholars with regard to partnership and community policing are: (1) the impact that such an approach has on power relations between the police and the policed and (2) the acceptance by the police of the “warts and all” realities of community life. In terms of power relations, broadly, community policing requires a shift of power away from the police and toward the community itself. Police officers are required to respond to community needs and wants rather than simply following institutional priorities (Skogan 2004). Communities are no longer simply passive recipients in the relationship but sometimes difficult and demanding consumers of police services; indeed, they may wish to have a say in the setting of police strategy and the operational delivery of police services. In addition, with regard to the police understanding of the community, the well-established tendency of police officers to distinguish between “rough” and “respectable” citizens (Chan 1996)—what Reiner (2000:179) terms “those who challenge and those who accept the middle-class values of decency which police most revere”—is directly questioned by the partnership aspects of community policing.

Partnering with the community may require the local police to accept that the realities of community life may not map readily onto such neat bifurcations between the righteous and the wicked. In concrete terms, in the case of CVE, community policing will require the police to do business with people and organised groups who have been previously involved in violent extremism and terrorism. As the Northern Ireland case study (discussed later) demonstrates, this has been one key element of the development of policing arrangements and partnership approaches in that country.

As all the strategies and programmes highlighted in this paper demonstrate, the relationships among the police, the public and key individuals within the community can be critical to identifying causes of and methods of preventing violent extremism. This is extremely important at the local, neighbourhood level because community policing, by definition, concentrates on local issues. The recent QIASS research has shown that the initial extremist recruiting factors (for those vulnerable to radicalisation) are often local,

not global. The implication is clear: local police, working with local communities, have a key role to play in detecting and addressing local factors that may contribute to violent extremism. Therefore it is important to support efforts being made at a grassroots, local level within the host community.

All of the above leads to some clear conclusions about what must be borne in mind when promoting, implementing, and evaluating partnership-style CVE efforts. Namely:

- Community policing is not a soft option; it is difficult, challenging work that tackles the most serious issues, including terrorism prevention and protecting life.
- Police will be able to do their jobs more effectively if real police-community partnership is achieved.
- Effective partnerships are built on mutual trust and respect. They require a ceding of power from the police both strategically and operationally and a willingness to accept the “warts and all” realities of community life.
- Effective strategies engage communities in more proactive ways than simply asking them to act as the “eyes and ears” of the police and to pass on information. Often communities have antipathy to such a passive role and can feel that they are being exploited for intelligence.
- Community policing encompasses a complete range of police activities that affect methods of patrolling, community engagement, the conduct of investigations, personnel and training policies, accountability forums—and much more. While effective public relations are undoubtedly part of this broader package, PR is no substitute for substantive delivery.

All these issues are critical to success. In the following section, which analyses CVE strategies in various parts of Europe, it is made clear that they are being widely addressed to various degrees in most countries.

Countering Violent Extremism in Europe

As was noted above, members of a QIASS CVE research team visited a number of European countries as part of the study. They included the UK, France, and Sweden, which are members of the European Union (EU), and Norway, which is not. This section discusses some of the schemes and projects from several different European jurisdictions. However, before discussing some specific practices in individual countries, it might be useful at this juncture to note developments in terms of countering violent extremism in the EU as a whole.

CVE and the European Union

Following the Madrid train bombings in 2004, the EU adopted the *Hague Programme: Strengthening Freedom, Security and Justice in the European Union*. It emphasised the EU's opposition to racism, and the benefits of lawful immigration into the EU. More important, for current purposes, it also spelled out the need to develop a counter-terrorism strategy across the EU. In 2005 the EU outlined its Counter-Terrorism Strategy, outlining a framework for a broad and proportionate response to combat terrorism. It noted that “radicalization and recruitment to terrorism are not confined to one belief system or political persuasion. . . . But the terrorism perpetrated by Al-Qa’ida and extremists inspired by Al-Qa’ida has become the main terrorist threat to the Union.”

The strategy covers four strands of work, which fall under its commitment “to combat terrorism globally while respecting human rights, and make Europe safer, allowing its citizens to live in an area of freedom, security and justice” (European Commission, 2005). The four elements of the framework were: prevent (individuals from turning to terrorism), protect (citizens and infrastructure by reducing vulnerability to attack), pursue (investigate terrorists and disrupt support networks) and respond (manage and minimize the consequences of attack). While primary responsibility for combating terrorism lies with individual member states, the EU outlined four “cross-cutting contributions” through which it could add value to such individual in-country efforts (EC, 2005). These include strengthening national capabilities of EU member states (by sharing knowledge and using best practice), facilitating European cooperation (by working together in sharing information), developing collective capability (by making collective policy responses to the terrorist threat) and promoting international partnership (by working together with

international organizations and key third countries). The EU also agreed on the importance of a structural assessment of its numerous counter-terrorism measures. As a result, an EU Counter-Terrorism Action Plan on Combating Terrorism is published annually.

In order to disrupt the activities of networks and individuals radicalizing and recruiting people, the EU recognizes the need to monitor the Internet and travel to conflict areas as well as to counter “those playing a role in radicalization including in prisons, places of education or religious training, and worship.” The EU also commits to empowering moderate voices, encouraging the emergence of European imams, and enhancing language and other training for foreign imams in Europe (to promote non-radical ideas). Most importantly, the EU plans to “co-ordinate and enhance our efforts to change the perceptions of European and Western policies particularly among Muslim communities, and to correct unfair or inaccurate perceptions of Islam and Muslims” by avoiding linkages of Islam to terrorism. Last, the EU states its commitment to ameliorate the conditions that encourage radicalisation, including tackling inequality and discrimination, promoting intercultural dialogue and “...where appropriate, long-term integration.” In February 2007, the Council of the EU approved the revised “Radicalization and Recruitment Action Plan,” which added a few minor points but essentially did not change the key elements of the strategy.

As Zimmerman (2007), Tansey (2009), and others have identified, the key challenge for the EU as an entity with regard to its response to terrorism is that while it can offer guidance, resources, and a framework for co-ordination, the primacy of national sovereignty in this area means that it is the individual member states that determine the implementation of policy at the local level. Whether variations in membership practices across the EU enhance or inhibit efforts to counter radicalisation at the local level is difficult to discern. In the sections below, we review a sample of different practices in a number of member states.

The United Kingdom (of Great Britain and Northern Ireland)

The UK is a member state of the EU and as such it contributed to the development of, and works within, the EU Counter-Terrorist Strategy.

The UK counter-terrorism strategy (called CONTEST) predates the EU's and was the first to introduce the four-track approach now favoured by the EU and individual members states (even if the terminology used is slightly different).

The stated aim of CONTEST is “to reduce the risk to the UK and its interests overseas from terrorism, so that people can go about their lives freely and with confidence.”

The scope of the CONTEST strategy has recently been revised and broadened to cover all forms of terrorism, including Irish terrorism (although Northern Ireland has a bespoke approach to CONTEST, which recognises the particular context and specific aspects of the threats that exist in that part of the UK).

CONTEST is a comprehensive and wide-ranging counter-terrorism strategy organised around four work-streams, each comprising a number of key objectives. They are:

- Pursue: to stop terrorist attacks
- Prevent: to stop people becoming terrorists or supporting terrorism
- Protect: to strengthen protection against a terrorist attack
- Prepare: to mitigate the impact of a terrorist attack

For the purposes of this paper, research has concentrated on prevention strategy.

Following the terrorist attacks in New York in 2001 and London in 2005 (7/7), the UK government established, within its counter-terrorism (CONTEST) strategy, a programme of preventative activity known as PREVENT. The scale of the problem in the UK is significant. Between 2001 and early 2011, 237 people were convicted of terrorism-related offences, and a further 48 individuals were placed under control orders (which monitor and restrict certain activities). In addition, 228 individuals have been referred to intervention programmes. These programmes are designed for those who are deemed to be at risk of engaging in violent behaviour.

In that period at least 2,000 individuals were deemed to have been or are “of concern” to the security services (Choudhury and Fenwick 2011:vi). In response to the problem, the PREVENT strategy was particularly concerned with the risk of “home-grown” terrorism and viewed the building of partnerships and alliances with British Muslims as a key element of CT work (Pantazis and Pemberton 2009, Briggs 2010). The strategy recognised that partnerships at home and abroad were essential to success and that these “depended upon openness and trust” (HMG 2009:11). It also indicated that PREVENT would include “a community-led programme to tackling violent extremism” (HMG 2009:13). The PREVENT strategy was delivered by a number of different central government departments (Kundnani 2009) and a multi-layered police response involving a range of different forces and departments (Spalek et al. 2008).

Significant resources have been allocated to this work. The sum of £45 million was committed for the Preventing Violent Extremism strategy through the Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG) between 2008 and 2011. Across all departments, including the Home Office, the Foreign Office, and the Department for Children, Schools and Families, the figure for prevention-related work was £140 million in 2008–09 (HMG 2009:16).

Much of PREVENT’s CVE effort focuses on identifying and helping persons deemed “at risk” rather than engaging with those who are convicted or detained. Broadly speaking, the original approach was to “win hearts and minds in Muslim communities” (Department for Communities and Local Government 2007). The programme sought to counter ideological support for violent extremism, disrupt those who promote the ideology, support persons vulnerable to recruitment, enhance community resilience, and address extremist-related grievances (HMG 2009). However, the current government reviewed the strategy between November 2010 and June 2011 and concluded that the previous programme was flawed. “It confused the delivery of government policy to promote integration with government policy to prevent terrorism. It failed to confront the extremist ideology at the heart of the threat we face” (HMG 2011). It has more tightly constructed PREVENT efforts claiming to now make a clearer distinction between counter-terrorist work and integration strategy. Its explanation for doing so includes a warning that points out that “failure to appreciate the distinction risks securitizing integration and reducing the chances of our success.”

The new (June 2011) PREVENT strategy has three objectives as opposed to the five contained in the previous strategy (see Part II). These are to:

- respond to the ideological challenge of terrorism and the threat from those who promote it
- prevent people from being drawn into terrorism and ensure that they are given appropriate advice and support
- work with sectors and institutions where there are risks of radicalisation that need to be addressed

In terms of who actually conducts them, it can be seen that the aim is to adopt a multi-strand approach that combines government sponsorship and funding with NGO and other agency activities.

Over the past ten years, community-oriented policing strategies in England have evolved and adapted to address vulnerable Islamic youth in order to counter violent extremism. The strategies are similar to those used in Northern Ireland for a much longer period to prevent young people from becoming involved with paramilitary groups. With both, however, there have been some tensions: between anti-terrorist policing and community policing, for example, and in enforcing some government policies with community-based groups (the need to “sign up” to British values is one problem area). The UK programmes will be explored in detail in the case studies that follow, but at this point it is necessary to identify some issues that are proving to be problematic in other parts of Europe.

A range of commentators have been critical of different aspects of the PREVENT strategy. Human rights lawyers, criminologists, community activists, and others have argued that the strategy was part of a broader securitisation process that demonised and alienated Muslim communities in general and young male Muslims in particular through excessive use of police surveillance, stop-and-search powers, and other draconian counter-terrorism measures. Control orders have proved to be particularly contentious.

Northern Ireland experienced a particularly violent thirty-year period between 1969 and the political agreements and developments of the late 1990s. Since then, there remains the threat and reality of violent extremism, but at a diminished scale. For more than forty years, therefore, the UK central government and the local (i.e. devolved) institutions have

been developing and implementing a CVE strategy that uses community policing and partnership practices. This has not been without difficulty— especially around the roles played by former combatants—but, as will be explored in the following case study, some major lessons have been learned and practices refined that may be applicable elsewhere.

The Netherlands

With a Muslim population of approximately nine hundred thousand (6 per cent of the population), centred largely in the four cities of Amsterdam, Rotterdam, The Hague, and Utrecht, Holland has developed some interesting and novel approaches to counter-radicalisation. Dutch-born young Muslims belonging to the so-called Hofstad network spread their radical ideology and planned attacks as early as 2002. The murder of film director Theo van Gogh in 2004 by a Dutch-born Muslim of Moroccan descent provoked a national and international outcry and appeared to many a direct assault on Dutch traditions of tolerance and multiculturalism (Buruma and Myers 2006). Van Gogh was a controversial director and social commentator whose works included a film criticising the treatment of women in Muslim societies.

The Dutch counter-radicalisation strategy was designed primarily for al Qaeda-type inspired extremism but is also applicable to right-wing and fascistic groups. Introduced in 2004, the two key elements of the Dutch national plan are an emphasis on localism and an emphasis on multi-agency co-operation (Vidino 2008). The Dutch view of the problem of radicalisation is borne of social and political exclusion rather than of religion. While the national government provides the general framework, training, and parts of the funding, local authorities have high levels of independence in deciding how to implement counter-radicalisation strategies on the ground. Central government does acknowledge its responsibilities in terms of tackling some of the macro issues that lead to radicalisation— discrimination, social exclusion, unemployment, housing, and so forth—but the emphasis on implementation of micro-counter radicalisation measures is local (Dutch Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations 2007). The Dutch Polarisation and Radicalisation Action Plan of 2007–2011 is thus viewed primarily as the responsibility of the local governmental authorities.

The Plan contains a three-track approach. The first track involves “prevention, signalling, and intervention” (Dutch Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations 2007). These

elements are implemented by youth workers, the police, truancy officials, and other municipal or local government security policy. Much of the emphasis is upon early intervention with those in the process of being radicalised, encouraging debates on Muslim television programmes and Muslim websites funded by the government, organising public gatherings to discuss differing opinions, offering support to those excluded or marginalised at school, and trying to facilitate entry into the labour market (Rabasa et al. 2010). The second track refers to specific policies at the national level in support of local counter-radicalization policy. In addition to progressive efforts to counter exclusion, the Dutch government has expanded police and enforcement powers, introduced tougher laws for those further along the radicalisation spectrum (for example, planning or carrying out attacks), and expanded the General Intelligence and Security Service (Demant and De Graaf 2010). The third strand concerns the international level, focusing on where radicalisation, polarisation, and foreign policy intersect, in terms of the Dutch government and its partners inside the European Union and beyond.

Each large Dutch city has created its own programme, with unique characteristics, although most have been heavily influenced by Amsterdam's programme. The Amsterdam approach has become synonymous with complex multi-agency co-operation involving government agencies, local authorities, social services, schools and colleges, religious institutions, and freelance consultants. Openness, information sharing, and constant input from all possible sources seem to be the guiding principles. As is discussed further by Rabasa et al. (2010), one project in particular is of interest for current purposes.

The Slotervaart Action Plan emerged from a particular area of Amsterdam with a significant Muslim population, a borough with high crime and unemployment rates where several members of the radical Hofstad group grew up, including Theo Van Gogh's assassin, Mohammed Bouyeri. Following riots in 2006, local authorities developed a series of programmes—driven in large part by one charismatic leader, Ahmed Marcouch (a former police officer and Dutch MP), who in 2006 became the first Muslim council chairman of Slotervaart. The group employed an anti-radicalization professional, an expert on Islam who functions as a mediator between Muslim citizens and the authorities. The project developed relations with a range of partners, with a remit to "... receive and respond to signals" that young people were in danger of radicalisation. It sought to encourage and foster resilience and resistance among young people through the development of relations with local mosques and associated organisations. According to a

2008 progress report, meetings and discussions were held with imams to generate support for the project. Several imams acknowledged that they needed radicalisation-related training, and the borough also organized gatherings (called the Religious-Secular Circle) to bring people of faith (or no faith) together to foster greater mutual understanding and tolerance. Marcouch also works on trying to assist with the reintegration of young offenders back into society, providing job training to those in prison and incentivising those who complete training courses by offering more generous remission rates (in partnership with the Justice authorities).

As in other contexts, evaluating the effectiveness of such programmes appears difficult. The 2008 progress report discussed above was written by the project staff themselves. As Rabasa et al. (2010) note, the project has been controversial in some circles, with Marcouch being accused by some commentators and politicians of pursuing an Islamisation agenda, lacking transparency in the operation of the project, and being resistant to outside evaluation against agreed-to benchmarks. As elsewhere, the difficulties of assessing the quality of the work and the need for charismatic local leaders with grassroots credibility appear to be universal challenges.

Spain

Along with the United Kingdom, Spain is the only other major EU country to have suffered a major internal attack by terrorists of the al Qaeda-type or affiliated since 9/11. Carried out by Moroccan nationals with links to al Qaeda, the Madrid bombings of 2004 killed 191 people and injured almost 1,800 others. Although Spain has historically had relatively low numbers of non-EU immigrants (2.7 per cent of the population in 2000, compared to an average of 6 per cent in the EU as a whole), numbers have increased quite dramatically in the past decade (Corcoran 2006). Muslims now constitute the second largest religious grouping in Spain. The number of attacks against Muslims has risen. As in France, a public debate has emerged concerning the wearing of women's headscarves (*hijabs*). The rightist Partido Popular, which won the general election in 2011, suggested in 2008 that it planned to ban the wearing of headscarves in schools, require Muslim girls to attend gymnastic classes, and allow male doctors to examine Muslim women (Expatica News, February 11, 2008). A proposed ban on the wearing of the burqa in 2010 was proposed by the Partido Popular in June 2010 and passed in the Senate but was defeated by the standing government in the Congress of Deputies (Spain's lower

house of parliament). Nevertheless, some local governments in Spain have moved to ban the wearing of burqas in public buildings. This theme, of national values clashing with minority traditions and the tensions that arise, is something that CVE strategists need to address.

Obviously Spain has a long history of, and experience dealing with, Basque terrorism. In that context, its existing panoply of anti-terrorist legislation was extended in the wake of 9/11. Interestingly, however, these laws were not extended again after the Madrid bombings, as it was considered unnecessary given the authorities' existing powers but also because the standing government was concerned that such a move might appear anti-Islamic (Beckman 2007, ch. 4). The government also made a number of important institutional changes to deal with the changing threat of terrorism. While specialist anti-terrorist units to deal with al Qaeda-type terrorism were established, the government also moved Immigration Affairs from the Ministry of the Interior to the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs—signalling a view of immigration as one of integration into the labour market rather than an exclusively policing issue (Corcoran 2006). In May 2005, large-scale regularisation took place; it was designed to provide legal residency for approximately 800,000 people who had previously worked illegally, in part because of the view that illegal immigration and the drug trade provide large recruiting bases and financing for terrorism (Celso 2005). Given that Muslims of Moroccan origin make up the largest illegal immigrant population (about 120,000), the process was designed to integrate them into mainstream Spanish society and, in the process, render such individuals much more visible from a monitoring perspective.

Over the period 2007–2010, the Ministry's Strategic Plan for Citizenship and Integration was allocated about €2 billion (approximately \$2.64 billion) for programmes related to immigrant education, employment, housing, social services, health, women, and youth-related work. The Spanish government has worked with Spain's two major Islamic groups in order to facilitate Muslim integration. The Federation of Islamic Religious Entities (FEERI) and the Union of Islamic Communities in Spain (UCIDE) joined together as the Islamic Commission of Spain (CIE) (Tansey 2009). However, due to disagreements within the group, smaller Islamic federations broke away from the CIE and formed the Spanish Islamic Council in April 2011. As elsewhere, some commentators have asked whether or not the CIE, as the voice of “respectable Muslims,” is the most appropriate partner agency to be leading the civil-society aspects of countering violent extremism.

The Spanish government also funds Islamic cultural, education, and social programmes through its Foundation for Pluralism and Coexistence, including the creation and printing of the first Spanish textbook on Islam for use by first-grade students. Efforts to seek and promote home-grown imams and to register the many “garage mosques” in Spain (and garner information on the nature of their teaching) have met significant resistance from the Muslim community since they were begun in 2005 (Leiken 2005). One of the key actors in the Madrid bombings, Sarhane Ben Abdelmajid Farkhet (known as “the Tunisian”), led prayers in one such informal mosque (Archick et al. 2011).

Denmark

There are some 200,000 Muslims in Denmark, accounting for 3.7 per cent of the total Danish population of 5.4 million. Most are first-generation immigrants. Historically, Klausen (2005:41) has suggested that Denmark was “the country with the least official interest in developing a dialogue with its Muslim residents.” However, as elsewhere in Europe, the need for such a dialogue and manifestation of tensions between the host community and Danish Muslims have come to the fore around one critical juncture, in this case the controversy over the publication by the newspaper *Jyllands-Posten* of cartoons depicting the Prophet Muhammad. Following the controversy, the Danish prime minister began a number of high-profile meetings with Muslim community leaders. However, Denmark has also seen an increase in anti-immigrant political discourse and political advances by some vehemently anti-immigrant and anti-Muslim activists associated with the Danish People’s Party. Although the more rightist coalition that the DPP had supported in the Danish parliament lost the elections in 2011, it (the DPP) remains the third largest party with 12.3 per cent of the vote.

In 2009, the Danish government published a counter-radicalization document, *A Common and Safe Future: An Action Plan to Prevent Extremist Views and Radicalisation Among Young People*. As elsewhere, the strategy seeks to focus not just on extremists claiming to be Muslims but on “all forms of extremism”—defined as “totalitarian and antidemocratic ideologies, intolerance to the views of others, hostile imagery and a division into ‘them’ and ‘us.’”

As in Holland, radical extremism in Denmark is largely viewed as primarily a failure of social integration (Rabassa et al. 2009). The Action Plan speaks of the need to strengthen

liberal democracy by educating and socializing citizens to accept democratic norms and responsibilities. It includes provisions for establishing direct contact with at-risk young people through mentoring programmes and other interventions aimed at redirecting youths away from violent extremism; facilitating inter-cultural dialogue; enhancing civil society; and developing community resilience to counter violent extremism (Government of Denmark 2009). In addition to the Action Plan, in coordination with the European Union, the Danish Ministry of Refugee Immigration and Integration Affairs has partnered with the municipalities of Aarhus and Copenhagen, the East Jutland Police District, and the Danish Security and Intelligence Service (PET) to create a pilot deradicalisation programme called “Deradicalisation—Targeted Intervention” (Rabassa et al. 2009). These programmes are voluntary and apply tactics used in crime prevention to counter violent extremism. They emphasise the need for interagency co-operation among schools, social services, the police, and youth agencies.

The Danish deradicalisation programme has two components. The Danish Security Intelligence Service (PET) directs one of these and the second is managed by the Ministry of Integration Affairs, the municipalities of Aarhus and Copenhagen, and the East Jutland Police District. As part of its responsibilities, the PET has identified five categories of individuals deemed at risk of becoming involved in violent extremism (Centre for Terrorism Analysis 2008). The first group consists of those who have sought asylum in Denmark who may have already trained in terrorist camps. The second category is composed of second- and third-generation immigrants who may be socially excluded, have failed at school, or been in trouble with the authorities. The third category consists of young individuals who appear well integrated into society but are nonetheless attracted to radical, militant versions of Islam. The fourth category consists of ethnic Danes who have converted to Islam. The final refers to “ideologists”—those deemed as recruiters and radicalisers.

PET co-ordinates the first diversionary aspect of the programme. Despite its intelligence role, PET has adopted what amounts to a community policing model in seeking to develop partnership arrangements with Muslim community groups. The second element of the programme (the element co-ordinated by the Ministry of Integration Affairs, etc.) comes into action if it appears that a young person appears in the process of being radicalised toward violent extremism. If individuals respond positively to intervention, the programme assigns a mentor to provide emotional support and guidance, trying to dissuade them from joining the violent extremist group or assisting them to leave if they

are already members and find alternative routes. Again, there is a lack of information evaluating the effectiveness of these programmes—although an independent evaluation of the Action Plan has been commissioned and will report in 2013. According to some of the research that has been conducted on these projects, many Danish Muslims had either never heard of the projects or viewed them in a negative way as stigmatising Muslims (Kühle and Lindekilde 2010).

Sweden

A range of community policing principles, procedures, and practices lie at the heart of strategies promoted by official authorities, including the Swedish Security Police (Säkerhetspolisen) and Swedish Government ministries, as well as NGOs and community programmes such as the “Fryshuset” project and Swedish Muslim programmes (in particular SENSUS, Swedish Peace Agents, and Swedish Muslims for Truth and Justice). The Swedish government’s counter-terrorist strategy, currently being reviewed, was published in February 2008. Its four-strand approach is summarised under the headings pursue, prevent, protect and manage. Although the document, from its first paragraph, identifies “the new threat” characterised by strong links to religious extremism—“the most serious terrorist threat to Europe as well as globally now consists of groups who seek to legitimise the use of violence by reference to extreme interpretations of Islam”—it also makes clear that all violent extremism will be treated in the same way. There is a deliberate policy to avoid singling out, and thereby risk alienating, the Swedish Muslim population.

Although incidents in Sweden have been few, the country is making deliberate efforts to learn from other countries how best to combat terrorism, particularly in the aftermath of a suicide bomb in December 2010. Under its Counter-Terrorism Cooperative Council, led by the Swedish Security Service, its stated aim is to develop and strengthen Sweden’s collective ability to combat terrorism.

The main threat is from extremists inspired by al Qaeda, or other similar groups, but there are also fears of right-wing extremism. In November 2010 the Director General of the Swedish Security Service published a public document reporting on “violence-promoting Islamist extremism in Sweden, the radicalisation processes discernible in violence-promoting circles in Sweden and the tools and strategies which can be used to

counter radicalisation.” Some have commented that the timing was poor—or very good—as a few weeks later the first (and only) terrorist suicide bomb attack of this nature took place on Swedish soil. The 112-page document (“Violence-promoting Islamist extremism in Sweden”) is an example of Swedish authorities’ efforts to be open about the threat to Swedish interests at home and abroad, its origins, processes of radicalisation, and how it intends (with all of society’s assistance) to counter the threat. Its focus is on mainly proactive, preventive measures.

Sweden has an espoused respect for liberal attitudes and multi-culturalism but recognises that more could have been done back in the 1970s when the Muslim community was beginning to establish itself. Government has responded to the fact that until recently, police had little to no training in dealing with minority groups, different cultures, and different values and thus lacked an appropriate knowledge base in this area. The key point was that there needs to be an integral knowledge of Islam to avoid culture clashes and the potential for violence. Efforts are now being made to link up with Stockholm mosques and their representatives to promote mutual understanding between state actors and the Muslim community. This policy of consultation and involvement is a classic community policing process.

One source of “culture clash” identified was between the Swedish judicial system and Muslims who believed in forcing the introduction of sharia law in Sweden. Another potential threat was from Swedish Muslim youth, particularly intellectual youth, who feel that they are not totally valued as assets to the Swedish community. Such feelings can drive them into becoming ostracised, alienated, discontent, and held in suspicion. The impetus is now to address the spread of such feelings, for example by reforms to police training, to prevent young Muslims being treated by society and the state as if they were all some sort of a problem.

Within local Muslim communities the issue of the credibility of those involved in CVE presents a challenge. Interviewees for this study claim that mainstream groups in the Islamic mosques have little influence because their leaders have no local credibility with or respect from those whom they need to challenge. It was said that they also have no training to deal with complex issues.

The Swedish authorities have endorsed (and funded) a number of community-based CVE programmes. These include the “Fryshuset” project and the “Swedish Muslims for

Peace and Justice” group both of which have credibility and, according to interviewees, are well led and capable of reaching young men deemed “in the risk zone.” Encouraged by state agencies, these organisations are attempting to counter narratives that might draw vulnerable individuals into violent extremism and provide support to those trying to leave extremist organisations.

The Swedish strategy places emphasis on involving all of society in efforts to prevent the types of radicalisation signalled by increased interest in terrorist activities or violent tendencies. It places great emphasis on measures that target and research “the breeding grounds of terrorism.” It includes initiatives to overcome exclusion (local causes of grievance) by promoting an integration policy and democracy. It espouses the wider use of dialogue as a means of creating more opportunities for representatives of civil society to give their views of threat pictures and possible measures. It also highlights the need for closer study of possible ways to provide support to individuals who want to leave extremist violence-promoting environments. The country has significant experience dealing with white power groups, and it is clear that the state recognizes that similar (but bespoke) programmes may have merit in preventing or disrupting other types of terrorism.

The most viable programme (as a model for future work) is EXIT, run by Fryshuset (Swedish for “Freeze House,” as it was first located in an old meat warehouse in the suburbs of Stockholm), an NGO that focuses primarily on young people on the margins of society. It is from this population that potential extremists may be recruited either as actual members or as sympathizers. Fryshuset is a programme now located in Stockholm, Gothenburg, and Malmo. It was the brainchild of Anders Carlberg, who identified a variety of factors that led young men to join gangs and wished to do something to prevent it. By providing a range of outlets for young people, including sports, recreation, music, and education, and also by providing role models and mentoring, it works with criminal gangs, skinheads and neo-Nazis, and other marginalized youths.

It could be described as an enabling programme for youth inspired by a vision that believes knowledge, encouragement, confidence-building and acceptance of responsibility are necessary for the positive and healthy growth of young people.

Currently there are thirty different programmes and activities (including a school) with, overall, eight hundred students/participants. Fryshuset employs over four hundred full-time staff plus volunteers at its three urban locations.

A particular programme that Fryshuset runs is EXIT, developed in 1998 to prevent young people from engaging with extremist groups (specifically white power environments) by offering positive alternatives, educating them about the perils of such groups, and helping them leave these groups if they so desire. EXIT identifies causes of and steps in recruitment (often local and personal; politics and ideology come later); “benefits” of belonging; common factors within sects; how those who belong come to think and act; strategies for leaving; and methods of preventing “relapse,” or recidivism. The interventions are personal, intensive, and require role models and mentoring.

PASSUS is a similar, related programme, designed specifically to help youths leave organized criminal gangs. Both EXIT and PASSUS handle about twenty young people per year. Programmes for each essentially utilize the same methodology, but participants are kept separated, partly in deference to the participants themselves, who do not want to mix with members of other groups. This model is itself based on a 1996 programme developed by the Norwegian Police Academy to help members disengage from white power groups.

EXIT has dealt mostly with youth involved in right-wing extremist groups and some left-wing movements. However, they recognize that globally and particularly in Scandinavia, there has been an increase in other extremism along with increased immigration of Muslims. Young Swedish men have been detected attending Al Qaeda and Al Shabaab training camps abroad and then returning to Sweden. There is some transferability of principles and practices from EXIT and PASSUS models into other counter-narrative and preventive programmes — such as those that tackle religious extremism. EXIT is now dealing with this type of extremism with a new programme called “Together for Sweden,” designed “to promote religious dialogue and tolerance.” They hired a moderate Imam, a move that has invoked criticism from many in the Swedish community ignorant of Islam. Consequently they hired a Christian priest and Jewish rabbi to prevent allegations of sectarian stereotyping.

EXIT’s main activities involve individual programming based on a participant’s personality, relationship with his/her parents, extent of involvement in extremist groups, and a range of other factors. The emphasis is on providing adequate support, which is customized and can range from motivational talks for participants to daily contact with them for several years.

Parents of participants are often sought out by staff to ensure there is adequate communication between them and their offspring and to explain the programme itself. Staff will often work with families to help them understand why their children became involved with an extremist group. Participation is voluntary and free. Referrals often come from the police but may also come from schools, therapists, neighbours, social workers, or by word of mouth.

To promote its message, EXIT has been conducting lectures in schools and has produced a movie, entitled “The Voice of Hate,” which preaches against prejudice of all varieties. They often rely on volunteers to spread positive information about the importance of cultural awareness, tolerance, and inclusion.

The approach involves the NGO working within local communities and supported by formal agencies—for example, the local police deploy officers to Fryshuset to build bridges and promote mutual understanding. Some former extremists have become involved in these initiatives. EXIT, for instance, is run by a mixed group of staff, including professional therapists and social workers—but also former gang members and extremists. According to organisers and police interviewees, the presence of these former extremists gives the programme a high degree of credibility. The police are not part of the formal programme team but meet and interact with young people, who often complain they had no dialogue with them.

Community policing principles and practices are also to be found within other two groups, known as Swedish Peace Agents and Swedish Muslims for Peace and Justice. They are comprised of Swedish Muslims whose initial aim to spread the message of peace within their own Muslim culture and community was prompted by the question: What does it mean to be a European Muslim in 2000? The idea of Swedish Peace Agents came about after 9/11. The definition of a Muslim Peace Agent is an “active citizen who promotes positive interaction between Muslim and non-Muslim communities. They subscribe to the Islamic peace culture and counteract mutual prejudices such as phobia toward Islam and phobia toward the west and non-Muslims (Westo-phobia).” The programme, funded by a number of Swedish agencies, has already trained one hundred Muslim Peace Agents in Sweden and produced a book called *Salam*, which is aimed at a multicultural audience and explains to the world that Islam is not about terrorism. The book also addresses the feelings of young Islamic people who feel lost and isolated, and it

offers support and suggestions to those who want to do some good. The programme's objective is to “counter the internal identity crises before radicalisation takes over.” The aim is to educate Muslim youth about the flawed messages and perils of violent jihad so that they can disseminate a positive image and message about their faith and culture.

There is an intensive training course on “Islamology” which all the project staff have to go through before they can start training others. Staff members include ten trainers (five men and five women). Participants travel to Cairo to observe the society and culture of the city and are challenged about their identity by being asked to consider whether they are Swedish or Muslim. They discuss identity, roles, the media, and other topics and are taught presentation techniques. In the aftermath of the December 2010 suicide bombing, the peace agents took a proactive stance. Future strategy is to focus on being Swedish Muslims who play a part in the wider European community and beyond. The organisers claim that, after the Arab Spring, there has been a growing interest in their work, and that others are copying their approach. In an interesting development, Egyptians are now coming to Sweden to learn from the Swedish Muslim groups.

When describing the relationship that Swedish Muslim organisations had with Swedish police, an interviewee said, “We help the police but we are not part of the police”—repeating almost verbatim what other community-based actors had stated in Belfast and London (see case studies below). Representatives of community-based programmes in Sweden make it clear that although the state plays a part by funding and supporting their work, credible local role models have much more chance of success than civil servants and other professionals. The commitment of charismatic individuals within society should not be underestimated, and in Sweden it is clear that the state is attempting to remove obstacles, not place obstacles in their way. Examples are the commitment to open dialogue and a new element of police training—and, more broadly, a new understanding of Islam.

Sweden has adopted a sensitive, thoughtful approach to the challenge presented by violent extremism and is planning state actions based on research and learning from elsewhere. In fact, learning on a constant basis is a central theme in Sweden's rather thoughtful approach to CT. The dangers of adopting an overzealous and more draconian approach were cited as justification for a more intelligent (and intelligence-led) approach. It has adopted a multi-dimensional approach to CVE that includes efforts to change legislation; the promotion of open dialogue (prevention diplomacy); and support to

individuals and community-based programmes engaged in a variety of activities that counter the narrative of the violent extremists (right-wing, left-wing, and religious). As seen elsewhere in Europe, the role played by these community-based groups and the charismatic individuals who staff them cannot be underestimated.

Some key themes have emerged following examination of Sweden’s multi-strand, community-based CVE strategies. These include: the openness with which the Swedish authorities approach the issue of violent extremism and their focus on open dialogue and “preventive diplomacy”; the importance and impact of NGOs and key individuals working within the community; and the important requirement from police and other statutory agencies to respond to these efforts in appropriate ways. Of particular note is the importance the state gives to the avoidance of overreaction, which could lead to the alienation of one section of the community, and Sweden’s “cerebral” approach to prevention—by which it prioritises learning from others.

Summary

All of the themes identified above can, to some degree, be found in most European countries’ approaches to CVE.

Part I of this paper has demonstrated that, in those European countries whose strategies were examined, community engagement plays an important role in countering violent extremism. Despite differing contexts, there is consensus that CVE is likely to be most effective when characterized by a partnership approach involving statutory organizations and community-based non-governmental organizations with grassroots credibility. The examples presented show that meaningful partnerships have been created based on mutual respect and acknowledgment of respective strengths and expertise between agencies and community-based organizations. In certain circumstances there has been a willingness to take calculated risks (for example, by employing former activists with criminal and terrorist backgrounds) to ensure that hard-to-reach groups are approached by those with the required local knowledge, credibility, and technical capacity.

Some common themes and practices have been highlighted by describing the CVE approaches taken by the UK, the Netherlands, Denmark, Spain, and Sweden. These include:

- The multi-strand approach to countering terrorism and the emphasis placed on prevention—especially efforts to reduce the recruitment of vulnerable persons into violent extremism.
- The importance of partnerships between formal state institutions and community-based organizations.
- The role that individuals within communities can play, including former activists who now wish to contribute positively to the situation.
- The importance of sharing lessons learned from other countries, strategies, and individual programmes.

As the 2010 QIASS report also disclosed, the strategies examined in this paper show that relationships are critical to the effective delivery of prevention programmes. The principles and good practices of community policing are followed to minimise the risk of failing to maintain community support. Each country has adopted approaches that take into account the specific culture, threats, legislation, and other local factors therein, and some are more developed, comprehensive, and multi-faceted than others. This is due largely to the duration and types of threats the country is dealing with.

Through study of these and other European national CVE strategies—their priorities and methods, and lessons learned from them—policymakers and strategists can more readily determine if these strategies and practices may be applicable to other areas.

To assist this process further, Part II of the paper now presents two in-depth case studies from the UK. Details of community based programmes in Northern Ireland (that deal with the threat of a return to the violence of the past) and similar programmes in England (that address the threat of al Qaeda-type inspired extremism) are presented and discussed. The paper outlines their origins; development; methodologies employed; and, indicates lessons to be learned. It concludes that principles and practices developed over a lengthy period in UK are worth considering for transfer and remodelling elsewhere.

Part II: Two UK Case Studies

Case Study I: Northern Ireland

All of the issues identified in the previous section are critical to success when a partnership approach to CVE is adopted. This is particularly so when a society is emerging from conflict; contains many divisions and grievances; expects its police service to demonstrate reform and community policing priorities; and is comprised of a sizable number of ex-prisoners. Northern Ireland is a case study that falls into this category. This section considers how community-oriented policing strategies have evolved and been adapted in Northern Ireland to enable prevention efforts to be more effective when one is working with former loyalist and republican paramilitaries.

It is important to note that Northern Ireland's CVE efforts can only be understood in the context of a peace process that has been ongoing for almost two decades. This has involved the development of a negotiated political settlement overseen by the British and Irish governments (with significant international assistance) and several periods during which the political institutions collapsed only to be patiently rebuilt with yet further political negotiations (Elliot 2007, Edwards 2011). The Belfast Agreement of 1998 (also known as the Good Friday Agreement), which was subsequently endorsed simultaneously by referenda on both sides of the border in Ireland (that is, in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland), heralded significant social and political reform across Northern Ireland. It saw the creation of a power-sharing (coalition) executive, cross-border bodies, the early release of politically motivated prisoners, police and criminal justice reforms, and a series of guaranteed human rights and equality measures (Cox et al. 2006, Bew 2007). As is widely discussed in the writings on the conflict transformation process, the completion of the "policing deal" that saw the Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC) transformed into the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) was among the most challenging elements of the transition.

The Agreement provided for the establishment of an independent commission on policing. That commission was tasked with developing a blueprint for policing in the jurisdiction appropriate to the new political accord. Commission chairman Chris (now Lord) Patten, a former Conservative minister and governor of Hong Kong, was clear

from the outset about the difficulties associated with the task set for him and his fellow commissioners.

Since 1922 and the establishment of the Royal Ulster Constabulary the composition of the police has been disproportionately Protestant and Unionist. Both in the past, when the police were subject to political control by the Unionist government at Stormont, and more recently in the period of direct rule from Westminster, they have been identified by one section of the population not primarily as upholders of the law but as defenders of the state, and the nature of the state itself has remained the central issue of political argument. In one political language they are the custodians of nationhood. In its rhetorical opposite they are the symbols of oppression. Policing therefore goes right to the heart of the sense of security and identity of both communities and, because of the differences between them, this seriously hampers the effectiveness of the police service in Northern Ireland. (Patten 1999:2)

At the heart of the vision intended to transform the RUC into the PSNI was the notion of community policing. The Patten Report (1999) was the result of a lengthy and comprehensive research and consultation process that ultimately contained 175 separate recommendations for policing. At the core of the reform programme was the aspiration to take politics out of policing and to create a service with a community ethos. The aim was to deliver a police service that was:

- representative of the community it served
- accountable to the law and the community
- open, transparent, and impartial
- protective of human rights
- effective and efficient in its operations

Symbolic changes in terms of the name, ethos, and culture of the organisation were accompanied by significant changes designed to improve police accountability to the community—the creation of an overseeing Policing Board with significant powers, the independent Office of the Police Ombudsman to investigate allegations of police misconduct, and District Policing Partnerships to govern local neighbourhood policing arrangements. As the report made clear, “Policing with the Community should be the core function of the police service...” (Patten Report 1999: para. 7.9). The legislation that was introduced to enact the recommendations contained in the Patten report, including

the renaming of the RUC as the PSNI, specifically charged all its officers with community policing obligations. Section 32 (5) of the Police (Northern Ireland) Act 2000 states: “Police officers shall, so far as practicable, carry out their functions in cooperation with, and with the aim of securing the support of the local community.”

Since then, despite episodic violent extremism and occurrences of terrorism—notably characterised by the emergence of several “residual” terrorist groups, such as the Real IRA (RIRA) and the Continuity IRA (CIRA)—the “peace process” is widely acknowledged to be successful and increasingly embedded in Northern Ireland. While Loyalism remains fractious and tensions within that constituency do manifest sporadically, no serious political commentator suggests that there is any prospect of a return to violence by either mainstream Republicanism or organised Loyalism. Sinn Féin, the political wing of the IRA, and the Democratic Unionist Party (for years the party most associated with sectarian and intransigent Unionism) now share power. Martin McGuinness, a former IRA commander, and the Reverend Ian Paisley, who also served jail time for politically motivated offences, led their respective constituencies into the new power-sharing arrangement in 2007. In 2010, after further intense negotiations, policing and justice powers were devolved and handed over to the local assembly. For the first time since the foundation of the state in 1921, Republicans and Unionists now share responsibility for the governance of a state that Republicans had heretofore sought to overthrow through armed struggle.

Neither constituency has altered its political allegiance or identity, merely its views on whether violence is justifiable in defence or promotion of that identity. Most pertinently for current purposes, when two British soldiers and a police officer were killed by Republican dissidents in 2009, Martin McGuinness stood shoulder to shoulder with his Unionist counterpart, Peter Robinson (who replaced Ian Paisley as First Minister), and the PSNI Chief Constable Matt Bagott, and condemned those responsible for the murders as “traitors to Ireland.”

At the grassroots level, much of CVE work carried out in Northern Ireland, against dissident Republicans or indeed more militant Loyalists, is done by local community organisations, many of which are directed and staffed by former combatants. The panoply of youth diversionary organisations, community safety projects, restorative justice programmes (some of which are discussed below), and neighbourhood renewal projects almost all have partnership working arrangements with the PSNI. The police role in such

contexts is to develop partnership but often not as the lead agency. The “new beginning to policing” (as the Independent Commission named their report) laid out a template for bespoke styles of police engagement that are adaptable to conditions on the ground. Thus, for example, it is widely accepted among community restorative justice projects in Northern Ireland (which are the most prominent of the former IRA and Loyalist combatant-led programmes) that the most sensitive of the state actors in developing effective working arrangements at the grassroots level were “pragmatic and sensible cops” (McEvoy and Shirlow 2012). Developing relations between the police and particularly historically estranged communities has been difficult and challenging for all of the actors involved, and the effort is still evolving. Such relations are, however, at the very core of the ongoing CVE efforts to thwart those who promote violent opposition to the status quo.

The Counter-Terrorism Context in Northern Ireland

Northern Ireland, as part of the UK, is covered by its national counter-terrorism strategy (CONTEST). The scope of the CONTEST strategy has recently been revised and been broadened to cover all forms of terrorism (including Irish terrorism). However, Northern Ireland has a bespoke approach that recognises some of the particular social, political, and contextual aspects of the threats and is recognised by the UK PREVENT strategy.

The PREVENT strategy notes that Republican groups have long recognised the political and propaganda value of mounting an attack in Great Britain. In September 2010, the Northern Ireland–related terrorist threat to Great Britain was raised from moderate to substantial, meaning that an attack is a strong possibility. That said, it is unclear whether the dissident Republican groups have anything like the required logistical sophistication, personnel, and community support to mount sustained attacks in Britain in the same way that the mainstream IRA did throughout the conflict. The last actual attack by Northern Ireland–related groups in Great Britain was in 2001. Locally, however, the threat in Northern Ireland itself is described as severe, which means an attack is highly likely.

Although there have been a number of arrests in Northern Ireland of individuals allegedly linked to violent jihadist activities, the current primary threat is assessed as coming from the dissident Republican sector. These groups include the Real IRA, Óglaigh na hÉirann, and the Continuity IRA. There are few concrete ideological distinctions among these groups in practice. All are opposed to the Good Friday

Agreement and the PSNI, and in particular all are opposed to the Sinn Féin leadership's endorsement of policing change. These groups, known locally as "the dissidents," continue to carry out sporadic attacks on the security forces, bomb civilian and military targets, and engage in acts of rough justice by meting out punishment violence within their own communities against alleged anti-social offenders.

For the above reasons (that is, the level and type of threat), the UK strategy differentiates between the implementation of PREVENT in Northern Ireland and the UK:

Under the Northern Ireland constitutional settlement, national security remains the sole responsibility of the UK Government. For the most part, UK-wide counter-terrorism legislation applies in Northern Ireland and remains the responsibility of the UK Government. However, following the devolution of policing and justice matters in April 2010, the Northern Ireland Minister of Justice is responsible for policing and criminal justice policy matters. In addition, most of the levers which are relevant to the work of PREVENT are devolved and are the responsibility of the Northern Ireland Assembly. In Northern Ireland, unlike the rest of the United Kingdom, the principal threat from terrorism comes from Northern Ireland-related terrorist groups. While the PREVENT strategy does not directly apply to Northern Ireland-related terrorism, the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland works closely with Ministers in the Northern Ireland Executive to counter the threat posed by these groups. (HMG 2011)

PREVENT also notes a range of factors that drive recruitment to terrorist groups in Northern Ireland. Dissident Republicans regard the compromises made by mainstream Republicanism as a "sell-out" of the traditional goal of a united Ireland (Tong 2004, Sanders 2011, Horgan and Morrison 2011). As the PREVENT strategy sums up, at a political level these dissidents are motivated by what they regard as "the ongoing British presence in Ireland." However, as the document goes on to note, "...as elsewhere, ideology is rarely the only factor in the process of radicalisation and recruitment. Recruitment is often personality-driven or dependent on family or local allegiances. The promises of status, excitement and in some cases financial reward are all relevant." There has apparently been some limited movement by former mainstream IRA activists toward the dissident groups, including provision of technical and logistical support. However, there is some local evidence in Northern Ireland that recruitment of skilled personnel remains a problem. Certainly some of those imprisoned and arrested for dissident-related

offences include individuals with significant “ordinary” criminal records, which might suggest that the dissident republican groups are struggling to attract the more genuinely politically motivated terrorists who tended to be a feature of their mainstream predecessors. Among the groups established by the British and Irish governments to monitor terrorist activities is the International Monitoring Commission. The commission noted, in 2010, that while some groups—in particular the Real IRA and especially Óglaigh na hÉireann (ONH)—remain active and dangerous, members were heavily involved in a wide range of serious crime (as well as terrorism). The commission also made clear that “. . . [i]t is however essential to keep things in perspective. It remains our view, as we said in our report six months ago, that in terms of weapons, money, personnel and support the present dissident campaign in no way matches the range and tempo of the PIRA campaign of the Troubles” (International Monitoring Commission 2010:6).

The Loyalist sector, within which the threat level is assessed as lower, has struggled with the transition out of conflict. As the International Monitoring Commission (2011:14) noted, “In contrast to PIRA [mainstream IRA], loyalist groups are finding it very difficult to contemplate going out of business. Indeed, one striking feature of the changes we have described has been how PIRA[,] however slowly, transformed itself under firm leadership and has gone out of business as a paramilitary group while loyalist groups, lacking comparable direction, have struggled to adapt.” In particular, there are significant tensions manifest in one of the major groupings, the Ulster Volunteer Force. These tensions are linked, in part, to leadership tussles, current police investigations into past violence, and an ongoing “supergrass” (informant) trial of Loyalist suspects. They have resulted in one very public murder of a former UVF affiliate in 2010, serious rioting in the summer of 2011 when firearms were used, and the re-emergence of militaristic wall murals—developments that continue to be monitored closely by the police not least in terms of how Loyalism might re-emerge in the context of a sustained threat posed by dissident Republicans.

Community-Based CVE Programmes in Northern Ireland

Northern Ireland is in transition from a thirty-year conflict. Unlike those involved in or supportive of Al Qaeda or like-minded jihadist organisations in the UK and elsewhere, for many of the principal protagonists in Northern Ireland the war is over. Much of the work discussed below is directed at maintaining the stability of the transition. That said,

there may be themes and ways of working in the Northern Ireland context that may be relevant or of interest elsewhere. Certainly in terms of the political, security, and peace-making lessons to be learned from the Northern Ireland experience, these have become a major source of interest and inquiry internationally over the past decade (Ellison and Reilly 2008, Ben Porat 2008, Williams 2010). We would therefore advocate for a cautious, analytical, but open-minded approach to the transferability of that local experience.

There are a number of programmes operating throughout Northern Ireland which contain elements of community policing and which highlight the challenges inherent to police and community partnerships in such a transitional context. The PSNI and district policing partnerships lead some of the least contentious programmes—for example, neighbourhood policing, crime prevention, and outreach efforts to strengthen community relationships. However, as noted above, particularly in working-class communities and in areas in which relations with the police have historically been difficult and in which dissident and Loyalist paramilitarists would continue to draw the bulk of their support and recruits, it is politically motivated former prisoners and ex-combatants in favour of the peace process who do much of the heavy lifting in such work. In some instances, this CVE work dovetails with more generic preventative programmes designed to divert young people from ordinary crime. Many NGOs, including some that work on a cross-border/all-Ireland basis, are engaged in efforts to prevent young people from becoming involved in “ordinary” crime, gang membership, and sectarianism. As was noted above, given that both dissident Republican and Loyalist extremists recruit people involved in criminality into their ranks—when the alternatives to joining up may mean a punishment shooting or a beating at the hands of such groups—ordinary criminality may serve as an obvious gateway into sectarian and politically motivated violent extremism.

In examining various programmes involving ex-prisoners and combatants in Northern Ireland, we will not postulate simplistic or mechanistic transposition from one quite specific setting to other very different social, political, or cultural contexts. However, from the details recorded, it is possible to identify principles and key practices that may apply elsewhere.

A Role for Ex-Combatants

We have seen that community policing provides for significant involvement by grassroots organisations in contemporary Northern Ireland, including those led and staffed by former combatants (Topping 2008). In addition to the usual counter-terrorism strategies and tactics deployed against violent extremism, there are local variants. In this section we focus in particular on the work of three programmes of particular interest for current purposes—(i) Coiste na N-Iarchimi ex-prisoners network (or “Coiste,” as it is known locally), (ii) Community-based Restorative Justice, and (iii) the Prisoners to Peace initiative. Before exploring the work of those projects, we explain how former combatants became so prominently involved in such work.

A key element of the Northern Ireland peace process was the early release of politically motivated prisoners (McEvoy 1998, 2001). None of the principal paramilitary organisations engaged in conflict could have delivered their respective constituencies without such early releases, a fact either implicitly or explicitly acknowledged by the signatories to the Belfast Agreement. That accord provided for the release, within two years of the signing of the Agreement, of all politically motivated prisoners in groups that supported the peace process. Those early releases were a conspicuous success. Between the signing of the Agreement in 1998 and May 2010, 453 prisoners were released early under the Northern Ireland Sentences Act, which implemented the prisoner release elements of the Agreement (Northern Ireland Prison Service 2011). Prisoners are released on license (a parole) until the end of the sentence that they would otherwise have served. Since 1998, only 23 have been recalled to prison for breach of their licences, 10 for alleged involvement in terrorist activities and the remaining 13 for ordinary offences (Northern Ireland Prison Service 2011)—an overall recidivism rate of 5 per cent after thirteen years. By way of comparison, the recidivism rate for “ordinary” adult prisoners in Northern Ireland within two years of the offence is 48 per cent (Northern Ireland Prison Service 2003). Those individuals who were released early joined thousands of others released during the conflict itself (estimates usually are around 15,000 Republicans and 5,000–10,000 Loyalists). As we will detail below, they have become crucial voices in “countering the narrative”—among either disaffected former comrades or a new, younger generation of potential terrorists who continue to believe in the efficacy and morality of political violence.

As well as the provisions relating to the early releases, the Agreement also stated:

The Governments continue to recognise the importance of measures to facilitate the reintegration of prisoners into the community by providing support both prior to and after release, including assistance directed towards availing of employment opportunities, re-training and/or re-skilling, and further education.

(Belfast Agreement, 1998: 26)

Despite this reference to its importance in the Agreement, the practice of prisoner reintegration in Northern Ireland remained controversial. For some, the allocation of any resources toward those who had been involved in violence constituted a “reward to the ‘men of violence’” (Gormally 2001). For others, the process has been characterised by a lack of political will on the part of government to properly support the work of ex-prisoners and to remove the obstacles faced by them in reconstructing their post conflict lives (Rolston 2007). In addition, many politically motivated ex-prisoners themselves bridle at the term “reintegration,” suggesting that it undermines their “hard-earned” status as political rather than ordinary offenders; that it denotes a failure to acknowledge the structural causes of violence and their continued exclusion from full citizenship entitlements; and that it implies a basic misunderstanding of the relationship between them and the communities from which they come—implying that they are somehow “other” or apart from such communities or are required to change in order to “fit back” into society (Coiste, 2003a, 2003b).

In any case, between 1995 and 2003, 61 former prisoner groups and a further 29 affiliated projects received a total of £9.2 million in funding from the Community Foundation for Northern Ireland (CFNI) and the European Special Support Programme for Peace and Reconciliation (Peace I and II). Ex-prisoner projects are currently awaiting a further application for funding under Peace III, which will be decided in January 2013. The re-integrative model developed for ex-prisoners was essentially a self-help model. Monies were distributed through CFNI (a highly respected independent community funding agency), but the actual management and staffing of the reintegration programmes were left largely to the ex-prisoners themselves. The projects were organised on a factional basis, broadly mirroring the various paramilitary organisations to which they had previously belonged. Thus Coiste na n-Iarchimí (discussed further below) became the umbrella organisation for former IRA prisoners, and four other organisations

served different Republican and Loyalist factions. While undoubtedly this model resulted in some duplication of effort, it is difficult to see how any other method would have been feasible with these former sworn enemies in the early days of the transition.

The practical work of the projects has encompassed a broad spectrum of activities, only a snapshot of which can be discussed here. The range of work in which politically motivated former prisoners are or have been involved includes: direct service such as counselling and training for ex-prisoners and their families; capacity building in local communities; ex-prisoner self-help initiatives including conflict-related tourist programmes delivered by former combatants; community-based anti-poverty and anti-racist work; resolving disputes at interface areas and concerning contested marches; community-based restorative justice as alternatives to punishment violence (discussed below); youth diversionary work; initiatives on dealing with the past, including truth recovery, developing relations with former enemies (including former soldiers, police officers, and ex-combatants from different factions) and victims of violence; devising forms of memorialisation and commemoration; equality and human rights campaigning; and a host of other related activities (see Shirlow and McEvoy 2008 for an overview). The three projects showcased below speak to different styles of counter-violent extremism work led by ex-combatants.

Coiste na n-Iarchimí: Safe Spaces for Critical Dialogue

Coiste na n-Iarchimí is the umbrella organisation for former Provisional IRA-affiliated political ex-prisoners throughout Ireland. At its height it represented 24 groups and employed 95 staff (Rolston 2007). Its stated aims from its inception were to secure the full integration of Republican former prisoners through recognition of the contribution they have made to the community and the contribution they can make in the future; to facilitate former prisoners in contributing to peace and justice in Ireland; and to deepen the links with community organisations, employers, and others (Coiste na n-Iarchimí 2002). Coiste's work has thus ranged from counselling through job- and training-related activity to lobbying and advocacy on behalf of the Republican ex-prisoner constituency in relation to what they regard as unwarranted discrimination in access to jobs, goods, and services (Ritchie 2002). While the organisation is engaged in a broad range of activities, the two most relevant for current purposes are (a) those related to working with

the police and (b) efforts to counter violent narratives promoted by dissidents. All of the interviews cited below were conducted with former IRA prisoners and ex-combatants.

The resolution of long-held antipathies between Republican communities and the police on both sides of the border has been one of the most difficult aspects of the peace process. Following the historical decision by Sinn Féin to support policing structures in Northern Ireland in January 2007, Republican ex-prisoners have been at the forefront of efforts to develop relations with the Police Service of Northern Ireland. Two of the Sinn Féin members of the Policing Board are prominent former IRA prisoners, and other Republican ex-prisoners are active members of local District Police Partnership Boards. In recent interviews conducted by one of the authors with Coiste members, ex-prisoners stressed that while there was still “some way to go” in terms of the relationship between Republicans and the police in general (with several suggesting that too often relations were particularly shaped for good and ill by the personalities and abilities of local police commanders), no one interviewed suggested that relations had remained unmoved since 2007. As the following former IRA prisoners noted:

The relationship with the PSNI is a huge issue. The decision taken to engage with the police by Sinn Féin has moved the goal posts but it is still an uphill battle in our community because we are fighting against years of never having a police force. The perception is that they were never there to fight crime. The PSNI are changing slightly but they have a huge mountain to climb. They haven't yet the capacity to do proper policing because they have 30 years history of political policing.

We were at a training day for new PSNI recruits—a senior police officer gave the address and spoke about partition and a sectarian police force and the equality agenda. That would never happen down South. The RUC have been dragged to this position and it is paying off. They are not perfect but no police force is.

In a focus group discussion facilitated by one of the authors in North Belfast, much of the discussion focused upon the developing relationship between the political ex-prisoner project and the PSNI.

People were asking what should they do in relation to the police—this was both organisations and individuals—and we felt we had to take a lead. The process of engagement would have taken a lot longer if it was not us with a republican background taking the lead. Most of the issues with the police boil down to quality

of life issues—the social situation, low paid jobs, over-crowding in housing and a community hemmed in by territoriality. It is amazing that there is not more negativity. It is a testament to the work done here that this area is still holding together. What people see is not just the high politics but also who is doing the work.

Our view is that the police are another group like the Housing Executive who are accountable to this community. The old police were very defensive—the new ones acknowledge problems. We criticised the behaviour of police at the interfaces. We see the community police who want to build relationships, then the response teams who actually come out when called. We have done sessions with the police about community linkages and their need for communication skills. . . . Unfortunately it is the parades that catch their attention. They should not come in with Territorial Support Groups—they shouldn't bring in strangers—it should be community based policing. Things are progressing but it could be going much faster. This process is all about putting in all the small pieces of the jigsaw—you've got the perimeter done in the form of overall political support for the police but we are now filling in the middle pieces.

There is interesting stuff going on in relation to community safety—bottom up linkages with police and other statutory agencies. It could work but it needs resourced. The government should view it as saving of money not an expenditure.

The consequences for Republican ex-prisoners in taking a lead on developing relations with the PSNI should not be underestimated. Many of the most prominent Republican ex-prisoners involved in these kinds of efforts have received death threats from anti-agreement Republican armed groups. Another former prisoner interviewed also noted that threats and attacks came not only from “dissident” Republicans but also from criminals in the local community.

We should remember that there is actual risk involved—death threats and houses attacked—there have been 13 attacks in 18 months. It is anti-social elements carrying out these attacks, not dissidents. A small criminal group— 8 or 9 people recently attacked a leading member's house. But we have big support from the community—at a public demonstration in protest against the attack we had 200 people including four UDA representatives.

Such discussions demonstrate the valuable work being done by political ex-prisoners to build positive relations between the PSNI and Republican communities at the grassroots level in Northern Ireland. While obviously the development of contemporary and indeed future relationships with the police remains paramount, a number of the political ex-prisoners interviewed also highlighted a number of important engagements in which they were involved with former RUC officers and British soldiers as part of their work “dealing with the past.” Such work has included arranging hosted visits by former police and army personnel into areas in which they were previously based and perceived by the community as part of a hostile occupying force, invitations to talks and seminars about past related issues, and other below-the-radar encounters.

The Coiste network has also reached out to elements of the Republican community who do not support Sinn Féin or the peace process. In some instances this work focuses upon young people, many of whom will have direct experience of their own parents, family members, and neighbours being involved in conflict, imprisonment, police raids, and so forth. As two ex-prisoners stated explicitly:

Young people who are children of ex-combatants were brought up in the context of the conflict. They see that their parent did something for their country but they may not see anything there for them. We need to show those people that there is something tangible for them—if that is not there they may become cannon fodder for people who are against the process.

We feel a real sense of responsibility for the next generation. A big reason for people to come to these projects is to make sure that the next generation doesn’t have to follow them. The young people do listen but we need to do a lot more—there is a lot of intense debate amongst them. They are looking at dissident websites and are taking simplistic arguments—“the Brits are still here,” for example. We need to continue the conversation for a long time. We also need to talk about what it was actually like—what it was like to live through a military conflict. If we don’t talk about it, the vocal minority will gain the ear of the young people. There are young people in the North who are being influenced by dissidents who talk about the great conviviality in gaol as though it were a party, which is nonsense.

All of those who work for the network insist that they operate under an open-door policy. Coiste has been involved in efforts to diffuse a “dirty protest” and has threatened hunger strike among dissident Republican prisoners held at Maghaberry Prison.

We have an open door policy—if you were an ex-prisoner it doesn’t matter where their heads are at politically now. We would not in any way discriminate—we helped an ex-CIRA person recently.

We have bought into the peace process wholly. But no-one who is an ex-prisoner is refused assistance for any reason. Even those who are now in prison will be supported because of what they were—not what they are in for now.

One respondent explained at some length that giving service to ex-prisoners might also have a political impact.

It is more than just being fair—where we prove ourselves prepared to help people whatever their views it has softened the attitudes of some of those people. When we can actually deliver for someone it demonstrates that the idea that nothing has changed is weak. There was some criticism of us and attempts to mobilise around ex-prisoner issues but our position reduced their ability to use the issue negatively. Even a critic who writes to the papers accusing us of giving jobs for the boys actually uses the advice service. There are also public interest issues which arise out of our work which have broader implications—compensation issues, those imprisoned or wrongly convicted who were not activists. We have been successful in being of relevance to the individual ex-prisoner.

Another consideration is seen as the importance of maintaining channels of communication in the ex-prisoner community:

It is important first that whatever political disagreements exist in the ex-prisoner community we don’t want it to reach breakdown. For example we ensured that people involved in [one non-mainstream group] got personal invites to an event and some came along—it is important that relationships are kept open. We are not an adjunct of Sinn Féin and we need to keep channels open—a leading critic has participated in our events. Having said that, the dissidents will not get any succour from us at all—there is no ambiguity about our rejection of them.

One person was explicit about the role of the projects in reducing dissent:

One of our roles is to continue holding the hands of those who are not happy with the peace process—we are able to talk out problems with the peace process. If groups like us didn't exist you would see a greater drift towards dissident groups—we have held that process back.

In short, the work engaged in by ex-prisoners and former combatants in the Coiste network, both in terms of their outreach to the police and their efforts to counter violent extremism within the Republican community, is an example par excellence of the ability of former combatants to help resolve conflict. One of the significant achievements of the peace process within Republicanism, as was repeatedly acknowledged by the International Monitoring Commission, among other commentators, was the movement's capacity to keep the bulk of its constituency “on board” as they moved toward significant compromises such as taking seats at Stormont, the decommissioning of paramilitary weapons, the dismantling of IRA structures, and of course the acceptance of policing arrangements. Many ex-prisoners we spoke with were keenly aware that the comradely bonds among veterans, including those who remained highly sceptical of the direction taken by Sinn Féin, were hugely important in minimising drift toward the dissidents. They did not regard their role as “disciplinary” or as the exercise of “political control.” Rather, interviewees characterised ex-prisoner projects within the Coiste network as providing safe space for often heated discussion and debate on strategy and tactics. If “keeping people on board” and reaching out to those who most definitely are not on board are the goals (through comradely relations that may supersede points of political or ideological difference), then this is a hugely significant contribution by such networks as Coiste. In Northern Ireland this has been recognised. Ex-prisoners have contributed to CVE by embedding the transition away from armed violence among former prisoners and combatants in a way no state agency could possibly do.

Loyalist ex-combatants, too, have worked hard to try to keep the bulk of their constituency on board with the transition. However, as was discussed above, with a less disciplined and organised constituency and fewer stand-out leaders spread thinly on the ground, their progress has been more uneven. They have also enjoyed fewer obvious tangible political gains than their Republican counterparts. Sinn Féin is now the largest political party within the nationalist community in Northern Ireland, while there are no

political representatives affiliated to the Loyalist groupings in the local assembly. (See Shirlow and McEvoy 2008.) In both constituencies there is an evident sense of responsibility among the former combatants interviewed about what they perceive as their responsibility to provide leadership in embedding the peace process in the communities in which they live and work and within their own constituency. That impetus toward leadership is also evident in the work of former combatants in community-based restorative justice in Northern Ireland.

Community Restorative Justice and Challenging Cultures of Violence

The background to community-based restorative justice in Northern Ireland has been discussed extensively elsewhere (McEvoy and Mika 2001, 2002, McEvoy and Eriksson 2008, Eriksson 2009). Broadly speaking, these projects grew out of efforts to supplant violent systems of paramilitary vigilantism with lawful, non-violent, and human rights-compliant community-based mediation drawn from the theory and practice of restorative justice. From the outset, in both Republican and Loyalist areas, the role of ex-combatants in challenging deeply embedded cultures of violence was central.

The background to the projects in Republican areas is that in 1996 a number of human rights and peace activists (including one of the authors—McEvoy) were approached by an intermediary to begin dialogue with the IRA concerning their continued use of punishment violence. A six-week training programme was devised and a discussion document was drafted outlining the potential for a non-violent community-based justice system based on the principles of restorative justice (Auld et al. 1997). After lengthy discussions, that document was endorsed by the IRA and Sinn Féin. Four pilot projects were established in Republican areas, since expanded to twelve. While the projects refused to work with an unreformed RUC at that juncture, they made it clear that partnership with all other aspects of the criminal justice system was desirable and held out the possibility of working relationships with the police in the context of an overarching political “deal” on policing. The projects in Republican areas became known as Community Restorative Justice Ireland. Since their establishment, many of the staff and volunteers involved are former IRA combatants.

The project activities have been focused upon the normal restorative justice activities of preparation of victims and offenders, mediation, family group conferencing, and the

monitoring of agreements (Mika 2006). In effect, the work of the projects appears very similar to what would be commonly known as community or neighbourhood mediation. In general, a “case” is referred to a local office by aggrieved parties or perhaps by another local organisation. Community members are encouraged to approach restorative justice, where they would previously have approached the IRA seeking punishment violence or threats. After an initial determination by project staff that indeed the matter is within the remit of the service—some types of conflict, such as domestic assault and child abuse, are routinely referred to other community or statutory resources—the conflict is assigned to two-person teams of trained volunteers. They most often visit with affected parties directly at their homes, and where issues are not resolved in simple “shuttle” diplomacy between parties to the dispute, arrangements are made to formally conduct a mediation or conference at some neutral venue. When agreements materialise from these conferences, the local service attempts to monitor compliance and seeks to intervene in situations where agreements must be revisited.

Generally, cases (of both crime and anti-social behaviour) involve individuals, entire families, or groups of households in matters that are relational in character. They range from supposedly minor types of disputes (noise, property damage) to matters that are significantly more severe in their consequences, including paramilitary threat. In addition to this more conventional fare, however, the Community Restorative Justice programmes become intimately involved in their local areas with a range of what might be characterized as community safety activities. Drinking by young people, graffiti on local buildings, trouble in parks or the city centre on the weekends, stoning of fire brigades, taxis, buses, and ambulances, desecration of a local church or shrine, vandalism of local shops and businesses, fighting at delicate interface areas, joyriding, and the like represent important community-wide trouble in which Community Restorative Justice has intervened, at the request of local residents, to devise collective local responses.

Given the presence of former paramilitaries among their staff and volunteers, the government and statutory agencies initially approached the issue of community justice projects with understandable suspicion. A key objective from the outset has been to bring the schemes into the remit of the formal justice system and to ensure that the rights of those who came into contact with the schemes were protected. In 2000 a government protocol was developed that requires community-based programmes to become accredited and audited in order to be recognised as legitimate and receive funding. Participants in restorative justice initiatives on both sides of the community agreed to

comply with the protocol, and this remains the case today. There is also official oversight of the programmes—inspection by the NI Criminal Justice Inspectorate (NICJI). Despite those initial suspicions, common ground was found over a prolonged period of consultation and negotiation (McEvoy and Eriksson 2008). The key objective was for partnership with the state agencies to be “real,” based upon mutual respect: business would be conducted in ways that did not undermine the organic relations of the community in which the projects operated. In practice, particularly in the Republican communities, the projects had to develop partnerships with the police and other agencies at a pace that was acceptable to those communities, with project leaders being keen to not “outstrip their constituency.”

Extensive analysis and evaluations of the projects over the past thirteen years have been very positive. The external evaluator (Mika) calculated that at the eight sites he evaluated between 1999 and 2005 (the number did not include all of the projects ultimately established), the projects were involved in almost 500 documented cases which, without their intervention, would almost certainly have led to a punishment attack by paramilitaries. Lord Clyde, the Justice Oversight Commissioner, argued in 2004 that the projects were “engaged in valuable and effective work” and that “they share a common intention and motivation to make a positive and peaceful contribution to the welfare of the communities in which they serve” (JOC, 2004: 101). The most definitive statement on the impact of the projects occurred in 2007 and 2008, in inspections by CJINI. In recommending formal government accreditation and mainstream statutory funding, CJINI said of the initiatives in Belfast (CJINI 2008:32): “They are well run. . . . Inspectors were astonished at the commitment shown by many of those who they interviewed, and there could be no question about their motivation being to help their communities, not in any sense to control them. Training was good, and paid due attention to human rights and child protection.”

Since the policing deal was concluded in 2007, the projects have become perhaps the key bridge between the police and historically estranged Republican communities. Prominent restorative justice activists, whose previous histories with the IRA are locally well known, have been among the most active in Republican communities in visibly reaching out to PSNI, assisting victims who remain reluctant to engage with the police, appearing on public platforms with the police, and developing “on the ground” relations with local commanders and officers, including “dividing up” those cases that are most appropriately dealt with by the police and those best handled by a community restorative justice

intervention. The police clearly value these relationships. As CJINI reported in 2011: “Inspectors were told by senior police officers in West Belfast and Derry/Londonderry that they regard CRJI as the single most important relationship they have in reaching out to the previously estranged or hard to reach republican/nationalist communities living in those areas.” (CJINI 2011:11)

The numbers processed by these projects are high. In the past six years, the projects have worked with over 10,000 people. In the year 2010 in the various offices, CRJI dealt with 1,866 new cases, ranging from neighbour disputes to more serious “under threat” cases. Some were resolved by mediation, some required other agency support, and some had to be “referred out”—including to PSNI (a very positive development in police and community relationships).

Community Restorative Justice Ireland has also been at the forefront of efforts to reach out to dissident Republicans, arguing against punishment violence and other armed actions and supporting individuals and community members who wish to engage with the police but who may be threatened or intimidated by dissidents. As a result of those actions, several prominent restorative justice activists (all of them former IRA prisoners) have been issued death threats, have been labelled as “touts” and “informers,” and have had their homes and offices attacked and daubed with paint and graffiti. A hoax bomb was left outside the organisation’s headquarters in West Belfast. As one senior manager told one of the authors,

We try to practice what we preach in terms of restorative values and reaching out to dissidents, attempting to persuade them against violence, either military stuff or punishment violence. It isn’t easy, however; they are very disparate, disorganised and unpredictable groups. While we have been trying to work with them, they have simultaneously issued death threats against us. Some people argue within the Republican movement that we should not give these micro-groups any legitimacy by talking to them, starve them of oxygen, since they have no support. My own view is the opposite. No matter how difficult they are, we have to keep trying to talk to them because if they are only talking to each other, no one is going to ask them the hard questions about their strategy and where they are going with continued violence. We have to keep talking to them.

Despite their different political allegiances, similar developments in working-class Loyalist communities share many attributes of their Republican counterparts. Interventions on punishment violence have been on a smaller scale, though no less interesting. In 1996, a former Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF) prisoner, once sentenced to life imprisonment, conducted a piece of research in the Shankill area of West Belfast on the viability of non-violent interventions on punishment attacks (Winston 1997). The subsequent report, based upon interviews with paramilitary, statutory, and other community actors, suggested that such interventions were possible with one faction—the Ulster Volunteer Force. While the UVF stipulated that they would not countenance restorative justice-style interventions concerning internal paramilitary discipline, disputes between paramilitary organisations, offences related to sexual offences, or disputes regarding the sale of drugs, interventions regarding punishments on other matters were possible.

That research was followed by two intense residential sessions, and a project called the Greater Shankill Alternatives programme was created. Operating within the limitations imposed by the paramilitaries, Alternatives originally limited itself to a narrow focus within its local area, namely, to provide an alternative to punishment violence for young offenders in that community. Participants in the programme are normally between 13 and 22 years of age. While the range and extent of work have expanded, the basic practice model remains the same. Staff members work with the individual young person and his or her family to explain the programme and invite participation. Participants are assigned a caseworker, and a contract is drafted that specifies actions on offending behaviour, victim restitution, and community reparation.

The young person also makes a presentation to a community panel, which judges the adequacy of the contract and makes sure that regular contact among the panel, the caseworker, and the young person is maintained. After what is usually several months, the young person again appears before the panel to certify that the contract is completed. If all is satisfactory, the young person is discharged, normally with some provision of monitoring or aftercare services. Like their Republican counterpart, significant numbers of the staff and volunteers in the project are former combatants.

There are five community-based restorative justice schemes operating in mainly Loyalist areas in and around Belfast, now under the name Northern Ireland Alternatives. This project has 30 staff and 100 volunteers and 25 cases at the “tip of the triangle”—that is, more serious cases that involve the police. The project also does preventative work in

schools. While the same US-based philanthropy organisation (Atlantic Philanthropies) originally funded both the Republican and Loyalist initiatives, there are now many funders, including the EU, the Belfast City Council, and the police; but, according to one interviewee, “they all want something different in terms of outcomes.” Again, this project has been the subject of extensive and highly positive external evaluation (Mika 2006, Criminal Justice Inspectorate 2007, 2009).

In addition to preventative and diversionary work with young people, the Alternatives programme is designed to hold offenders accountable, support victims, and contribute to community development in areas where it operates. This is seen to be a vital issue in the peace process and contributes toward undermining the narrative of violent extremism. The initiative plays a role in mediation and talks between police and communities—for example during, and in the aftermath of, riots. One prominent staff member interviewed for this research drew a historical connection between the current work of the project and his own and his colleagues’ prison experience. He suggested that dialogue in the prisons was “. . . crucial in encouraging Loyalist inmates to explore alternative ways of resolving problems.” Some of those negotiation skills, developed in the prisons, have been crucial at both the macro and micro level in resolving disputes.

In terms of the current threat to the stability of the transition, he identified the danger associated with Loyalist disaffection as a key challenge and one in which their work in countering the narrative is crucial.

It is primarily a class issue. Young, disaffected youth—often with no real memory of the realities of violence—are vulnerable to those elements of Loyalism that would still wish to promote violence or social disorder in their own narrow interest.

In both constituencies, the working relations with the police are crucial. The judgement calls to be made by the police regarding the most appropriate response to events on the ground are finely balanced. Political pressure to “crack down” on either Republican dissidents or Loyalist militarists is often mitigated by relations with individuals and organisations involved with the restorative justice and other programmes warning of the dangers associated with “overreaction.” In interviews for this research, those pro-peace process Republican ex-prisoners in particular who run the programmes warn that there are real dangers if the PSNI responds to dissident violence with heavy-handed tactics against Republican communities more generally. Such actions, reminiscent of the worst

days of the conflict, would of course feed the dissident line that “nothing has changed” in terms of policing, and would undermine the credibility of those who advocate non-violence and cooperation with the police.

In Northern Ireland the relationship between the PSNI and community-based programmes (in particular those run by former prisoners) is not “cosy.” It demands a very different style of policing, and acceptance by enlightened police commanders that the local communities and their representatives are no longer passive. The programme managers expect the police to listen when the community tell the police how to best police an area, and organisers are keen to point out that they hold the police to account. As noted above, organizers of the projects are well aware that their organic legitimacy in the community is a key variable in altering the relations with the police. As one interviewee closely associated with a restorative justice programme described the situation, police now have to accept that “the community is not just the eyes and ears of the police; they are also the muscle and brains.”

To recapitulate, the restorative justice programmes led and staffed by former Republican and Loyalist combatants have been key agencies both in challenging deeply embedded cultures of violence and in developing more effective partnerships with the police in working-class areas of Northern Ireland’s main cities and towns. The challenge was particularly significant because at these sites violence had become routinized, euphemised, and sometimes eulogised as a way of “doing business.” Effecting change in a context where, particularly in Republican areas, the police are the practical and symbolic strong arm of the state, with which few have any affinity, is even more complex. However, it is precisely because the participants had been historically involved in violence on behalf of their community—and indeed had often been on the receiving end of violence from either the state or “the other side”—that they had the credibility to promote a non-violent message as part of the transition out of conflict.

From Prison to Peace: Ex-Combatants and Citizenship Education in Schools

The final example of former combatants' involvement in CVE activities we wish to focus upon is an initiative involving a diverse group of ex-prisoners, a local sponsor (the Community Foundation for Northern Ireland), and a number of people engaged in citizenship education in Northern Ireland.

In 2009, CFNI, together with a number of politically motivated former prisoner organisations, submitted a successful application for EU PEACE III funding. Those involved included Coiste (discussed above) but also ex-prisoner groups associated with the other factions, including the INLA, Official IRA, UVF, and UDA. This latter collective bid became known as the Prison to Peace Partnership Consortium. In addition to providing financial support for the individual groups and their respective centres and offices, the programme also contained provisions for work on collective themes around which the groups would work together, including Conflict Transformation and Peacebuilding, Social Change in the Community, and Youth Development and Citizenship (Kilmurray 2010).

In 2009, as part of the commitment to the latter theme, the Prison to Peace Partnership Consortium began working with Lesley Emerson, a citizenship education specialist at the School of Education at Queens University. Emerson, a former teacher and educational board adviser and now an academic specialising in citizenship education, worked closely with the various ex-prisoner groups to develop a teaching resource on the prison and conflict transformation process to be delivered in Northern Ireland secondary (high) schools (Emerson 2011). As noted earlier, a key element of the mobilisation efforts of former prisoner groups in Northern Ireland has been their assertion that they should be entitled to enjoy the rights and responsibilities associated with “full citizenship” in the changed polity (Shirlow and McEvoy 2008). Interestingly, those traditional mobilisation efforts mapped onto themes contained in the Northern Ireland Curriculum. The local citizenship curriculum focuses on four themes: Human Rights and Social Responsibility, Diversity and Inclusion, Equality and Social Justice, Democracy and Active Participation (Education Curriculum Minimum Content Order Northern Ireland 2007). All of these themes have featured prominently in the practical work and lobbying efforts of the former prisoner groups.

That resonance was institutionalised when representatives from the five groups worked over a period of months with the educational specialist to produce an educational resource and accompanying DVD. With a total of nine lessons, the resource provides teachers with advice, activities, and guidance that are designed to assist the students to explore a number of themes. Former prisoners from the different groups are interviewed on the DVD about their reasons for becoming involved in political violence, the prison experiences, and conflict transformation.

Notes within the educational resource explain:

It is a very honest sharing of experience by a number of individual ex- combatants/ political ex-prisoners from very different backgrounds...What motivated the participation of the political ex-prisoners in this project was a determination that their experiences should be shared with young people. There is no sense of glamour in their stories or any sense of self- aggrandisement. They are an honest portrayal of how individuals can become caught up in violence; inflict and suffer pain; endure often long prison sentences and still hold a commitment to make society a more just and inclusive place. This is the essence of where we have come from; hopefully it can contribute to, and inform, a future sense of citizenship that can avoid these circumstances and work to create a more inclusive, welcoming and equal society.

A further key element of the project is that, if the school desires it, suitably trained Republican and Loyalist ex-combatants share a panel, discuss their experiences of imprisonment and involvement in violence, and answer the students' questions. Over the course of their studies, students are expected to;

- develop an understanding of the term “political ex-prisoner”;
- consider the factors which influenced individuals' decision to become involved in the conflict;
- explore the reality of the prison experience and its impact on political ex-prisoners, their families and their communities;
- become familiar with the post-conflict work of political ex-prisoners in conflict transformation and community development;
- determine how young people could make a positive contribution in their own communities (CFNI 2010: 9)

As in other conflicted societies, it is a significant challenge to deliver a curriculum about past violence which is balanced and critical but which also does not seek to sanitise events that, while they may have occurred in the recent historical past, nonetheless often took place before the children were born (see e.g. Warshauer-Friedmann et al 2004a, 2004b). In the Northern Ireland context, where only 5 percent of children are formally educated in the “Integrated” sector, the reality for the vast majority of children is that they must be educated about such events in either predominantly Catholic or State (Protestant) schools (Gallagher 2004).

The *From Prison to Peace* resource was launched in June 2010 by then Sinn Féin Minister for Education Catriona Ruane, who publicly committed her department to write to all schools encouraging them to utilise it in the delivery of the citizenship curriculum. Its potential importance is well captured by Bruce Robinson, Head of the Northern Ireland Civil Service, who states:

What strikes me most about these materials is their reality. The real stories of the real lives of real people are reflected time and time again throughout the resource and I believe this is its key strength as an educational tool. In bridging the gap between yesterday, today and tomorrow, I believe this resource can only enrich the educational experiences of many young people throughout our society and encourage them to play a positive role in their community.

Since its launch in 2010, over 100 teachers have been trained in the delivery of this resource, it has been distributed to 200 schools, and five schools have participated in a pilot project involving the ex-prisoner panels (Emerson 2011). It is of course too early to tell what the overall impact of this resource will be in the schools of Northern Ireland or with the children who are taught about the past through its various learning initiatives. Even by virtue of its development, it captures the practical potential of ex-combatants as agents of conflict transformation. As Harold Good, former President of the Methodist Church in Ireland, stated in his endorsement of the resource:

As young people growing up in a much more peaceful Northern Ireland, it is difficult for you to imagine what it was like to grow up in the very violent years of the not-so-distant past. This is why this resource is so important, not least in helping you to understand how young people like yourselves were affected by the conflict and how so many, on both sides of our sadly divided community, became involved in

the conflict and in violence. . . . This is why it is so important for you to hear their stories—so that you may be spared what they went through and that together with you we will now build a happy, fair and safe community for us all to share.

Conclusion: Lessons and Transferability of the Northern Ireland Experience

The central theme to emerge from the Northern Ireland experience is the potential for former combatants to become key agents of countering violent extremism. Though we caution against overly simplistic generalization to other contexts, several themes merit further exploration:

- If individuals are a part of organised and disciplined armed groups or political movements that commit themselves in a genuine fashion to ending violence, then the Northern Ireland experience suggests that at least some will have the credibility, leadership, and organisational skills to become bulwarks against further violence.
- Ex-combatants may have personal relationships (often based on the prison experience or at least the shared “veteran” experience of being a member of an armed group) which could supersede political and ideological differences with those who still believe in the use of terrorism. That history and experience may in turn allow them to engage in critical conversations on the use of violence, whereas other mediators or interlocutors would struggle to gain such access or purchase.
- As with the restorative justice project, ex-combatants may be ideally located to provide the grassroots leadership in building relationships with historically estranged organisations such as the police—even though such relations will undoubtedly be difficult, challenging, and demanding for all the parties concerned.
- On the part of the police and other statutory organisations, such relationships require sensitivity, subtlety, and a willingness to accept the “warts and all” realities of community life. Briefly stated, if the police or other statutory organisations believe in the quality of the work being done by ex-combatants in countering violent extremism, and make informed judgements as to the local community

legitimacy and credibility of such organisations, then acceptance that police/community power relations will be routinely challenged and a willingness to take on board a certain “spikiness” to the relationship may be the price worth paying for real partnership in hard-to-reach communities. Certainly, the experience of police community relations in Northern Ireland in Republican areas shows that, while there may be a gravitational pull toward working with “nice” or “respectable” organisations (for example, ones that do not involve ex-combatants), the grassroots credibility of such work will be correspondingly muted.

- One obvious entry point for engagement with ex-combatants is that many of them do not want their own children or grandchildren to live through the violent experiences that have shaped their lives. Projects such as the Prisoner to Peace initiative can harness that desire to reach the next generation. As long as they are suitably trained, their lived experience of violence may provide an antidote to those “violence entrepreneurs” who would seek to glamorise terrorism to impressionable or vulnerable young people.

Case Study II: Countering Violent Extremism in Britain

Drawing directly from the experiences of the Irish community in Britain (Hillyard 1993), some commentators have pointed to the risk of radicalisation of Muslims by police attitudes and behaviours toward a particular community (Pantazis and Pemberton 2009, Mylonaki and Burton, 2011). Mythen et al. (2009) carried out focus groups with 32 British Pakistanis aged 18–26 in northwest England and identified concerns about racial victimization and “excessive police stop and searching.” Haberfeld et al. (2009:57) also report confusion about the division of authority between local police and the security services in counter-terrorism and also a “disconnect between the law enforcement and the community” (Haberfeld et al. 2009, 57).” In contrast, an eleven-city European survey, which included the English city of Leicester and the London borough of Waltham Forest, found similar levels of trust in police among Muslims and non-Muslims (OSI 2010, 169–70). That study, which also included focus groups, suggested that trust in the police is actually high among European Muslims because of favourable comparisons between European police and police in the country of emigration (OSI 2010: 172)—a finding replicated in some older work (Loader and Mulcahy 2003: 162) and repeated to us (admittedly by police sources themselves) during the QIASS site visit. Significantly, Innes

et al. (2011:7) have found that among Muslims, “community perceptions of the police have been remarkably stable and largely positive.” They concluded: “Prevent policing does not appear to be causing widespread damage to police and Muslim community relations.”

Overall, while the methodology deployed in some of these studies has sparked an interesting debate (Greer 2010, Pantazis and Pemberton 2011), and while Lakhani (2011) and Innes et al. (2011) and others would suggest quite sophisticated judgements and distinctions made by Muslim communities (for example, between different forces or indeed different elements of different forces), the broader point concerning the risks of heavily armed police and security tactics are self-evident.

Finally, with regard to police-community relations, and of interest to the current study, Tom Tyler and colleagues have suggested that views of and cooperation with the police among British Muslims are shaped not only by how they are treated but also by the extent of their involvement in policy formulation before strategy and tactics are implemented (Huq et al. 2011:32). They caution that meaningful prior consultation, as well as the nature of the police service that is actually delivered, is an important component of the policing elements of the PREVENT strategy and should be borne in mind.

Other criticisms have been advanced about the ways in which policies were implemented and strategies developed. For example, the House of Commons Select Committee on Preventing Violent Extremism argued that PREVENT was putting at risk positive cohesion work by “blurring the boundaries” between security and social policy and stigmatising British Muslims in the process (HC Select Committee 2010). Indeed, others have suggested that labelling projects that traditionally would have been considered social programmes as part of a new securitised prevention agenda has led to a number of organisations in the UK boycotting the programme entirely or “splitting” community organisations on how they should respond. As one interviewee suggested to Kundani (2009), “. . . those who take the money are seen as complicit in the government agenda and are sell-outs. Those who don’t are seen as borderline extremists.”

Another difficulty, which also featured prominently in the interviews with officials for this study and which has been identified in other contexts (see, for example, Horgan and Braddock 2010), was the difficulty in assessing the impact of the PREVENT Strategy. As Bartlett et al. (2010) have suggested, the problem in assessing the effectiveness of

prevention work is that linkages between the programmes and countering terrorism are often weak.

An official review of PREVENT activities in 2007–8 found that in nearly two-thirds of local authorities' CVE projects, only 20 per cent worked with individuals considered at risk, and only 3 per cent with those glorifying or justifying acts of terrorism (cited in Briggs 2010). In a small but interesting qualitative study of the views of both officials and Muslim community leaders in different parts of the UK on attitudes toward the PREVENT strategy, Lakhani (2011) argues that many of his interviewees thought that the money invested through the strategy was being “wasted.” In particular, they tended to highlight that funds allocated to local authorities were far removed from the overarching aims of PREVENT and were more concerned with general community- cohesion-type work. Lakhani (2011:6) also suggests that one of the reasons for the misdirection of funds was that local authorities were tending to play it safe in funding terms, allocating resources to groups with whom they already had a relationship rather than those who might be better placed to have a real impact in preventative work.

Not altogether surprising is the fact that those CVE programmes and practices that were assessed (by police and community leaders interviewed for this study) as being most effective were those that involved local groups and individuals with grassroots credibility. In particular, the multi-agency Channel programme was highlighted as something positive to be built on. Channel identifies and provides support for people at risk of radicalisation. This approach is not police-led, but police (and other state agencies) can refer vulnerable individuals to local groups (such as the STREET programme) that provide a range of interventions, such as challenging beliefs and offering alternatives. Examples of community-based initiatives will be discussed later, but a key fact is that many of them have been dogged by the antecedents and affiliations of the main protagonists.

Partly in response to the criticisms mentioned above and other factors (for instance, political viewpoints about “British standards”), the current UK government conducted a complete review of the PREVENT strand of its counter-terrorism strategy in 2010–11. As the new strategy document notes, the previous version “confused the delivery of government policy to promote integration with government policy to prevent terrorism. It failed to confront the extremist ideology at the heart of the threat we face.” The review,

conducted by Lord Carlile (2011), resulted in a reduction from the original five objectives to three. The three objectives that remain are:

- respond to the ideological challenge of terrorism and the threat from those who promote it;
- prevent people from being drawn into terrorism and ensure that they are given appropriate advice and support;
- work with sectors and institutions where there are risks of radicalisation that need to be addressed.

These objectives have been abbreviated to “ideology, individuals and institutions.” In practice, however, the strategy remains quite complex, with twenty-five areas in England identified for attention and a range of priority activities listed. Most require significant multi-agency co-operation and co-ordination. While there is no one single objective or priority labelled as “community policing,” in practice much of the overall approach resonates strongly with the key themes in community policing discussed above. Certainly from our perspective, community policing is actually required in order to give effect to the strategy.

The new PREVENT strategy was introduced in June 2011, and its impact has yet to be evaluated. The strategy document notes that the principal terrorist threat continues to be the continued risk of attack from Al Qaeda, its affiliates, and like-minded organizations, with appropriate attention given to the threat from far-right groups and Irish dissident Republican terrorists. The threat is viewed as emanating from both international and “home-grown” terrorists. The threat level is currently adjudged as substantial (reduced from severe in 2011).

The key principles that guide the new strategy include:

- PREVENT will address all forms of terrorism, including the extreme right wing, but will be targeted against those forms of terrorism that pose the greatest risk to national security. PREVENT will tackle non-violent extremism where it creates an environment conducive to terrorism and popularizes ideas that are espoused by terrorist groups.
- PREVENT will make a clearer distinction between counter-terrorist work and the government’s integration strategy. The UK government recognizes that PREVENT

depends on the success of that strategy but believes that the two cannot be confused or merged together. The new document specifically points out that “failure to appreciate the distinction risks securitizing integration and reducing the chances of our success.

- **PREVENT** must do much better at evaluating and monitoring progress against a common set of objectives.

The strategy makes a clear distinction between what it terms the ideology of extremism and terrorism and legitimate religious belief. In seeking to make those distinctions clearer, the strategy’s first stated aim is to tackle those extremist organisations that oppose the values of universal human rights, equality before the law, democracy, and full participation in society.

In its efforts to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism, and to ensure that they are given appropriate advice and support, the strategy’s second aim is stated as building on the successful multi-agency Channel programme. As discussed earlier, Channel identifies and provides support for people at risk of radicalisation, challenges beliefs, and offers alternatives.

The third aim of the approach is to work with sectors and institutions in which there are risks of radicalisation. These include education and health care providers, faith groups, charities, and the wider criminal justice system. The approach also works to tackle the challenge of radicalisation on the Internet.

The initiatives are specifically aimed at those at risk of becoming involved in violent extremism. It includes those already involved and seeking a way out. Support is also provided to the parents, friends, and families of those at risk of involvement. A London-based community initiative, visited by the QIASS team, provided persuasive evidence of the need for support tailored to specific individuals looking for advice and support.

One interviewee (a part-time imam who has worked with the state at strategy development and mentored vulnerable individuals at the community level) outlined his beliefs regarding how young people are drawn into the path toward radicalisation. He talked about “supply meeting demand in a fertile breeding ground where issues of identity were important to young British Muslims actively seeking (demanding) knowledge about Islam.” He talked about gaps between the generations that caused them to look

elsewhere, beyond the local imam. He identified the supply of violent extremist ideologies, actively spread through the Internet, CDs, DVDs, and face-to-face engagements, and he noted how radicalisers are adept at “. . . seeking youths who have no theological resilience.” Breeding grounds for radicalisation are created when young Muslims in the UK react to real and perceived negative imagery, discrimination, polarisation, humiliation, international conflicts (brought close by satellite TV and the Internet), poor political representation, low socio-economic prospects, perceived national and international injustice, and hypocrisy and double standards. In that context, radicalisers seek out a “cognitive opening”—sometimes prompted by some form of personal, social, theological, or political crisis. His view is that countering the narrative in such a context requires (1) the ability to identify when a crisis is about to break through or has broken through the natural resilience toward violence; and (2) a bespoke tailored intervention to suit the needs of the person identified.

As in the Northern Ireland context, interventions require interlocutors with credibility. In some instances these may be charismatic imams, skilled youth or community workers, or indeed former combatants or prisoners (see further below)—depending on the background, community, and personality of the targeted individual. The intervention also needs to be tailored around the interests of the targeted individual.

As noted above, the Home Office has acknowledged that the evaluation and the monitoring of performance was weak during the previous iteration of the PREVENT strategy. They have indicated that, in the future, before funding is granted, any proposed PREVENT project will be more rigorously assessed against its ability and likelihood to deliver against PREVENT objectives. These assessments must take into account the extent to which the project can reach people who are vulnerable to radicalisation, and clear agreement must also be reached about the programme’s intended outcome. To justify funding for particular PREVENT projects, decision makers will consider their likely effect and compare this against cost and impact of different interventions achieving the same end.

The UK is developing input and impact indicators across the whole of CONTEST to assess the effect of what is being done to reduce vulnerability to terrorist attack. In an attempt to reduce reporting burdens, indicators will be based wherever possible on data that is already collected and used by contributing organisations. To our knowledge, the new indicators and methods of evaluation have not been agreed upon. The need for such

monitoring and evaluation of all aspects of the strategy for countering violent extremism was universally accepted among interviewees for this project (a wide range of individual practitioners from state agencies and NGOs). However, when pressed, few (including funders) could provide details of instances to show that it was being done systematically. Indeed, neither could they identify the benchmarks that will inform such an evaluation process. Those interviewed who staffed the projects expressed concern that they were likely to face bureaucratic demands reducing their ability to “get on with the job.” Despite some divided and ambivalent opinions on why and how it should be carried out, and the problems anticipated with it, evaluation is definitely on the PREVENT agenda.

The Role of Former Combatants

As in the Northern Ireland context, there is a role for former extremists in the initiatives. The PREVENT strategy does enable former extremists (or perhaps those who could more sensitively described as combatants, fighters, activists—since language is such a crucial area) to play a role. The authors met members of an organization established by a “former jihadist” (of British Pakistani background) which has now established itself as an important and credible programme identifying and supporting those deemed at risk of radicalisation. The project is supported by the local police, although organisers of the initiative made clear that this did not inhibit them from criticising police behaviour when warranted, an attitude they felt was crucial to their own grassroots credibility. The researchers’ view is that those working and managing the programme appeared to be committed and charismatic individuals who have had to stand up to physical and verbal attacks from some in their own community for “siding with the Crusaders.”

In meeting with representatives (such as an imam and community-based project leaders in London), we were persuaded that the heavy lifting of preventative work is best placed in local projects within the communities from which potential radicals come. As is explicit in the PREVENT strategy, government’s role should be to select and facilitate appropriate partnerships, to support dialogue, and to stimulate communities. However, as one senior police officer frankly told the research team, “...this isn’t the kind of work the state is particularly good at—it should be left as much as possible to trusted interlocutors in whom both we and the community have confidence.”

'Signing Up' to British Standards and Values

In interviews with officials and community workers, the difficulties facing the new PREVENT strategy to counter violent extremism was related most often to “British values.” Community representatives we interviewed claim that, in response to concerns raised by the British tabloid press that the government was “funding terrorists,” a new requirement has been introduced to funding regulations. This requires all community programmes that access PREVENT-related monies to sign up to a set of “British values.” The principle is expressed as an intention that public money will not be provided to extremist organizations that do not support the values of democracy, human rights, the rule of law, and mutual respect and tolerance of different faith groups. While in theory such values might appear unproblematic, in practice both funders and community projects admitted that these have proved highly challenging.

As Jarvis and Lister (2011) suggest, in response to their focus-group research with British Muslims on the issue:

...the discussion of “mainstream British values” that runs throughout the new Prevent is both conceptually flawed and potentially dangerous. Bluntly, what it means to be British, and which values are to be associated with this identity, is always, necessarily, open and changing. Simplistic listings of the sort: ‘democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and the mutual respect and tolerance of different faiths and beliefs’ (p.34) are, simply[,] myths. They are efforts to capture or stabilise this dynamic, collective, entity that work to camouflage the huge variability with which people understand (and perhaps even value) such abstract concerns. What it means to be British both is and should be a product of ceaseless dialogue, debate, and competition: a product, put otherwise, of politics.

The development of this requirement, albeit for understandable political reasons, does run the risk of creating unnecessary hurdles for projects that are otherwise doing excellent work but which may resist signing up to such standards. Had such requirements ever been introduced in Northern Ireland, it is inconceivable that the above-mentioned work in the Republican community would have been carried out during the transition. It would have been (and still is) unthinkable for Irish Republicans to sign up to a requirement embracing “British values.” It is a potentially significant error to think that it will be any easier for British Muslims. As one interviewee told this research team:

Does supporting “British values” mean I have to agree with what my government has done in Iraq or Afghanistan? Rule of Law? As far as I am concerned, these are illegal wars. Or do I have to agree with what is happening in West Bank or Gaza. Is what the Israelis are doing legal? Of course it’s not. It’s a bloody joke this stuff. . . . The problem is that if you try to force this on people then in all conscience they may not feel able to sign up to it and then the work won’t get done and that’s in no one’s interest, least of all the government who need people like us to do this work.

The question of signing up to British values speaks directly to the issues of credibility and legitimacy. Is it possible to work with groups that might support political violence in some arenas (for example, in the Palestinian context) but which are completely opposed to violent jihadism in Britain? In many Western countries, networks and organizations close to the Muslim Brotherhood, Jamaat-e-Islami, or to the nonjihadist/political Salafists have gained influence, particularly among second- generation Western Muslims. While these and similar groups may espouse tenets of an ideology that make them radical in the eyes of most Western observers (for example, on religious freedom or women’s rights), they may also oppose and condemn violence in the West. As Vidino puts it, could these “nonviolent Islamists” become partners of the government against violent radicalization? Although Western observers might baulk at some of their views, and these almost certainly would fail the British values test, those who genuinely oppose violence may be exactly those who have the credibility to reach young people in danger of being radicalised.

As Robert Lambert, the former head of the Muslim Contact Unit in the London Metropolitan Police, has argued, “ideal yes-saying” Muslim leaders may lack credibility in their communities and have no knowledge of radicalism (Lambert 2008, Mazer and Lambert 2010). Lambert has argued in particular that projects such as STREET (Strategy to Re-Empower and Educate Teenagers), run by strict Salafists in the Brixton area of London, have the combination of “street skills and religious integrity” required to counteract the recruitment efforts of Al Qaeda–linked preachers in the area. STREET is one of the projects deemed too radical to support under the new PREVENT strategy. Lambert (2011) has argued (persuasively, in our view), based on his experience of the quality of STREET’s work, that the decision to no longer support that project represents an example of “neo-conservative ideology trumping academic research and practitioner experience.” From our perspective, the view that only pacifists or people with progressive views on women’s rights or religious freedoms will have suitable credibility to counter

radical narratives is misplaced. It appears Great Britain is still struggling with issues that have, albeit with difficulty, been resolved in Northern Ireland.

Conclusions

As this paper has demonstrated, community policing and partnership approaches are now commonly used throughout Europe—not just to tackle problems stemming from crime and disorder but to address the causes and effects of violent extremism.

It is very clear that European CVE efforts are predicated on the belief that they are likely to be most effective when meaningful partnerships are agreed to and implemented by law enforcement agencies, other statutory organizations, and community-based, non-governmental organizations with grassroots credibility. Real partnerships in this area of work require relationships based upon mutual respect and recognition of respective strengths, skills, and expertise of various stakeholders.

Community policing principles and practices are expected to produce better results than traditional police forces or any other statutory agency acting in isolation. Some of the activities and issues highlighted in this paper are likely to be of wider relevance than to the single national or European setting they are to be found in. Relationships—building and maintenance—are critical to success, not just between institutions and organizations but also between individuals. This is especially true of those with disparate or divergent cultures and those who are at opposite ends of the spectrum. Of particular note is the positive role to be played by former combatants, ex-prisoners, and “reformed” extremists. There is need for an open-minded and pragmatic attitude to the benefits that accrue when they are permitted to identify causes of extremism, those at risk, and methods of prevention. Such attitudes are required not only at local levels but at national, strategic levels, and they should be incorporated into prevention plans.

Community policing initiatives need to take into account the fact that ex-prisoners and former activists are part of the community—and in some cases the most influential parts of it when it comes to CVE. Perhaps this is one of the main points to be drawn from the research offered in this paper: that CVE requires a wider definition of “community,” a broader understanding of “policing,” and, by implication, a much more comprehensive view of what “community policing” encompasses when countering violent extremism. If community policing can be (and often is) caricatured by the terms “consult” and “involve,” (White 2011) one would need a very inclusive list of all those who could be and should be consulted about, and involved in, the development, implementation, and evaluation of any CVE strategy.

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