



Analysis

“Call it intercontinental collaboration”: radicalisation, violent extremism and fusion centres

Chris Jones

September 2014

State activity aimed at dealing with “radicalisation” and “violent extremism” – such as the UK’s Prevent and Channel programmes – has long been criticised for intrusive methods, the creation of ‘suspect communities’ and dubious ideological underpinnings. Despite this, the US, the EU, and EU Member States are drawing inspiration from each other’s counter-radicalisation programs and developing shared frameworks and policies. There has also been direct cooperation between law enforcement agencies – Europol and the US Department of Homeland Security (DHS) – on the issues of radicalisation and “fusion centres”, bodies set up to gather vast amounts of information and intelligence, including on those suspected of being “radicalised”.

Transatlantic liaisons

Cooperation between the EU and the US on counter-terrorism has been ongoing for years, but it is only relatively recently that a joint interest in “radicalisation” and “countering violent extremism” has developed. Leaked diplomatic cables from 2008 and 2009 make clear the intention of the EU and US to work more closely on the issue, and since then a ‘US-EU Countering Violent Extremism Steering Committee’ has dealt with a number of issues including surveillance of “terrorist travel”, “countering terrorist online activities” and “de-radicalisation programmes in prisons”. [1]

The US government has also suggested sending officials to contribute to the EU’s Radicalisation Awareness Network (RAN), set up to help “first-line practitioners” – that is, “those in direct contact with targeted individuals or vulnerable groups of population” – and “to facilitate the exchange of experiences and best practice between them.” [2] The RAN itself appears to have adopted some key themes and frameworks from both UK and US counter-radicalisation policy, and is encouraging the development of intrusive UK-style policies across the EU.

Law enforcement agencies on both sides of the Atlantic have also been cooperating. In 2012 Europol and the US Department of Homeland Security organised a series of reciprocal visits, meetings, briefings and training sessions on the issues of “countering violent extremism” and setting up and maintaining “fusion centres” – bodies designed to Hoover up information and intelligence from as wide a variety of open and closed sources as possible, in order to

generate reports, “threat assessments” and profiles. They are defined by the DHS and the US Department of Justice as:

“A collaborative effort of two or more agencies that provide resources, expertise, and/or information to the center with the goal of maximizing the ability to detect, prevent, apprehend, and respond to criminal and terrorist activity.” [3]

Fusion centres may therefore gather information on “violent extremists” – those who have been “radicalised”, or who are suspected as such. According to the DHS:

“The threat posed by violent extremism is neither constrained by international borders nor limited to any single ideology. Groups and individuals inspired by a range of religious, political, or other ideological beliefs have promoted and used violence against the homeland.” [4]

Alongside Islamist terrorists, the ideologies and activities of the far-left, the far-right and animal rights activists are frequently lumped under the banner of “violent extremism”. Europol claimed in its 2012 ‘Terrorism Situation and Trend Report’ that “the distinction between organised crime and terrorism and/or violent extremism is increasingly blurred.” [5] In January this year the European Commission noted that:

“[T]errorism in Europe now finds its inspiration in a larger variety of ideologies... These include nationalist and separatist ideologies, those inspired by Al Qaida, violent left-wing, anarchist and right-wing ideologies.” [6]

There is clear potential for the invasive “counter-radicalisation” practices currently largely targeted at Muslims to be expanded to cover a far wider range of groups and individuals.

Converging interests

A March 2008 US diplomatic cable released by *Wikileaks* recounted a US-EU ministerial meeting on justice and home affairs at which Dragutin Mate, at the time the Slovenian Interior Minister and representing the Slovenian EU Presidency, called for “more cooperation in this area of radicalisation and terrorist recruitment.” [7] A May 2009 cable noted a statement by US Attorney-General Eric Holder “urging even closer transatlantic cooperation” on “radicalisation and recruitment”. [8]

In November 2009, the US State Department hosted a “Multilateral ‘CVE’ [countering violent extremism] Workshop with Australia, Canada, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Spain, and the United Kingdom... as a first step in developing a more cooperative approach.” [9] Among other things, the workshop focused on:

- coordinating current efforts to counter violent extremism with Allies;
- discussing a common approach and developing a multinational framework for a CVE Common Operating Picture;
- facilitating the establishment of a multinational CVE network; and
- developing a multinational CVE Capacity Assessment and Building Methodology. [10]

In June 2010, the US, EU and its Member States issued a ‘Declaration on Counterterrorism’ which called for “an effective and comprehensive approach to diminish the long term threat of violent extremism,” and highlighted “the importance of countering the threat of home-grown violent extremism and of the sharing of lessons learned and best practices.” [11] Later

that month, the first 'US-EU Seminar on Preventing Violent Extremism' took place. A subsequent joint statement said:

"Mindful of the challenges ahead, the participants welcomed and stressed the importance of intensified cooperation between the European Union and the United States. This seminar was an important step forward in identifying areas for coordinated action... This can also pave the way for developing new areas in transatlantic cooperation in the area of home affairs and international counterterrorism."

An "action group" – which became formally known as the 'US-EU Countering Violent Extremism Steering Committee' – was set up to examine:

- terrorist travel (travel movements);
- partnering with Immigrant/Diaspora communities to address issues of countering violent extremism;
- challenging violent extremist narratives also by using terrorist victim's voices to deglamourize/delegitimize terrorism;
- countering terrorist online activities;
- conflict prevention/resolution in third countries;
- developing benchmarks for CVE-initiatives (evaluation/assessment of initiatives); and
- de-radicalization programmes in prisons. [12]

The Steering Committee is made up of representatives from the Commission's Directorate-General for Home Affairs, the European External Action Service and the US State Department, and meets "3 or 4 times per year". [13] No minutes or other materials from the meetings are made public.

Ongoing work

The priorities outlined by the Steering Committee in 2010 have been moved forward in a number of ways. EU officials and Member States have continued to push for the implementation of European Passenger Name Record [14] and 'Smart Borders' systems [15] (the US has taken an interest in both) [16] to try and monitor the movements of suspected terrorists, and the US-EU Steering Committee has organised high-level meetings to address violent extremism in Somalia and Pakistan. [17] Discussions on "countering violent extremism" have also taken place within the bi-annual EU-US Justice and Home Affairs Ministerial Meetings, which facilitated the exchange of information and the organisation of joint activities such as seminars and conferences. [18]

The structure of the European Commission's Radicalisation Awareness Network (RAN, "an umbrella network connecting people involved in preventing radicalisation and violent extremism throughout Europe", which was set up in 2011) reflects the interests outlined by the US and EU in 2010 – seven of its eight working groups are devoted to the topics outlined as priorities. [19] The White House noted in December 2011 that it was "considering supporting the [RAN] by providing access to USG [US government] CVE practitioners and experts," [20] although it is unknown whether US officials have participated in the network. Europol also considers that its cooperation with the DHS (see 'inter-agency cooperation', below) provides a useful basis for working with the RAN.

In August 2011, the Obama administration launched its anti-violent extremism strategy titled 'Empowering Local Partners to Prevent Violent Extremism'. [21] A January 2014 Radicalisation Awareness Network conference organised by the European Commission appeared to take its inspiration directly from the US: it bore the name "empowering local actors to counter violent extremism". [22]

Crossing the Channel

It is not just the US from which the EU is taking inspiration – large swathes of the EU's counter-terrorism efforts involve the transfer of policies from national governments, in particular the UK. According to David Anderson QC, Independent Reviewer of Terrorism Legislation:

“An indicator of the high degree of UK influence [in the EU counter-terrorism strategy] may be seen from the fact that the four elements of the CONTEST strategy, which governs the entirety of UK counter-terrorism policy (Pursue, Prevent, Protect, Prepare) were translated into four equivalent and only slightly less alliterative EU elements: Pursue, Prevent, Protect and Respond.” [23]

Despite concerns over the UK Prevent programme (see ‘critical voices’, below), a government review of counter-terrorism measures undertaken after the killing of British soldier Lee Rigby in Woolwich in May 2013 said that implementation of the programmes by local authorities would become mandatory, despite a lack of evidence that they are effective. [24]

The European Commission advocated in a January 2014 paper that the highly intrusive approach adopted in the UK be taken up by other Member States. The Commission argued that “effective prevention means involving non-governmental organisations, front line workers, security services and experts in the field,” and called for training on radicalisation to “be expanded to other sectors, such as social services, healthcare and education.” [25] The Council duly adopted a Revised Strategy for Combating Radicalisation and Recruitment to Terrorism in June 2014, noting that “practitioners or first line workers may be able to identify signs of radicalisation at an early stage, therefore they need to be aware of and understand signs of radicalisation to terrorism.” [26] While “the responsibility for combating radicalisation and recruitment to terrorism primarily lies with the Member States,” the Strategy notes that it “should help Member States develop, where relevant, their own programmes and policies”. [27]

Inter-agency cooperation

In 2012, Europol and the DHS began to cooperate on the issues of “countering violent extremism” (CVE), and setting up and maintaining “fusion centres”. This cooperation has taken the form of reciprocal visits, meetings, briefings and training sessions and makes up a small but potentially significant part of EU-US cooperation on “radicalisation”. Work on “fusion centres” – information-gathering and analysis units – seems to be a new area for transatlantic discussion.

Cooperation between Europol and the DHS on violent extremism began in 2011 with a “series of bi-lateral meetings”. The two agencies agreed on a work plan, which remains classified, but according to one document made public by Europol following a formal request from *Statewatch*, after the initial meetings:

“[A] short-term joint activity was initiated aimed at exploring opportunities to share best practice and lessons learned in countering violent extremism (CVE) and in setting up and maintaining fusion centres.” [28]

Europol “agreed to cooperate with the DHS in facilitating engagement with the EU around these topics,” and to “organise a series of events and conference calls that will seek to

involve Member States that have experiences in the subjects covered and who can offer feedback on best practices and lessons learned.”

On 18 January 2012, Europol representatives attended a meeting at the White House where DHS chief Janet Napolitano and other high-level federal officials met with state, local and tribal law enforcement officials to “engage them on the critical task of preventing violent extremism in their communities.” [29] The next day, Europol went with law enforcement officials from Belgium, France, Spain, Sweden and the UK to the DHS headquarters in Washington DC. There they received “various briefings on [the] CVE programme including Suspicious Activity Reporting,” [30] and visited the city’s fusion centre. On 20 January, the European delegation visited a fusion centre in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. [31]

Subsequently, the agencies held three video conferences. The US side was made up of federal, state and local law enforcement officials. The EU was represented by Europol officials and representatives of Belgium, Germany, Norway, Poland, Spain and the UK.

In the first video conference, the UK representative made a presentation on “consequence management following the deployment of under cover officers within a local Muslim community in the UK” and the related “risk management model”. The second conference “concentrated on a Los Angeles [Police Department] training module for Law Enforcement on countering radicalisation.” At the third conference, a Norwegian representative offered a presentation on Anders Behring Breivik, the perpetrator of the mass killing in Oslo in July 2011. [32]

Over three days in March, a US delegation travelled to Europe and was taken to see “fusion centres” in the Netherlands and Belgium and participated in a conference and workshops at Europol’s HQ in The Hague. In attendance were representatives of Member States (“some not all”), the EU’s Situation Centre (SITCEN, now part of the European External Action Service and known as the Intelligence Analysis Centre or INTCEN), EU judicial cooperation agency Eurojust and the EU Counter-Terrorism Coordinator’s office.

Europol, citing confidentiality requirements, refused to release information on participants for the DHS. The DHS, however, posted information about the event on its website:

“The U.S. delegation... was composed of representatives from DHS, CBP [Customs & Border Protection], DOJ [Department of Justice], FBI [Federal Bureau of Investigation] and the National Counter Terrorism Center, along with state and local law enforcement agencies. CRCL's [the DHS Office for Civil Rights & Civil Liberties] participation in these conferences underscores our commitment to partnering with international government and stakeholders to counter violent extremism.” [33]

Also present were Michael Downing of the LAPD, Keith Squires of the Utah Department of Public Safety and David Carabin of the Boston Regional Intelligence Centre. [34]

Joint outcomes

The “main deliverable” for the joint activity was “reports from Europol and the DHS... with recommendations for possible future cooperation activities on countering violent extremism.” The agencies produced a case study on Breivik, a “gap analysis on law enforcement CVE training (EU v US)”, and information on “best practices/lessons learned – US Fusion centres/EU CT [counter-terrorism] Coordination Centres”. [35]

“Gap analysis” is an activity adopted from the business world which “involves determining, documenting and approving the difference between business requirements and current capabilities.” [36] In response to questions from *Statewatch* in April 2013, Europol said that

these reports had been “circulated to law enforcement officials in the Member States” but would remain classified – they are “for law enforcement only” as they describe “current practices in Countering Violent Extremism.”

Official Europol documents outlining the aims of collaboration with the DHS state that analysis of all current training materials would be conducted and that the DHS would “note similarities and differences and make recommendations to enhance the curricula” (presumably the “gap analysis” referred to above). [37] However, Europol told *Statewatch* that “the DHS does not make recommendations to Europol on the content of training material,” and denied that the two agencies were producing a “common curricula”.

According to a press release from the Center for Homeland Defense and Security, US and European delegates:

“Discussed the similarities faced on both continents. Europe has long been a magnet for immigration from traditionally Muslim nations, but unlike police agencies in the United States police forces [in Europe] are nationalised.” [38]

“Call it intercontinental collaboration,” suggested the press release.

An October 2012 report on the joint activities, drafted by an official working in Europol’s counter-terrorism department, notes that, overall, cooperation on training in countering violent extremism is “less developed” than that on fusion centres:

“[Member States] have been canvassed (with little success to date) in relation to ongoing training curricula in countering radicalisation. Informal contacts with CEPOL have been made with a view to possible facilitation of contacts with [Member States] training.” [39]

Possibly at Europol’s behest, in 2012 CEPOL (*Collège européen de police*, European Police College) began providing training courses on ‘Counter Terrorism (Awareness)’ that touched upon radicalisation, with one “learning outcome” being the ability to “identify, differentiate and compare a number of backgrounds to terrorism (religion, radicalisation, political).” The course was intended to train a minimum of 25 senior counter-terrorism officers over four days. [40] It disappeared from the College’s work programme in 2013 but reappeared in 2014, with a minimum of 28 senior officers – presumably one from each Member State – as the target group. [41]

In relation to fusion centres, Europol’s October 2012 report noted that the agency is working with the Belgian Federal police’s counter-terrorism unit to undertake:

“[A] study of [Member States] in relation to current coordination/fusion centres in the respective [Member States]. The results will be evaluated in conjunction with similar studies carried out by the DHS on the US fusion centres.”

It also suggests that the “Madrid Group” (a network of European fusion centre officials, see below) “could offer a working group on EU best practice/lessons learned in [counter-terrorism] coordination at the national level that could interact with the CVE group in the US.”

Two US participants on the trip to Europe were frank about the aims of EU-US cooperation on fusion centres. Thomas O’Reilly (formerly Director of the Department of Justice’s Nationwide Suspicious Activity Reporting Initiative) and Ron Brooks (Director of the Northern California Regional Intelligence Center) said in a blog post that:

“At the forefront of our conversations was Europol’s interest in developing a common information exchange model that benefits all of Europe and potentially improves information sharing between Europe and the United States.” [42]

Subsequently:

“The Europol participants shared their emerging fusion center concept, which involves a primary fusion center in each Europol member site as well as their work to develop a reporting system similar to our Suspicious Activity Reporting (SAR) and refine analysis of behaviour and patterns.”

Furthermore:

“Our Europol counterparts indicated that there are concepts, training materials, and technology principles that are transferable and we agreed. For example, we discussed the origin of the Nationwide SAR Initiative [NSI]; how its Functional Standard was developed; the privacy, civil rights and civil liberties protections in NSI, and the partnership between DHS, FBI, and state and local law enforcement.”

Europol told *Statewatch* in April 2013 that the agency and Member States “are cooperating with US authorities, including DHS, in accordance with their legal framework and on a regular basis.” Despite the stated “short-term” nature of the cooperation initiated in 2011, Europol’s October 2012 report suggests “an annual EU/US workshop or seminar on CVE”.

The same report also indicates a willingness to take on board US practices should cooperation continue: “every effort should be made to encourage more input (especially on case studies) from the US side, more especially, best practice in extrapolating information for training material.” The DHS, meanwhile, has stated its interest in expanding the activity “to a wider audience, including, for instance, the International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP),” [43] an organisation that was formed in 1893 and “has grown to serve as one of the largest police chiefs organizations in the world.” [44]

A ‘Europol Platform for Experts’ (an online “secure environment for specialists from a variety of enforcement areas, enabling them to share... knowledge, best practices and non-personal data on crime”) [45] on countering violent extremism has been set up to facilitate ongoing discussion. This is used by “EU Member States’ and US Federal, State and Local Law Enforcement officials.” [46]

Europol told *Statewatch* in April 2013 that:

“Europol/DHS activity represents one strand of the overall EU/US cooperation [on countering violent extremism] but specific to law enforcement. As this cooperation develops, the potential exists to exploit lessons learned and good practices which in turn can be fed into the appropriate channels of the EU Radicalisation Awareness Network.”

“Radicalisation”: critical voices

Since its launch in 2003 [47] with the stated aim of stopping “people becoming terrorists or supporting terrorism,” the UK’s Prevent programme has become notorious for the way in which it has legitimised police infiltration, state surveillance and public suspicion of Muslim communities. [48] Similar concerns have been raised over Channel, a Prevent sub-programme which:

“[U]ses existing collaboration between local authorities, statutory partners (such as the education and health sectors, social services, children’s and youth services and offender management services), the police and the local community to identify individuals at risk of being drawn into terrorism.” [49]

Across the Atlantic, the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) has argued forcefully against US domestic counter-radicalisation policies:

“Despite substantial empirical evidence to the contrary, the government continues to embrace a theory that argues that adopting radical ideas is a first step toward terrorist violence. Based on this discredited model, intelligence and law enforcement agencies are increasingly implementing flawed and wasteful “preventive” policies that result in discrimination, suspicionless surveillance of entire communities, and selective law enforcement against belief communities and political activists.” [50]

Perhaps the most extreme and well-publicised example of this approach is the New York Police Department’s “blanket surveillance of Muslims in the wake of 9/11 terrorist attacks,” which was exposed in 2011 in a series of Associated Press articles. [51] In February this year a judge dismissed a court case “brought by eight Muslim individuals and local businesses who alleged their constitutional rights were violated when the NYPD’s mass surveillance was based on religious affiliation alone.” Judge William Martini dismissed the argument that the surveillance was based solely on religion, saying that:

“The more likely explanation for the surveillance was a desire to locate budding terrorist conspiracies. The most obvious reason for so concluding is that surveillance of the Muslim community began just after the attacks of September 11, 2001. The police could not have monitored New Jersey for Muslim terrorist activities without monitoring the Muslim community itself.”

Lawyers who brought the case said the ruling was “preposterous and dangerous”. [52]

The writer and lecturer Arun Kundnani argues that while the discourse surrounding the concepts of radicalisation and violent extremism has been able to “present itself as the wiser, more liberal alternative to the accounts of terrorism offered immediately after 9/11,” it has “limitations and biases” which have “led to the construction of Muslim populations as ‘suspect communities’, civil rights abuses and a damaging failure to understand the nature of the political conflicts governments are involved in.” Kundnani argues that:

“[T]he radicalisation discourse was, from the beginning, circumscribed by the demands of counter-terrorist policy-makers rather than an attempt to objectively study how terrorism comes into being... constraining the intellectual process to the needs of government security establishments.” [53]

Marc Sageman, a forensic psychologist and former CIA operations officer posted to Afghanistan to work with the mujahidin in the 1980s, has also been vocal in his opposition to dominant interpretations of the concept. He believes that:

“The notion that there is any serious process called ‘radicalisation’, or indoctrination, is really a mistake. What you have is some young people acquiring some extreme ideas – but it’s a similar process to acquiring any type of ideas. It often begins with discussions with a friend.”

Nevertheless, the ‘conveyor belt’ theory of radicalisation, which argues that there is a clear process from initial influence by “non-violent extremists” to the embrace of violent methods, remains a popular idea. Sageman dismisses this as “the same nonsense that led

governments a hundred years ago to claim that left-wing political protests led to violent anarchy” [54] and argues that “radicalisation is a collective rather than an individual process in which friendship and kinship are key components.” [55]

Even authors more accepting of the radicalisation discourse have noted its problems. An article in *Vice* magazine examining anti-extremism projects says that:

“[T]he scheme... makes broader assumptions – for instance that de-radicalizing radicals is a science, and an exportable one, such that former members of al Qaeda, an American fundamentalist cult, an LA street gang, and a clique of Swedish skinheads may be deprogrammed in similar ways.” [56]

Fusion centres: “a bunch of crap”

Fusion centres, or counter-terrorism coordination centres as they tend to be referred to by European officials, have also been the subject of harsh criticism, particularly in the US, where their establishment and use grew quickly following the 9/11 attacks. They emerged, according to the ACLU, “to improve the sharing of anti-terrorism intelligence among different state, local and federal law enforcement agencies,” although:

“[I]n many cases fusion centers amount to little more than centralized call-in centers for the reporting of suspicious activity... fusion center personnel report repeatedly answering calls about ‘people taking pictures’ and ‘people behaving suspiciously.’” [57]

The DHS boasts of this ability:

“Fusion centers contribute to the Information Sharing Environment (ISE) through their role in receiving threat information from the federal government; analysing that information in the context of their local environment; disseminating that information to local agencies; and gathering tips, leads and suspicious activity reporting (SAR) from local agencies and the public.” [58]

Evidence given by DHS officials to a 2012 US Senate committee investigation suggests that the effectiveness of fusion centres is over-hyped. The officials told the committee that fusion centres produce “predominantly useless information” and “a bunch of crap”. The committee found that the DHS’s network of over 70 centres did not help to uncover “a single terrorist threat between April 1, 2009 and April 30, 2010.” [59]

Despite this, there is enthusiasm from some quarters to further develop Europe’s emerging network of fusion centres. Examples of current centres include the UK’s Joint Terrorism Analysis Centre, Denmark’s Centre for Terror Analysis, and Spain’s National Centre of Anti-Terrorist Coordination.

The EU Counter-Terrorism Coordinator, Gilles de Kerchove (an enthusiastic proponent of greater collection and sharing of data by and between states), [60] has said that following terrorist attacks in New York in 2001, Madrid in 2004 and London in 2005: “The progress achieved so far is impressive indeed. The walls between intelligence and law enforcement have collapsed in many respects.” De Kerchove argues that consideration should be given to: “linking up these fusion centres and pooling together some resources, such as the training of analysts and research on methods for integrating information coming from different sources.” [61]

In September 2001, the EU Justice and Home Affairs Council launched a peer evaluation of “national anti-terrorist arrangements” which led to the publication in 2005 of a report calling

on Member States to put in place “national coordination arrangements to ensure strong inter-agency cooperation,” where “all competent national authorities have access to the information and intelligence that are needed.” The report also called for states to establish “a coordinated assessment of the terrorist threat drawing on all available sources,” and for states to:

“Optimise the collection and exchange of information, both nationally and internationally, on all aspects of the terrorist threat (including suspect persons and potential perpetrators of terrorist acts)...”

The peer evaluation process was extremely effective in altering Member States’ practices. The final report says that:

“27 member states were invited to implement all the general recommendations. Out of the total of 432 (27x16 recommendations), 421 have been implemented or are being implemented. 11 recommendations were considered by member states as not relevant.” [62]

A second round of peer evaluation began in 2007 and ended in 2010, focusing on “preparedness and consequence management” in case of a terrorist attack. This process was also considered to be a resounding success. [63]

Along with these occasional exercises, EU-wide cooperation on fusion centres is helped along by the secretive “Madrid Group”. This was established in November 2009 by the Spanish EU Presidency and is formally known as the Committee of Counter-Terrorism Coordination Centres (CCCAT). According to *Europolitics*, the introduction of the coordination committee was supported by centres in Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Italy, Portugal, the Basque country and the UK, and it works in collaboration with the EU Counter-Terrorism Coordinator and the EU SITCEN (now INTCEN). [64] It apparently meets annually. [65]

One rare reference to the Group in an official EU document from 2012 notes that the Commission, India and Turkey had been invited to join. [66] Another document, drafted by the EU Counter-Terrorism Coordinator, suggests that:

“The Madrid Group and Europol could consider multilateral exchanges regarding suspected individuals and foreign fighters with a common threat perspective. A multilateral focus (EU member states + relevant EU agencies + US) on different aspects of terrorist travel could enable the identification of trends and patterns that bilateral cooperation alone could not necessary identify.” [67]

State snooping

It remains open to question whether the ideas and measures lifted from the US and the Member States that have contributed to the EU’s strategy on radicalisation will have any positive effect (assuming that Member States choose to implement them in the first place). Many of the proposed new policies have extremely negative implications. The encouragement of ever-greater inquisitiveness – by social workers, doctors, teachers and so on – into the lives of people considered “at risk” of radicalisation is highly intrusive and in the UK has created significant resentment. A recent report by the organisation CAGE says of Prevent:

“Much of it is shrouded in secrecy, operates outside the rule of law (without due process) and violates individual liberty. It gives the State unrestricted intrusive

powers into the lives of a minority community and faith; restricting their freedoms of belief, expression and association.” [68]

While Prevent and other similar programmes have so far largely affected Muslims, there is clear scope for their extension to other groups considered to be “at risk” of radicalisation. This is recognised by CAGE:

“Having established mechanisms for clamping down on people’s political values, beliefs and expressions, and having determined socially acceptable behaviour and activity, the State can implement the same principles to other communities that come to pose a ‘threat’.”

As noted in the introduction, the European Commission considers that inspiration for terrorism comes from “nationalist and separatist ideologies, those inspired by *Al Qaida*, violent left-wing, anarchist and right-wing ideologies.” [69]

The UK police already operate a “domestic extremist” database that holds information on over 9,000 people involved in a variety of campaigns and causes. [70] In July this year police approached the parents of a student from Birmingham University following his participation in protests, citing concern over “Domestic Extremism”. [71] Europol holds information from European and other states on anarchist and other left-wing groups and causes in a file covering “non-Islamist extremist terrorist organisations threatening the EU.” [72] The file was formerly known as Analysis Work File Dolphin. [73] Meanwhile, the DHS “closely” monitored various Occupy protests across the United States during 2011 and 2012, “providing [law enforcement] agency officials with regular updates about protests taking place through the country, responding to requests from fusion centers for intelligence on the group and mining Twitter for information about Occupy’s activities.” [74]

The widespread implementation of counter-radicalisation policies across Europe – whoever they are targeted at – and the collection and processing of information by a growing network of “fusion centres” is a recipe for creating further distrust between the state and its citizens. This is compounded by the ongoing Snowden revelations that have led to extensive questioning of the necessity and proportionality of mass state surveillance and data collection. Cooperation amongst Europe’s emerging network of fusion centres, formalised in the ‘Madrid Group’, is subject to no democratic oversight at the EU level. Oversight at national level also appears to be a problem. According to a European Parliament study:

“Relatively few oversight bodies scrutinise the activities of fusion centres. In fact, only seven EU Member States indicated that their specialised oversight bodies play a role in this regard.” [75]

There is a similar lack of oversight of cooperative activities between Europol and the Department of Homeland Security, and the wider framework of EU-US cooperation on violent extremism and fusion centres. Policies appear to flow from one state to another, and to the EU level, and in doing so evade the stamp of approval by democratic bodies. It seems unlikely that governments and state agencies will be able to effectively address the problem of political violence through policies that have little democratic legitimacy and that create significant resentment amongst those at which they are aimed.

It is also questionable whether these policies address what is often at the root of the problem. The dominant approach against “radicalisation” is little more than a highly-invasive and ethically dubious way to try and soothe concerns about state practices, without having to address the practices themselves. This is particularly the case for state activities that have gone hand-in-hand with the ‘War on Terror’ such as ‘extraordinary rendition’, torture and drone strikes. Daniel Benjamin, Coordinator for Counterterrorism at the US State

Department from 2009 to 2012, said at a March 2010 Senate hearing on countering violent extremism that: “We must do a better job of explaining U.S. policies to foreign publics and debunking myths about the United States.” [76] That is hardly the same as altering the policies and practices that give rise to grievances in the first place.

Endnotes

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