FROM DEPRIVATION TO DETONATION: IDENTITY, POLITICAL DEPRIVATION AND HOMEGROWN TERRORISM IN THE UNITED KINGDOM

A Thesis
Submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences of Georgetown University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Conflict Resolution

By

Karen Love, B.A.

Washington, DC
April 13, 2009
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table of Contents</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methodology</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muslims in the United Kingdom</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literature Review</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Muslim Minority</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The 7/7 Bombings</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussion</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Counterterrorism Policies</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation of Counterterrorism Strategy</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bibliography</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
INTRODUCTION

At 8:50am on the raining morning of July 7, 2005, three bombs exploded on three separate London subway trains during rush hour. Almost one hour later, at 9:47am, a fourth bomb exploded on a commuter bus in Tavistock Square. In total, the 7/7 Bombings— as they are now widely known— killed fifty two people and injured hundreds.

These attacks were carried out by a four-man cell composed entirely of Muslim British nationals. All four of the bombers were radicalized to Salafi jihadist Islam, for the most part, within the United Kingdom. Perhaps most surprising, these bombers were otherwise ordinary, seemingly well-integrated British lads— an elementary school teacher, a gifted sports player who drove a red Mercedes, and a university student. For example, bomber Mohammad Siddique Khan (30) was described as “a professional, married man with a steady job, a pregnant wife, a baby daughter, a new council house, a season ticket to the gym and a silver Honda Civic” (Rai, 28). Indeed, Khan and his cohorts are the new face of a new type of terrorism sweeping the West— the homegrown terrorist attack.

Since September 11, 2001, homegrown terrorist attacks have swept the West. They have occurred in Spain and Amsterdam, and have been foiled in Sydney Australia, Toronto Canada, and the United States. In the United Kingdom alone, there have been five homegrown terrorist plots since 2004, all perpetrated by young Muslim citizens. These attacks represent a new type of terrorist threat to the West: whereas previously Al

---

1 A homegrown terrorist attack is an attack by a citizen against civilians in his own country with the purpose of inspiring fear to gain political goals. An important component of the homegrown attack is that homegrown terrorists are often radicalized within their own countries through open-source, widely available resources.
Qaeda was the primary threat to Western security, now the danger has moved inwards as Western citizens terrorize their own countries.  

Not only is this new threat widespread, but it is more difficult to combat than the threat from Al Qaeda. Since Al Qaeda was a highly centralized organization, successful counterterrorism strategies focused on decapitating Al Qaeda’s core and reducing its operational capabilities. In contrast, the new terrorist threat is diffuse and seemingly more ad-hoc. Nearly anybody can become radicalized and make a bomb through information widely available on the internet. There is no command center to attack, no training camp to level. Consequently, it has become more difficult for Western countries to deter terrorist attacks with traditional strategies. Accordingly, the new terrorist threat requires new counterterrorism techniques.

In order to formulate effective strategies to combat the internal terrorist threat to Western societies, it is necessary to understand what motivates homegrown terrorists. To this effect, this paper seeks to explore what causes seemingly ordinary individuals to become radicalized? What causes teachers, doctors and students-who once seemed assimilated into Western society- to become bombers? This paper will examine this question in the context of the United Kingdom, specifically using the 7/7 bombings as a

---

2 Indeed, prior to September 11, 2001, Al Qaeda was the primary threat to Western security. This threat was external to the West as Al Qaeda’s core had a heavy hand in planning and carrying-out terrorist attacks from its foreign bases: it would recruit and train bombers, direct targeting, and fund missions. Since September 11, Western counterterrorism strategies have reduced Al Qaeda’s command and control capabilities and thus have lessened the external terrorist threat; however, the threat of an internal terrorist attack has increased as we have seen a rise in Western homegrown terrorism. For the most part, homegrown terrorists are self-radicalized in their own backyards, and are only tied to Al Qaeda through a common militant jihadist ideology. It is important to note, however, that Al Qaeda may still provide some support to homegrown terrorists.
case study\textsuperscript{3}. In essence, if we can find out what about life in the United Kingdom makes its seemingly well-assimilated citizens turn into anti-social bombers, perhaps we can generalize these observations to other cases throughout the West.

This paper argues that the key to this central puzzle is identity. This paper will suggest that the 7/7 bombers- and British Muslim youths more generally- suffer from a lack of authentic identity\textsuperscript{4}. Indeed, British Muslim youths, like many Muslim youths in Western societies, live at the cusp of two very different cultures, neither of which provides them with adequate authentic identities. Thus, the 7/7 bombers were pushed towards radical Islam in a search for authentic identities. As these individuals developed a salient authentic identity through group membership in fundamentalist Islamic groups, they became increasingly prone to internalize group struggles as their own, including the political deprivation of the Muslim community both in the UK and abroad. They violently reacted to this relative deprivation with aggression because, since they were themselves politically deprived, they lacked access to the normative political channels through which they could express grievances non-violently.

If a lack of authentic identity pushed the bombers towards radical Islam, and if the political relative deprivation of Muslims pushed them towards violence, then

\textsuperscript{3}The reason for this focus is In the case of the UK, the frequency and concentration of incidents is far too high to be purely coincidental. If there were only one attack, historians and analysts could write it off as the work of a sociopathic miscreant; however, the occurrence of five attacks points to a possible pattern, which is larger than the psyche of a few bombers. Indeed, the number of bombings points to something amiss much deeper in the United Kingdom.

\textsuperscript{4}By lack of authentic identity I mean that an individual does not perceive that he has a positive, distinct identity which fits him well and adequately describes who he is. An individual develops his identity through group membership, and, thus, through how he perceives others treat and feel about his group.
counterterrorism strategies might focus on addressing the sources of Muslim deprivation. To this end, this paper will propose counterterrorism strategies for the United Kingdom. These strategies are by no means quick-fixes, as they require underlying social and political changes both within the Muslim community and the United Kingdom; however, it is necessary to adequately address the root causes of terrorist attacks with appropriate strategies in order to avoid the high price of terrorism. Indeed, terrorism not only costs people their lives, but it has real economic costs both in the short term (property damage, emergency response expenditures, lost revenues) and the long-term (reduced consumer confidence). Consequently, the proposed counterterrorism strategies may be necessary medicine for a society threatened by homegrown terrorism.

**Methodology**

This paper seeks to understand what compels individuals to become homegrown terrorists. To evaluate this question, this paper will review, analyze and critique existing social-psychological literature on this subject. This paper will then attempt to demonstrate that the quest for authentic identity lies at the heart of this puzzle. Using the United Kingdom as a case study, this paper will review demographic data, official reports and anecdotal information which point to a lack of authentic identity among Muslims in the United Kingdom. Next, this paper will explore this question in the context of the 7/7 bombings. This paper will draw on anecdotal information, including statements by the bombers, which point to their lack of authentic identity and an internalization of the political deprivation of the larger Muslim community. Based on this analysis, this paper
will then propose counterterrorism strategies that address the possible causes of homegrown terrorism.

While this study focuses on what motivated four individuals to commit one set of attacks, it may be possible to generalize its conclusions, at least to the United Kingdom. This is because the 7/7 bombings are one example of a total of five homegrown terrorist plots or attacks in the United Kingdom. Moreover, the 7/7 bombings are just one example of a larger trend of Muslim homegrown terrorism in the Western world. Thus, this attack may, at the very least, provide insight into the phenomenon of homegrown terrorism.

**Muslims in the United Kingdom**

Before we explore this paper’s central question it is necessary to provide a brief overview of Islam in Britain, with a specific focus on Barelwi Islam, which is practiced by most British Pakistanis. Additionally, this paper will provide basic demographic information about Britain’s Muslim community, in general, and its Pakistani community in particular.

*Islam in Britain*

Islam is now the largest faith community in Britain after Christianity (Isic, 13). There are already over 1,400 mosques in Britain with another 240 under construction (Isic, 16). Most British Muslims are Sunnis and are “traditional and conservative in their faith, affirming the mainstream teachings of Islam and practicing it in their daily lives to

---

5 The most similar attack was the 2004 Fertilizer bomb plot. All five bombers were Muslim British citizens and four out of five bombers were of Pakistani descent. The least similar attack was the 2007 London/Glasgow airport attack. Only one of the three bombers was a citizen, and he was of Iraqi descent.
a greater or lesser extent.” (ISIC 10). In fact, a poll of 500 British Muslims found that just over half of the people surveyed say that they pray five times a day, every day. Moreover, Muslims ranked religion as second only to family in terms of its importance to their self-identity, while Christians ranked religion seventh (O’Beirne).

There are two major strands of Islam in the United Kingdom. First, there is the Barelwi Sufi movement, which three of the 7/7 bombers were born into. Barelwi Muslims “practice a traditional form of Islam to which Sufism and veneration of Muhammad play a large part” (ISIC, 10). There is also the Deobandi movement, which advocates a strict Sunni orthodoxy and belief in a literal interpretation of the Quran. In addition to these two branches of Islam, two other movements emerged in the beginning of the twentieth century based on Deobandi orthodoxy: the Tabligh movement, which places Islamic teaching at the heart of daily life, and the Jama’at-I Islami movement, which campaigns for the construction of an Islamic state (Kepel, 90).

The 1990’s saw the emergence of another Islamic movement in Europe and the United Kingdom called Salafism. The aim of Salafism is to hasten the eventuality of the Islamic state; however, there are three different sects which have different means for bringing this about. Revolutionary Salafism focuses on the use of jihad to bring about an Islamic state, while Predicative Salafism focuses on preaching and religious teaching and Political Salafism focuses on using political tactics. The 7/7 bombers and other British Muslim youths were drawn to Revolutionary Salafism, so this paper will focus on its belief system.
Revolutionary Salafists believe in direct action to implement the God’s reign on earth. Essentially, Revolutionary Salafists believe in using violence to fight for the establishment of an Islamic state instead of engagement with the West or integrated Muslims. There are two forms of violence associated with Salafist Jihad: vertical violence against the state and horizontal violence against individuals accused of “contravening a religious norm that the jihadists expect to have respected by all means” (Amghar, 41). In the West, this violence is primarily aimed at contesting the legitimacy and actions of Western regimes, particularly those Western regimes that bolster Arab countries which are seen as an obstacle to revolution. Jihad undertaken in Europe is offensive as it “expresses the desire to destabilize or unnerve western governments so that they cease supporting the Arab-Muslim regimes that Salafis are fighting against” (Amghar, 42).

Today, militant Salafists represent a minority of Muslims in Europe and the United Kingdom; however, the movement’s appeal and its capacity for mobilization makes it a growing threat. The appeal of Salafi Islam for many Muslim youths is that it provides a distinct, positive identity for Muslims who search for authentic identities. Moreover, it provides simple solutions to the challenges of negotiating between British and Muslim identities since Salafis reject all aspects of the Western identity. Moreover, Salafi Islam has an increasing capacity to mobilize angry youths. It is of particular note that several Wahabi countries, for example Saudi Arabia, funded Salafi mosques in the United Kingdom. Moreover, London’s liberal asylum laws make it almost impossible to get rid of radical Islamist preachers who have sought asylum in the United Kingdom.
Nevertheless, UK intelligence indicates that the number of British Muslims actively engaged in terrorist activity (at home or abroad) is estimated at less than one percent (O’Beirne).

**General Demographics**

There are two million Muslims now living the United Kingdom. This number has risen by 400,000 people since the 2001 census, adding more than 50,000 to the total each year (Slack, 2008). Muslims make up approximately three percent of the United Kingdom’s total population. Muslim communities are largely concentrated in the inner city areas of the United Kingdom. Specifically, the largest percentage of Muslims (38%) lives in London followed by West Midlands (14%) the North West (13%) and Yorkshire (12%).

Muslims have the largest households in Great Britain with an average size of 3.8 people. Moreover, households headed by a Muslim are more likely than other households to contain children. Around two thirds (63%) of Muslim households contained at least one dependent child. In fact, British Muslims have the youngest age profile of all religious groups in the United Kingdom. A third of the Muslim community is under the age of 16 compared with one fifth of the general population. The average age for the Muslim community is 28, compared with 41 for other groups. (ISIC, 13).

Three quarters of the Muslim population (74%) is from an Asian ethnic background, predominately Pakistani (43%). The majority of British Pakistanis (70%) originally come from the district of Mirpur in the Pakistani Kashmir (Rai, 72). Just under

---

6 The remaining data is from the 2001 UK Census unless otherwise stated.
half (46%) of Muslims living in Great Britain in 2001 had been born in the United Kingdom, while 18 percent were born in Pakistan (National Statistics, 2004). The Pakistani Muslim communities have largely remained concentrated in the inner city areas in the North, the Midlands and the South.

Pakistani immigration to the United Kingdom began in the early 1960s, when migrants left the former British colony for economic opportunity in the UK. Particularly, many first generation Pakistani males immigrated to Britain to work for the textile industry. After bringing over their wives and families, many Pakistani immigrants sponsored the immigration of other people from their village. Consequently, Pakistani community structures were reproduced in Britain as biradari, or a “local network of extended families which forms an enclosed intermarrying group” (Rai, 72). Mirpuri biradari networks “retain traditional loyalties to the villages of origin and the customs and practices associated with them” (Rai, 72).

The continuity between life in Pakistan and the UK biradari is strengthened by communication between groups in both countries. Mirpuri Muslims can communicate with Pakistani Muslims back home through the internet and telephone. They can receive news from home through a number of Pakistan’s most popular Urdu newspapers, which have English editions available in the UK. Further, because of the proximity between the UK and Pakistan, Mirpuri Muslims can (and do) travel between countries with some frequency. One of the strongest ties between Pakistan and the UK biradari is the mosque. This is because most Mirpuri Muslims import their imams from Pakistan.
According to Lewis (2002), these biradari are large and concentrated enough that they generate and sustain a “separate institutional and economic infrastructure which embodies and perpetuates religious and cultural norms” (19). For example, within Mirpuri communities there is a profusion of specialist goods and services from halal butchers to Urdu video shops (Lewis, 19). Moreover, because these communities are highly concentrated, they can elect candidates of choice to represent their needs. Consequently, Mirpuri Pakistanis formed “an urban village living within its own socially, linguistically and ethnically defined borders” and can interact with the outside world as it chooses.

**Economic Deprivation**

British Muslims experience high levels of economic deprivation. In general, more Muslims live in deprived local authority areas than in non-deprived areas. Nearly two-thirds of Muslims (65%) live in the most deprived 25 percent of local areas, compared to 34 percent of the population as a whole. Further, economically Muslims “occupy the most disadvantaged position in the labor market compared with other groups.” According to the 2001 Census, the unemployment rate for Muslims is three times higher than the population as a whole (14.6% compared to 5%), and over two fifths of Muslims have no qualifications for employment. In fact, 36 percent of British Muslims drop out of school with no qualifications (Franz). Further, 16 percent of Muslims have never worked or are unemployed long-term, which is more than five times the rate for the entire population. Moreover, around half of Muslims (52%) are economically inactive, which is higher for
any other group and is over one and a half times the rate for the population as a whole (33.5%) (Young Muslims and Extremism).

Economic deprivation appears to particularly afflict Muslim youths in Britain. One fifth of 15 to 24 year old Muslims in Britain are unemployed (Franz). Forty-two percent of Muslim children are deemed to live in overcrowded conditions, and 12 percent live without heating. More than a third of them grow up in households where no adult has a job (Isic).

The Pakistani and Bangladeshi communities, which are composed of nearly two thirds of Muslims in the United Kingdom, experience very high levels of economic disadvantage. Indeed, nearly 70 percent of Bangladeshi and Pakistani Muslims live in poverty (Franz). After the collapse of the textile industry between 1975 and 1985, many members of this generation found themselves unemployed and under-qualified for available jobs. According to Rai, many of these older Pakistanis “generally possess low or non-existent qualifications and are often illiterate.” Consequently, many Pakistani Muslims in this generation tend to be employed in restaurants or as taxi drivers, occupations which “offer limited opportunities for progress” (Lewis, 2007, 29).

Further, low participation among Pakistani women in the formal labor market and the fact that Pakistani Muslims tend to marry at an early age negatively affects the community’s economic prospects. These factors not only reduce the time individuals spend in school and lower their overall qualifications, but they ensure a large household size. This means that the problems of the parent generation are transferred to an even larger generation of youths. Indeed, the children of these Pakistani immigrants “now
experience the highest rates of joblessness, possess the lowest education and training qualifications, and life in the worst housing in Britain” (Rai, 91). Moreover Pakistani Muslim youths in Britain attend some of the worst schools among ethnic minority groups in Britain.

Political Participation

According to Lewis (2007), “with the emergence of a generation of Muslims born and educated in Britain, more and more Muslims are being incorporated into public and civic society” (18). In terms of political representation, Muslims have some electoral power in Britain: they can influence election results in local and parliamentary elections, and they can “be decisive in certain constituencies, especially when non-Muslim voters are apathetic and show a low turnout” (ISIC, 81). As of 2004, there were five Muslim peers in the House of Lords (four Labour, one Liberal Democrat) and two Muslim Members of Parliament in the House of Commons (both Labour). In 2002, there were 219 Muslim local councilors, of which 161 were Labour (Lewis, 18). Despite this representation, some Muslims claim that there should be at least twenty Muslims in the Commons to represent the real proportion of Muslims in the population (Saeed, 2004).

In general, Muslim participation in civic activities is low, particularly among youths. According to the Home Office Survey, only 29 percent of Muslims reported that they had participated in civic activities including contacting a local councilor, official, Member of Parliament, or public official from central government; attending public meetings or rallies; signing a petition; or taking part in a public demonstration or protest. In contrast, 39 percent of Christians and a high of 57 percent among Jews said that the
participated in civic activities (O’Beirne). Moreover, young Muslims are less likely than all faith groups to participate in civic activities (39% compared with 30%) (Young Muslims and Extremism). Additionally, Muslims had the lowest level of participation in social groups and volunteering among all religious groups (55%). However, among Muslims, the highest rate of participation was among youths ages 16-24 (O’Beirne).

There are several political organizations charged with representing the British Muslim community’s interests. Perhaps the biggest organization is the Muslim Council of Britain (MCB), which is a national representative Muslim umbrella body with over 500 affiliated national, regional and local organizations, mosques, charities and schools. The purpose of the MCB is to “promote cooperation, consensus and unity on Muslim affairs in the UK” and to work to improve the position of Muslims in the UK and eradicate disadvantages and forms of discrimination faced by Muslims. In terms of political engagement, the purpose of the MCB is constructive engagement. The MCB aims to resolve problems and influence policies through principled and effective participation in conformity with Islamic norms and standards.

Since the mid-1980’s Muslims have rallied together to various extents to push for religious oriented political reform. Perhaps the most notable Muslim political action was during the Rushdie Affair. Muslims-particularly Barelwi Muslims- took offense to Salman Rushdie’s depiction of the prophet in the Satanic verses. Consequently, they took to the streets to protest this book, and began political campaigns to remove it from print and circulation. Although the government failed to respond to these concerns, the
mobilization of the Muslim community demonstrates that Muslims have been capable of communal political action under certain circumstances.

Additionally, some Muslims have been mobilized to political action in order to push for a respect of religious differences in the educational system. For example, in response to Muslim pressure, some schools have adapted uniform rules to allow girls to wear shalwar kameez (loose trousers with a long skirt) in school colors. Similarly, British schools have also met Muslim demands for prayer facilities and halal meat in schools. Recently, the Muslim community has increasingly demanded the establishment of voluntary-aided Muslim schools; however, this campaign has so far had little success.

Some Muslims have also pushed for a separate system of Muslim family law (as it pertains to marriages, divorces etc). Although this campaign has received only a modicum of support from the Muslim community, it still demonstrates the ability of Muslims to organize for political purposes. Additionally, Muslims have successfully pushed for the British government’s respect of ritual slaughter laws. According to Jacobsen, Muslim political participation indicates that Muslims are becoming an “increasingly self-confident and articulate religious minority” (42).

Nevertheless, it appears that a majority of Muslims surveyed believe they lack influence on local and national politics. According to the Home Office Survey, 52% of Muslims believed that they could not influence political decisions affecting their area; however, this number is lower than the average for all religious groups, including Christians (58%). Moreover, 69% believed that they could not influence decisions
affective Britain; however, this number was also lower than the average for all religious groups, including Christians (76%) (O’Beirne).

**LITERATURE REVIEW**

*The Quest for Identity*

According to Moghaddam (2006), “at the heart of Islamic terrorism is the crisis of identity in Islamic communities,” particularly among Muslim youths who search for an authentic identity (14). Building on Social Identity Theory, Moghaddam posits that authentic individual identities are only achieved at the group level and are only based on a group’s internal characteristics such as its traditions, values and goals. Further, an authentic identity needs to be positive and distinct.

Moghaddam suggests that the Muslim community is undergoing a collective identity crisis, which trickles down to its youths: Islamic group identity is not authentic but instead is dominated by imported Western ideals and cultural systems. Thus, in this age of globalization and Western dominated mass media, the best young Muslims can hope for is to be a good copy of a Westernized individual, never “as good or better than the original Western models”(38). Accordingly, Muslim youths lack authentic identity. They can never be truly Westernized, but neither has Islam created an alternative authentic identity.

In this case study, two factors widen the identity gap: Muslims cannot find an authentic identity within their own faiths or in Western culture. First, the British Muslim community, particularly its Mosques, is unable to meet the changing needs of its Muslim
youth population. Moreover, many of these Mosques are influenced by Western principles, so that they are incapable of providing an authentic indigenous identity.

Simultaneously, the Pakistani Muslim community is isolated from Western society. This isolation is worsened by economic deprivation, political exclusion, perceived discrimination and failed integration policies. Indeed, the British Muslim community—particularly Pakistanis—is one of the most economically deprived communities in all of Britain. Because of this economic deprivation, British Muslims are segregated into the poorest British localities, with little hope of communal economic mobility which would help them integrate into Western society. Thus, British Muslims, especially the youth, are both physically and aspirationally separated from the West. Moreover, British Muslims perceive that they are discriminated against through the media, and even through government counterterrorism policies which often target them. This discrimination only serves to widen the gap between Muslims and the West, and Britain’s failed integration policies have not done much to bridge this chasm.

Perhaps the most important factor isolating British Muslims from the West is political exclusion from participation in government and civil society. This exclusion is both rooted in the characteristics of the Muslim society, and external to it. Indeed, British Muslims lack some of the educational and political skills necessary to participate in British political society. Moreover, many Muslim immigrants from Pakistan have little experience with democracy, and thus are poorly equipped to be psycho-social citizens of a democracy. Specifically, Moghaddam suggests that individuals are psychological citizens, who develop expectations of political fairness and justice that allow them to
function in a particular sociopolitical order, based on active participation in collective life (Moghaddam, 2008). In this vein, British Muslims have difficulty matching their expectations for government and political beliefs to democracy because of how they are collectively socialized. For example, the beliefs and values of these communities—for instance, on the rights of women, or on the use of Sharia law—are often incompatible with democracy.

However, at the same time, the British Government has failed to adequately reach out to these citizens and integrate them into the democratic system. Accordingly, in their search to fulfill their quest for authentic identities, Muslim youths have turned to fundamentalist Islam, which presents an authentic identity untainted by the West (44). In fact, not only does fundamentalist Islam reject a Western influence, but it rejects the West entirely.

**Salient Group Identity**

Through fundamentalist Islam, many Muslim youths have found an authentic identity which is derived from group identity. During the radicalization process, the salience of this group identity increases. According to the NYPD Report on Radicalization, during the radicalization process an individual will progressively intensify his fundamentalist beliefs and develop a completely new identity based on Salafi Islam until he isolates himself from anybody who is not a group member. Throughout the radicalization process, group building exercises help to reinforce group cohesion. Thus, an individual’s identity becomes increasingly enmeshed with his group identity.
According to Runciman, an individual’s sense of kinship with group members, investment in the membership group, and the salience of group boundaries can increase the likelihood that the individual will experience group relative deprivation (Runciman, 1966, 31). Group (fraternal or collective) relative deprivation is when a person feels relatively deprived because his membership group is deprived relative to another group (often along political, economic, or social lines). Similarly, Kawakami and Dion conducted an experiment to gauge the effect of group salience on feelings of group relative deprivation. Their experiment showed that “when group identities were made salient, stronger feelings of group relative deprivation” were reported (Kawakami and Dion, 1993).

This paper argues that the 7/7 bombers developed highly salient group identities rooted in Salafi Islam, which increased their perceptions of group relative deprivation among Muslims. Particularly, the 7/7 bombers focused on the political deprivation of the Muslim community not only at home but in the larger Muslim community around the world, in places such as Iraq. The final words of Mohammad Siddique Khan, one of the 7/7 bombers illustrate this strong identification with Muslim political deprivation: “Your democratically elected governments continue to perpetuate atrocities against my people all over the world…until you stop the bombing, gassing, imprisonment and torture of my people we will not stop this fight” (Khan, 2005). While the bombers were radicalized to identify with this deprivation, for example through atrocity videos, this paper argues that

---

7 Runciman posits that relative deprivation occurs when a person (i) does not have something (X), (ii) sees some other person or persons as having X, (iii) wants X and (iv) sees it as feasible that he should have X (Runciman, 1966, p. 10).
they were susceptible to identification with relative deprivation because of the salience of their group identity.

**Responding with Collective Action**

Indeed, Kawakami and Dion note that the greater the salience of group identity, the greater the perception of group relative deprivation and the greater the likelihood of collective actions” (Kawakami and Dion, 1993). Similarly, according to Wright and Tropp, group relative deprivation is closely linked to collective action, or an act by a group member on behalf of the group, aimed at improving group conditions on the whole (Wright & Tropp, 2002, 203). Similarly, several authors argue that “people who believe their membership group is relatively deprived are more likely to participate in social movements and actively attempt to change the social system using group strategies” (Kawakami & Dion, 1993; Guimond and Dube Simard, 1983; Walker and Pettigrew, 1984). Examples of collective action might include normative actions, such as protests, or non-normative, violent actions such as murder or civil war. Although no existing literature links group relative deprivation to homegrown terrorism, it appears to fall within the spectrum of non-normative actions.

It is important to note that a person will not necessarily take collective action to resolve group relative deprivation. Propensity to act depends on multiple variables which are discussed below (although the list is not exhaustive). Gurr (1968) posits that the availability of institutional mechanisms that permit the expression of nonviolent hostility may reduce non-normative collective action. In this respect, political institutions can act as a stop-gap, a means to direct anger and frustration into normative forms of expression.
Additionally, the degree of repression in a state contributes to the likelihood of collective action: if a state is either too repressive or too lenient, violent collective action may result. According to Gurr, socialization patterns that permit or deplore violence may also contribute to the likelihood of violent collective action. Further, the permeability of ingroup boundaries is also a factor influencing collective action: if individuals can fix their frustration over their status through mobility, they will be less likely to act violently. Finally, the perceived legitimacy and stability of the intergroup context may contribute to violence. If individuals believe that they deserve their lower position in the intergroup context, then they may not respond violently. If the intergroup context is either highly stable or unstable, individuals may react to frustration with collective violence (Gurr, 1968).

Through an analysis of the case study, we will see that several of the factors which facilitate violent collective action are present in British Muslim society. First, the British Muslim community is politically deprived, so individuals lack access to the institutional mechanisms that permit the expression of hostility nonviolently. In this respect, members of the politically deprived British-Muslim community may be more likely to express their frustration through bombs than through ballots. Although the bombers grew up in the Barelwi Muslim tradition, which opposes the militant jihadist doctrine of Wahabism, the bombers were socialized through radicalization to accept violence as a response to frustration. Third, the British Muslim community—particularly Muslims of Pakistani origin—suffers from a lack of social mobility. The Pakistani Muslim community tends to be segregated in Britain’s poorest localities, with an
unusually high unemployment rate, low qualifications, and few prospects—particularly amongst the youth. In general, although an individual may better his own status, the community is ill-equipped to relieve itself from economic, political and social deprivation. Thus, as relative deprivation theory suggests, violent collective action is more likely.

Moreover, according to Gurr, it is not necessary for an individual to be actually deprived in order for him to suffer from group relative deprivation or take collective action on behalf of a deprived group. In fact, according to Kawakami and Dion, “people who feel the most deprived are generally not those who are objectively the most destitute (Kawakami & Dion, 1993)”. Several authors argue that collective actions are more likely to be led by the more advantaged members of disadvantaged groups rather than the most deprived, because the moderately deprived have the resources and connections to pursue collective actions (Caplan & Paige, 1968; Gurin & Epps, 1975; Smith & Ortiz, 2002). Moreover, educated and economically well-off individuals, such as the 7/7 bombers, may have higher economic, political and social expectations, so they are more likely to feel relatively deprived if these expectations are not met. This may explain why the 7/7 bombers were themselves relatively affluent individuals, yet they still suffered from and reacted to relative deprivation.

The Importance of Political Deprivation

Throughout this analysis, one common theme has emerged several times: the political deprivation of the British Muslim community. Indeed, this paper suggests that the political deprivation of the British Muslim community is a key factor in
understanding why the 7/7 bombers became homegrown terrorists. Political deprivation plays three major roles in facilitating homegrown terrorism. First, political deprivation widens the gap between Muslim and Western identities, which sends British Muslims on a quest for identity that sometimes leads to fundamentalist Islam. Second, the 7/7 bombers primarily identified with the political deprivation of the larger Muslim community. Thus, political deprivation caused the bombers frustration, and added fuel to the fire that would explode in bombs. Third, political deprivation took away the means for the bombers to resolve their frustration non-violently. Because the bombers were politically deprived, they lacked access to normative channels through which they could express their grievances. Without this stop-gap, the bombers chose to respond to their frustration with violent collective action.

**Theoretical Critiques**

Several theorists have offered critiques of theory that relative deprivation can be linked to collective action. One critique of relative deprivation is that it is extremely difficult to identify and quantify (Brush, 1996). This is because relative deprivation focuses on perceptions of deprivation, not actual deprivation. It is much more difficult to quantify and analyze feelings than objective data. This critique is certainly relevant to this paper as it is difficult to gauge the 7/7 bombers perceptions. Accordingly, this paper relies on the bombers’ statements, which point to political deprivation as their impetus for the 7/7 bombings.\(^8\) Although the bombers may have also identified with the Muslim community.\(^8\)

---

\(^8\)This critique is relevant to bombers’ statements as well. Although Khan rationalized the attacks by referring to the political deprivation of the Muslim community, it is unknown whether he truly internalized this deprivation. Essentially, we are unable to tell true
community’s economic, political and social deprivation, their statements are limited to comments about political deprivation. Thus, this paper primarily focuses on political deprivation as a trigger for the 7/7 bombings.

Another critique which is particularly relevant to this paper is that relative deprivation theory lacks predictive power (Brush, 1996). It is easy to identify relative deprivation in ex-post facto analysis of events, but it is difficult to determine when relative deprivation will result in collective action. Thus, we can infer that the 7/7 bombings were motivated by relative deprivation and facilitated by several factors including a lack of mechanisms for non-violent expression of grievances; however, we cannot necessarily expect these same factors to cause more homegrown terrorist attacks. In fact, there are certainly British Muslims who internalize the community’s deprivation but do not bomb Britain. With this critique in mind, this paper views relative deprivation theory as a helpful explanation of behavior, not a reliable predictive tool. Accordingly, this paper attempts to identify relative deprivation as a factor that may make individuals prone to violent action, not guaranteed to bomb the London subway.

Indeed, there are other possible explanations for why an individual may undertake violent collective action. For example, one argument is that the radicalization process is so powerful that it convinces some individuals that violence is acceptable, even necessary. However, this analysis does not discount the power of the radicalization process to funnel individuals towards violent action. Instead, this paper argues that the search for identity and relative deprivation may lead an individual to enter into and motives from a statement. However, since these statements are the most reliable evidence available, this paper will rely on them with support from statistical data.
continue through the radicalization process. Essentially, the search for identity primes the pump, relative deprivation is the fuel, but the mechanisms generally ignite the fire.

Support for Thesis

Despite possible critiques of this paper’s central thesis, there also appears to be some evidentiary support. In fact, the British Home Office Report on Young Muslims and Extremism appears to support this paper’s central thesis: that British Muslims are drawn to Salafi Islam in a search for authentic identity, and that their identification with Salafi Islam makes them prone to group relative deprivation which can result in homegrown terrorism. Indeed, the Report states that Muslim youths suffer from a struggle to reconcile a modern Islamic identity with modern secular challenges. They have a “proactive desire to forge an alternative Islamic identity” in a search for “practical goals and a purpose in life” to satisfy their “need to belong.” This identity gap is widened by “disillusionment with ‘sell-out’ mainstream Muslim organizations.” Further, Muslims feel increasingly isolated from Western life as there is a “general lack of Muslim participation in mainstream politics and public life,” economic deprivation, and a sense of alienation caused by Islamophobia and counterterrorism policies. According to the Report, all of these factors drive “vulnerable youngsters in unpredictable directions,” including towards homegrown terrorism (Young Muslims and Extremism, 2004).

Jacobson (1998) suggests that second-generation Pakistani Muslims in Britain experience ambivalence over identity.” According to Jacobson, “as a result of the social circumstances in which they are living, the individuals have a tendency to view themselves as subject to various and, to some extent, opposing definitions of self.” This
ambivalence means that individuals might perceive themselves to be different people internally and externally, or might switch between two identities.

To this effect, Jacobson cites her interviews with second-generation British-Muslim youths, almost all of whom “articulated at least some degree of self doubt or uncertainty with regard to questions of identity” (79). For example, Naveed commented, “What is British? I don’t know. I suppose I would probably be more British than the average British person sometimes. But then at other times I would be not at all British, at all. I can’t class myself as British. But then I can’t class myself as being Pakistani” (79). A British-Pakistani youth, Yusuf, expresses a similar ambiguity over his identity when he discusses his support for cricket teams: “When it comes to cricket, people say –you’re from England, you should support your English team, no one should support Pakistan, but at the end of the day you’ve got to support your own home country! This [England] is our home country…this is where I was born, but I still end up supporting Pakistan” (Jacobson, 68).

Similarly, just under half of the respondents Jacobson interviewed made explicit comments about their feelings that white Britons do not accept them as fully British. For example, Hanif, a British-Pakistani Muslim remarked, “there are times when I’ve felt regardless of how much I’ve done in my life to integrate I’ve still been left out. And that does hurt…and I think, down to the bottom of my heart, if I ever think that it’s ever going to go away, I’d be foolish” (Jacobson, 72). In a similar vein, Bushra considers being Asian as “being someone who’ll never be considered a British person” (Jacobson, 72).
According to Jacobson, there are cultural and racial reasons for this exclusion. In regards to cultural exclusion, Shahid comments that “Asians are expected to lead a certain lifestyle if they are considered British...There are Britons who say Asians should speak English and should eat fish and chips instead of curry if they are living in this country” (Jacobson, 72). With regards to racial exclusion, Ruksana, when asked if in some ways she does not feel British answered, “Yeah- when I look in a mirror. Then I can say maybe I’m not British.” Similarly, Zubaida commented, “just because of our skin color, we’re different and we’re looked upon as if we’re- god knows what- aliens or something” (Jacobson, 72).

Similarly, the Guardian provides quotes by young British Muslims which support this paper’s central thesis. For example, in describing his identity, Iman Naji, a student at Surrey University stated, “I was born and brought up here, all I know is a British life, but we have to accept the fact that we will never be 100% British.” According to Naji, barriers to complete integration include signifiers such as an Islamic name or non-western looking face (Guardian, 2004). Similarly, Alya Shakir, a translator, stated that a public declaration of being a ‘British Muslim’ is impossible “because of the stereotypes surrounding Britishness.” According to Shakir, “We are restricted by how people perceive us and what they allow us to be. You can say to people you are British and they will push you for another explanation because we do not fit their idea of what British is” (Guardian, 2004. This paper argues that it is this lack of authentic identity which pushes Muslim youths towards fundamentalist Islam.
Muslim Pakistani youth in the United Kingdom straddle the chasm between two separate identities, neither of which fits well. In order to understand why Muslim youths feel that they lack an authentic identity, it is necessary to explore Muslim life in Britain through historical, demographic and anecdotal evidence. The following sections review this question in the context of the British Pakistani community. The reason for this focus is that many of the homegrown terrorists were of Pakistani origin.

**THE MUSLIM MINORITY**

This section looks at why Western culture does not provide Pakistani Muslim youths with an authentic identity. This section argues that a Western identity is incomplete and inauthentic for second-generation Pakistanis because they grew up in close-knit, isolated and insular Muslim communities as ethnic minorities in a Western world. Although they may play soccer, wear Western attire, or consider themselves Britons, they cannot rid themselves entirely of their heritage.

Indeed, Muslims are a small minority in British society at only three percent of the total population. Moreover, Pakistani Muslims live in relative isolation from Western society. This is partially because of their history of chain migration which resulted in the self-sufficient biradari community structure. As previously stated, these communities are often socially, economically and politically self-contained, so that they interact with the Western world selectivity. Further, this self-segregation is reinforced by economic deprivation: because the Pakistani (and other Muslim) communities are economically deprived they tend to be confined to the poorest localities in the United Kingdom.
Additionally, perceived discrimination against Muslims in the UK helps reinforce their sense of otherness, their sense that they will never become authentically Western. Abbas states that some Muslims have been positively disposed towards integration, but then experience a sense of dislocation and alienation, perceived or real, which negatively affects their outlook. Indeed, discrimination and Islamophobia in Britain is seen to be persistent, particularly since September 11, 2001 when the government instituted counterterrorism policies which targeted Muslims as potentially dangerous enemies.

Accordingly, between 48 and 66 percent of Muslims who were surveyed thought that relations between Muslims and non-Muslims have worsened because of September 11, 2001. Moreover, between 30 to 35 percent of Muslims had experienced hostility based on religion as a result of September 11. Further, between 57 and 70 percent of Muslims stated disagreed that the war of terror is not a war against Islam. As Azhar Ali (36) stated, “the cause of integration has not been served by British foreign policy and the so-called ‘war on terror’ which have left many Muslims here feeling persecuted.”

Moreover, 34 percent of Muslims agreed that the British Government was doing too little to protect religious groups from discrimination (O’Beirne). This was a higher percentage than for any other group. Perhaps most interesting, Muslim youths were the most likely out of all Muslim age groups to feel that the government was doing too little to protect religious groups from discrimination. This discrimination reinforces the sentiment among Muslims that they are not authentically Western. Instead, they are separate and different, and will never truly be able to develop a Western identity.
Further, Muslims are prevented from developing an authentic Western identity because their inadequate political representation isolates them from Western society. Their lack of political participation is evidenced by their underrepresentation in government and their low levels of civic involvement. Indeed, a majority of Muslims in the UK believe that they cannot affect local policy, and an even greater percentage feels that they cannot affect British policy. Where Muslims feel that they cannot influence society, and especially the policies that affect them on a daily basis, they are further isolated from the majority culture. This is a vicious cycle: since Muslims are underrepresented, they have difficulty pushing for policies that will ensure their adequate representation or general integration into society.

One political area in which Muslims feel they are underrepresented is Britain’s foreign policy. According to the UK Report on Young Muslims and Extremism, “it seems that a particularly strong cause of disillusionment amongst Muslims-including young Muslims- is a perceived ‘double standard’ in the foreign policy of Western governments, in particular Britain and the US.” Thus, a key long-term grievance of Britain’s Muslim community is the perception that British foreign policy passively oppresses the international Muslim community through non-action in Kashmir and Chechnya, and actively oppresses the Muslim community through the war on terror, and in Iraq and Afghanistan.” These policies are seen as “acts against Islam” (Young Muslims and Extremism). Specifically, 64 to 80 percent of Muslims opposed the Afghan war, while 80 percent of Muslims had unfavorable opinions of the Iraq war (O’Beirne).
According to Rumeana Jahangir (23), a British Muslim of Bangladeshi origin, “Britain’s foreign policy is making Muslims feel angry. When you feel angry you tend to feel isolated. And if you feel like you’re isolated anyway because you’re not getting proper educational services, because you may be living in a deprived area, that aggravates it” (Guardian). It is this sense of isolation which drives Muslims away from developing an authentic Western identity. It is this sense of anger, when combined with an inaccessible political process, which can lead to radicalization.

There are several reasons for Muslim underrepresentation in British political life. First, many Muslims in the United Kingdom lack the skills to be democratic psychological citizens. In a practical sense, undereducated, economically deprived Muslims lack the knowledge, money and time to run political campaigns or participate in civic organizations. In a deeper sense, Muslims- Pakistani Muslims in particular- were originally socialized in non-democracies. In essence, those who are unfamiliar with democracy and its responsibilities- for instance, how to vote- have difficulty integrating into a democracy.

Second, because Muslims were not socialized in democracies, they have different expectations for their government than democratic citizens, particularly regarding the integration of religion into political life. Specifically, Muslim communities resent that the British democratic system marginalizes religion and separates it from public affairs (ISIC, 16). Instead, most Muslims prefer a greater integration of Islam and politics, far beyond British democracy’s respect for and tolerance of religious differences.
The debate over Sharia Law best illustrates the desire of Muslims to incorporate Islam and politics, and the discrepancy between Muslim expectations and British democracy. According to a survey conducted by the Guardian, a clear majority of Muslims surveyed want Islamic law for civil cases (divorce, custody, inheritance) relating to their own community. Some 61 percent wanted Islamic courts, operating on Sharia principles “so long as penalties did not contravene British law.” Similarly, most Barelwis would aim at a UK Muslim community with its own autonomous institutions under Islamic Sharia law (ISIC).

As illustrated by the above opinions, instituting Sharia Law would require separate independent Islamic institutions from the British justice system. Currently, the desire for separate independent Islamic institutions has given rise to a de facto parallel Islamic legal system which is unrecognized by the state. This system provides a means of Islamic dispute resolution for the Muslim community, so that many cases do not come before British courts (ISIC 23). These separate judicial institutions reflect an incompatibility between the Muslim community’s expectations for democracy, and what liberal democracy can provide for this community.

In order to compensate for this incompatibility, the British government has taken several measures to accommodate Muslim religious beliefs, specifically regarding Sharia Law. For example, although UK law requires that all animals must be stunned before slaughter, it has exempted religious communities from this regulation where it conflicts with religious procedures for slaughter (ISIC 36). In this case, this exemption benefits Muslims since stunning animals conflicts with its procedures for preparing halal
The government has also made accommodations related to education. The 1994 Education Act allows parents to absent their children from school during religious festivals. It encourages schools to provide halal food for their Muslim pupils as well as to provide prayer facilities, Muslim religious instruction and headscarves (ISIC, 37).

These accommodations not only attempt to compensate for the incompatibility between Muslim expectations and the limitations of British liberal democracy, but they also are overtures towards better integrating the Muslim community politically. Nevertheless, these policies do not address the underlying separation between Muslim expectations and liberal democracy; rather, they try to fix its symptoms. Moreover the Muslim community’s need to forge separate Muslim institutions undermines its political participation. Specifically, by abandoning the available justice mechanism and creating their own Sharia courts, Muslims remove their stake in the existing system: by choosing to exit the system, they fail to influence it.

The separation between Muslims and liberal democracy is further widened by a difference in values and traditions. Because Muslims were socialized into the values and traditions of non-democratic societies, they may have different expectations of what is fair and just than citizens of liberal democracies. Moreover, their biradari reinforce these traditional values and impart them to a new generation. Although it is quite controversial- and likely incorrect- to argue that all Islamic values are fundamentally incompatible with democracy, there are areas where the two conflict. One such area is women’s rights: Islam tends to have more traditional, conservative views of women’s roles, while liberal democracies empower women without boundaries.
In this vein, “coming from Muslim majority countries in which traditional views on religion, family, morals, honor and shame, and Islamic law prevail, many Muslim immigrants are shocked by the secular, permissive and liberal society they find in Britain” (ISIC 16). Further, “they intuitively feel that excessive individual freedom endangers communal rights and considerations of the common welfare” (ISIC 16). Young Muslims “face difficult choices in matters such as marriage and lifestyle between the traditional demands of their families and communities and liberal Western norms” (ISIC, 47). Indeed, there is an underlying contradiction between some Muslim values and liberal democratic values. It is this divide which makes some Muslims unable to become democratic psychological citizens. This chasm is yet another factor which pushes some Muslims away from authentically adopting a Western identity through political involvement.

British Muslim youth respond to these choices differently. According to the UK Report on Young Muslims and Extremism, “parts of the Muslim community are still developing an understanding of how to reconcile their faith and Islamic identity with living in a secular multi-cultural society, and with modern social challenges.” To this effect, some young Muslims rebel against their Muslim heritage and try to completely integrate into society. In contrast, other young Muslims- particularly those who are influenced by radical Islamists- refuse to abandon their Muslim traditions and isolate themselves from the West.

As several Muslim youths note, there is also a middle ground between complete integration and complete isolation. In this vein, Shazia Akhtar (27), a member of Hizb ut
Tahrir reflects on the two options of integration or isolation and responds, “I think there should be a third option, whereby we are interactive in society, whilst retaining the values of Islam” (Guardian). Similarly, Samia Rahman (28) states that “people are casting aside their more traditional cultural baggage and forging an identity that reconciles being both British and Muslim. It is possible to be both!” (Guardian).

Out of these possible options, it appears that the majority of Muslims in the United Kingdom favor some form of integration over isolation: a recent poll showed that 40 percent of Muslims think the Muslim community needs to do more to integrate into British mainstream culture, while only 20 percent believe that integration has moved too far already” (O’Beirne 2001). Moreover, between 67 and 87 percent of Muslims feel very or fairly loyal and patriotic towards Britain, while between 8 to 26 percent of Muslims feel not very or not at all loyal and patriotic (O’Beirne, 2001). At the same time, however, Muslim identity appears to trump British identity for the majority of British Muslims: 81 percent of Muslims surveyed first consider themselves Muslims and second British citizens (Pew, 2006).

Nevertheless, British Islam has not helped Muslim youths navigate the chasm between Muslim values and British democracy and develop a British-Muslim identity. This is because most British Muslims import imams from their home countries to run the mosques and teach Muslim children the basics of Islam. These imams are looked to as important community leaders; however, they fail to connect to British Muslim youth because they know little about Britain and British culture, and often do not even speak English. Moreover, these imams tend to reject western values of democracy and
secularism and consequently cannot help Muslim youths accommodate to Western life. Indeed, it appears that very few imams “have the desire let alone the skills to teach Muslims how to live in a pluralist society” (ISIC, 46). Consequently, most British imams are impotent because they are “unable to give any meaningful direction to young British Muslims, having never experienced the kinds of problems or challenges they face” (Lewis, 2007, 103). At the same time, the fact that imams are inaccessible and unhelpful means that British Muslim youths do not develop an authentic Muslim identity.

In this context, radical Islam can appeal to young Muslims. According to Abbas (2007), because the mosques are unable to provide Muslim youths with authentic Muslim identities, “young Muslims have subsequently gone on to form their own study circles, use the internet to access alternative sources of information and utilize modes of communication familiar to them, that is, the English language.” During this exploration, some youths are “particularly vulnerable to negative external influences when all else has failed them internally” (Abbas, 2007). Indeed, according to the UK Report on Young Muslims and Extremism, “individuals who are looking for a more prominent form of identity but who have little knowledge about Islam may be ideal recruits for extremists. Thus, “the spread of Wahabi/Salafi Islam…is partly a result of the failure of mainstream Sunni traditions to connect with young Muslims educated and socialized in Britain” (Lewis, 2007, 138).

Consequently, many British Muslims- particularly Muslim youths- lack authentic identities. They are neither authentically British, nor authentically Muslim, nor British-Muslim. Because they are politically deprived, they lack adequate political means to
express their grievances normatively. For these reasons, some British Muslim youths are
drawn to Salafi Islam, which rejects Western society in favor of militant, violent Jihad.
As previously stated, it is not necessary that all young Muslims who lack authentic
identities and who are politically deprived will become homegrown terrorists: some may
become ordinary criminals, or engage in other non-normative behavior, while some may
do nothing at all. These two factors merely predispose individuals towards homegrown
terrorism; however, they do not compel them to detonate bombs.

THE 7/7 BOMBINGS

The previous analysis has demonstrated that some Muslims in the United
Kingdom-particularly Pakistani youths- suffer from a lack of authentic identity which,
when coupled with political deprivation, makes them more likely to become homegrown
terrorists. In order to test the veracity of this argument, it is important to examine this
thesis in the context of the 7/7 Bombings. Did the 7/7 bombers suffer from a lack of
authentic identity? Were they politically deprived? What factors appeared to push them
towards Salafi Islam? The answers to these questions will validate this paper’s central
argument: the 7/7 bombers lacked authentic identity and were politically deprived, so
they were pulled towards Salafi Islam and radicalization.

Cell Background

On July 7, 2005, a four member terrorist cell detonated four bombs in the United
Kingdom’s public transportation system, leaving fifty two people dead and hundreds
injured. Three of the four bombers, Mohammed Siddique Khan (30), Shehzad Tanweer
(22) and Siddique Khan (18), were second-generation British nationals of Pakistani origin
born in Leeds, West Yorkshire, England\textsuperscript{9}. Leeds and West Yorkshire have a reasonably high percentage of Pakistani population (2.1 and 5.9\%, respectively) and of Muslims (3.0\% and 7.2\%, respectively) (2001 Census). Although Leeds is an economically deprived area, the three bombers were born into reasonably well-off families. Further, all three bombers were born into the Barelwi sect of Islam, which is opposed to violent jihad. It is also important to note that their youths were relatively secularized, and they only became more religious in their teenage years.

The four members of the 7/7 cell met around 2001 in a run-down suburb of Beeston, England through a local bookstore, the Iqra Learning Center, and through a local community center. The Iqra Learning Center “sold Islamic books, tapes and DVDs and was also used for IT lessons, lectures and discussion groups on Islam” (Official Account). The community center “functioned as a general social meeting place for the young of the area” and had a gymnasium, computers, classes, lectures and discussion groups (Official Account). The community center also sponsored outdoor trips for youth such as paintballing and whitewater rafting excursions.

Accusations abound that the Iqra Learning center and the community center were known locally as centers of extremism (Official Account). For instance, according to the Official Account of the attacks, the “local bookshop was used to watch extremist DVDs and videos, access extremist websites, and for extremist lectures. Some have said extremist preachers have visited the bookshop.” According to the NYPD Report, “this local bookshop was a central node in the community for radical Islam- not only did it sell

\textsuperscript{9} The fourth bomber, Germaine Lindsay (19) was a Jamaican immigrant who converted to Islam.
Islamic books, tapes and DVD’s, but it also hosted lectures and discussion groups on Islam. According to an unnamed friend of Khan, Tanweer, and Hussain, the bookstore “sold under-the-counter stuff, videos of what was happening in Bosnia, Iraq and Chechnya. Stuff the television could not show. Rapes, murders, mutilation.” (Rai, 52).

Similarly, the NYPD Report states that extremists often used the community center “as a venue to proliferate their radical message to the susceptible youth. Jihad was a frequent topic of discussion at the club.” In fact, the community center gymnasium was known locally as the “Al Qaida gym’ because of the extremists who frequented it (Official Account). The Official Account is careful to note that beyond this, little is known about the activities in the community center. It is known, however, that some people who attended the gym- including some of the bombers- also became part of the Mullah Crew, an extremist 15-person vigilante group which carried-out strong-arm social work (Rai, 101).

It is also known that gym members, including all four bombers, attended the outdoor trips organized through the community center. According to the NYPD Report, “these events served as bonding and vetting opportunities and were often preceded by Islamist themed lectures.” According to the Official Account of the attacks, these trips may have been used to reinforce group solidarity, hone skills needed for extremist activities, or recruit potential candidates for indoctrination.

In these venues, and through these activities, Mohammed Khan was the key figure to assemble, train and guide the 7/7 cell. According to the Official Account, Khan was a “leading figure” in assembling the cell, as he was viewed as a mentor by many youths
who looked up to him. Khan was known to be an active participant in and organizer of possible extremist activities at both the local bookstore and the community center. It is alleged that Khan preached fiery sermons at the local bookstore, created the Mullah Crew (along with Tanweer), and organized many of the youth club’s outdoor excursions. Khan may have used these activities, particularly the outdoor excursions, to recruit or indoctrinate individuals. In fact, Khan is said to have recruited Lindsay into the cell during one of these outings.

Khan not only assembled the 7/7 cell, he also likely provided its members with operational training. In 2003, Khan traveled to Pakistan and received military and explosives training at a camp in Malakland and in the North-West Frontier Province (NYPD Report). According to the NYPD Report, this travel abroad provided the cell with the advice and experience to acquire attack capabilities.

Additionally, the NYPD Report states that travel abroad provided Khan and Tanweer with the mission of attacking the United Kingdom. Initially, Khan traveled to Pakistan in 2003 with the goal of raising funds in the United Kingdom for Jihadist groups; however, Khan’s subsequent visit to Pakistan in 2004, changed his and the group’s mission. On this trip, Khan and Tanweer allegedly met with Abd al-Hadi al-Iraqi, who was regarded as one of al-Qaeda’s most experienced, intelligent and ruthless commanders (NYPD Report). According to the NYPD Report, Abd al-Hadi re-tasked Khan and Tanweer with attacking the United Kingdom. When Khan and Tanweer returned from their trip, they immediately began preparing the cell to attack the United Kingdom.
The following sections review the backgrounds of these three bombers in order to
demonstrate that they lacked an authentic identity and that they internalized the Muslim
community’s political deprivation.

Mohammed Siddique Khan

The Times describes Khan as the “oddest” of the bombers because he was the
oldest, and a “professional, married man with a steady job, a pregnant wife, a baby
daughter, a new council house, a season ticket to the gym, and a silver Honda Civic”
(Rai, 28). From 2001 up until several months before the bombings, Khan worked as a
teaching assistant and mentor for young children at the Hillside Primary School in
Beeston. According to Rai, the teaching staff was “united in describing Khan as gently-
spoken, endlessly patient, and immensely popular with children- who called him their
buddy” (Rai, 25).

Although Khan was the son of Pakistani immigrants, as a teenager he “completely
rejected his Pakistani Muslim identity and chose to present himself as an entirely
Westernized young man using the nickname ‘Sid’”(Rai, 92). In fact, Khan had “dreams
of emigrating to the United States and becoming American.” According to one of his
school friends, “you’d never really know what religion he was from” as Khan seemed
“entirely uninterested in religion.” (Rai, 92).

Khan became more religious in 1998 when he studied business at Leeds
Metropolitan University. According to the NYPD Report, Khan was somewhat new to
Salafi Islam, but he began to pray regularly at school and attend Mosque on Fridays.
Moreover, he “gave up fighting, bouts of drinking and using drugs.” Subsequently, Khan
joined the Stratford Street Mosque which followed the more rigid Deobandi school of Islam and had a heavy Tablighi Jamaat presence (NYPD Report).

By the time Khan began his job as a learning mentor in 2001, “it was clear that he was serious about religion. He prayed regularly at work and attended the mosque on Fridays” (Official Account). Around twelve months after starting his job at the school, Khan’s colleagues began to notice subtle changes in his character. For instance, they reported that Khan became uncharacteristically introverted and intolerant, and his attendance became increasingly erratic.

It was during this period that Khan became radicalized. In 2001, Khan left the Stratford Street Mosque saying its approach to outreach was too narrow, its focus too apolitical, and that it “abided by an injunction by mosque elders that politics or current events involving Muslims should stay outside the mosque” (NYPD Report). Instead, Khan gravitated toward the Iqra Learning Center in Beeston where he engaged in political discussions about Muslim oppression around the world, organized study groups and accessed the internet. Also, around this time period, Khan began attending the community center and youth club in Beeston, otherwise known locally as the “al Qaida gym.” There, he solidified and created the Mullah Crew with Tanweer, and organized outdoor trips for local youths.

Khan was the leader of the 7/7 cell. He recruited and helped indoctrinate the group, through the local bookstore and community center. He also provided the cell with operational knowledge. Beginning in 2005, after two trips to Pakistan, Khan began plotting the cell’s attacks on the United Kingdom.
Shehzad Tanweer

According to his friends, Shehzad Tanweer was the “most unlikely of the four bombers” because he “seemed to enjoy everything Western and had the means to do so” (Rai, 31). Tanweer, who drove a red Mercedes and wore designer clothing, was described as the “epitome of assimilation into British society” (Rai, 32). According to Tanweer’s cousin, “he felt completely integrated and never showed any signs of disaffection” (Rai, 32).

Tanweer excelled academically at school and was a gifted sports player. In 2001, he began his studies in sports science at Leeds Metropolitan University. In 2003, Tanweer left the University before finishing his full coursework, and worked part-time in his father’s fish and chip shop until November 2004. From that time until the bombings, Tanweer did not have paid employment and was supported by his family (Official Account).

According to the Official Account of the bombings, Tanweer “is said to have taken religion seriously from an early age but showed no signs of extremism.” Tanweer began to become more religious around the age of 16. Subsequently, in 2002, religion became “a major focus of his life” (Official Account). When Tanweer left Leeds University in 2003 (partly because he lost his grant and partly because he was losing interest), he “appeared to devote the majority of his time to religious study and observance, including at a religious school in Dewsbury” (Official Account).

Beginning in 2001, Tanweer began to attend the Iqra Learning Center and the local community center, where he met Mohammad Khan and Hasib Hussain. Tanweer
also attended outdoor excursions through the community center, such as a camping trip in 2003 and a whitewater rafting trip just weeks before the bombings. As previously stated, Tanweer is known to have traveled to Pakistan with Mohammad Khan in 2004. Upon his return, the cell began planning its attack on the United Kingdom.

**Hasib Hussain**

Hasib Hussain was born the youngest of four children to Pakistani parents. He did not excel academically and dropped out of secondary school with below a C-average. Nevertheless, Hussain went to college to study for an Advanced Business Program. Despite a patchy attendance record, Hussain graduated in June 2005 (Official Account). Hussain also played cricket and hockey on local sports teams.

Hussain was described as a “British Asian who dressed in Western clothes” until he underwent a “complete transformation almost overnight” in 2002 (Rai, 46). After his family traveled on a Hajj to Saudi Arabia in 2002, Hussain became increasingly religious. While previously Hussain only wore jeans, he returned from his trip and “started wearing a topi hat from the mosque, grew a beard and wore robes” (Rai, 47). Hussain would regularly sit up during the night reading religious texts and praying (Official Account). Increasingly religious, Hussain told one of his teachers that he wanted to become a cleric.

Beginning in 2001, Hussain began to attend the Iqra Learning Center and the local community center. During the subsequent years, Hussain started to exhibit some extremist tendencies, for instance, writing “Al Qaeda no limits” on one of his schoolbooks. In addition to supporting Al Qaeda, Hussain regarded the September 11, 2001 bombers as martyrs (Official Report). Hussain’s extremist views apparently
developed such that he began plotting the 7/7 bombings along with his fellow cell members in 2005.

**The Search for Authentic Identities**

It is difficult to evaluate to what extent the bombers felt that they lacked authentic identities; however, their backgrounds give us clues. All three of the bombers were described as being extremely westernized and integrated earlier in life. For example, Tanweer drove a red Mercedes Benz and Hussein dressed in Western clothes. Although these young men appeared to be highly integrated, they grew up in an isolated biradari in Leeds, England. This Mirpuri Pakistani biradari was not only insulated from the outside world, but economically deprived. In fact, Rai argues that “the self-segregation and cultural isolation of their particular Muslim community…may well have made the Leeds bombers more vulnerable to anti-Western fundamentalism” (160). This may be because this communal isolation prevented the young men from developing authentic Western identities.

Moreover, it appears that the 7/7 bombers had difficulties developing authentic Muslim identities. This is because mosques in Leeds were set up by first generation Muslims and are not accessible to the young. According to Dr. Sean McLoughlin, an Islam expert at Leeds University who has visited all the mosques in the Leeds area, many of these mosques are “almost like old men’s clubs” (Rai, 95). Since Barelwi Islam was inaccessible to the 7/7 bombers, they failed to fully develop authentic Muslim identities. Additionally, since these Mosques did not appeal to the younger generation, they did not help these youths negotiate the divide between their Western and Muslim identities.
Since mosques were inaccessible, youths were deprived from active participation in religious life. However, this lack of youth participation appears to run deeper through the Leeds community. According to two North Leeds Muslim youths, “many parents fail to give younger Muslims the freedom to openly express themselves or to take active political and religious roles in their communities” (Rai, 96). For these reasons, Muslim youths are not only unable to develop authentic Muslim or British identities, but are unable to express their concerns or grievances through normative channels. For instance, if Muslim youths were better represented in the Mosques, or in community organizations, they could help these institutions better serve the unique needs of Muslim youths, thus reducing their grievances. Of course, this neglects the larger problem of the underrepresentation of Muslim youths in British government, which magnifies the inability of Muslims to express their grievances.

According to Rai, this underrepresentation is why “parents, friends and imams lose control and influence.” It is why, in part, “young men such as Hasib Hussein and Shehzad Tanweer feel an explosive sense of anger” (96). Indeed, in the absence of an authentic identity, and without normative channels through which these youths could express their grievances, all three men became increasingly drawn towards Salafi Islam. As previously stated, Salafi Islam appeals to those searching for an authentic identity because it offers a simple solution to the identity quandary: Salafi Islam encourages the complete rejection of all things Western. Instead, followers of Salafi Islam develop an entirely distinct Muslim identity.
The radicalization process helped facilitate the bombers’ development of authentic Muslim identities. Throughout the process, these young men were transformed from outwardly Westernized youths into religious Muslims who completely rejected the West. Indeed, the radicalization process increased the salience of these bombers’ Muslim identities, particularly through an emphasis on the Muslim community’s political deprivation. In this vein, the radicalization process exposed the bombers to atrocity videos of political oppression of Muslims abroad, which both solidified their Muslim identities and catalyzed their anger. To this effect, the next sections look at how the cell members were radicalized.

**Radicalization in Context**

In order to understand how these three seemingly ordinary, Westernized young men became transformed into global jihadists, it is necessary to explore the radicalization process further. According to the NYPD Report on Radicalization, jihadists typically complete a four-phase radicalization process which consists of pre-radicalization, self-identification, indoctrination, and jihadization. It is important to note that not all people who engage in the radicalization process become terrorists; however, all of the 7/7 bombers completed the radicalization process by 2005.

This paper has already explored the factors which may make an individual prone to identify with Salafi Islam. In order to understand why Salafi Islam became a salient identity for the bombers, it is necessary to examine the radicalization process. According to the NYPD Report, once an individual is drawn into the radicalization process, he may migrate away from his former identity and develop an identity defined by “Salafi
philosophy, ideology and values.” As previously stated, prior to the July 7, 2005 attacks, all of the bombers were drawn to Salafi Islam. The bombers became increasingly religious and began to attend Salafi mosques, local community groups, and the Iqra Learning Center (for Khan, Tanweer and Hussain), which further reinforced their Salafi beliefs. Indeed, the NYPD Report refers to these venues as “incubators” for the bombers’ adoption of Salfi Islam.

All four of the 7/7 bombers then undertook the next phase of the radicalization process which the NYPD Report calls the indoctrination phase. During indoctrination, an individual “progressively intensifies his beliefs, wholly adopts jihadi-Salafi ideology” and concludes, without question, that he should undertake a militant jihad against the kufr in order to create a “pure fundamentalist Muslim community worldwide” (NYPD Report). The NYPD Report identifies two indicators that an individual is becoming indoctrinated: he will withdraw from his mosque and his beliefs will become politicized. By 2001, there were indications that members of the 7/7 cell were becoming indoctrinated. The cell’s two leaders, Khan and Tanweer, had left the local Deobandi mosque, “saying its approach to outreach was too narrow, its focus too apolitical” (NYPD Report). Instead, Khan and Tanweer began to spend more time at the Iqra Learning Center, where they were soon joined by Husain. At the bookstore, their beliefs became increasingly politicized. “They had political discussions about Iraq, Kashmir, Chechnya and organized study groups and produced jihad videos” (NYPD Report).

Finally, the 7/7 bombers undertook the jihadization phase of radicalization, when they each decided to participate in militant jihad and began operational planning for an
attack (NYPD Report). According to the NYPD Report, travel abroad was a prominent factor in directing the bombers “to conduct an attack in the UK, solidifying the group’s commitment to jihad, and providing them the advice and experience for acquiring the capability.” As previously stated, Khan traveled to Pakistan on two occasions in 2003 and 2004. On his 2003 trip, he acquired the advice and experience for acquiring attack capabilities. On his 2004 with Tanweer, their mission was re-directed by Abd al-Hadi to attack targets in the United Kingdom. Khan and Tanweer were responsible for transferring this knowledge to the cell and transforming this mission into action. In terms of cell training, the bombers participated in outward bound activities together.

As this summary indicates, several factors facilitated this radicalization process. First, the bombers attended fringe venues—such as the Iqra bookstore—which facilitated their development of authentic Salafi Muslim identities. Second, the atrocity media that the bombers viewed at these venues increased the salience of their Muslim identities by angering them over the political oppression of the Muslim community. Third, contact with radical Muslims (particularly abroad) trained the bombers and directed their mission towards attacking the UK. Finally, group bonding exercises increased the salience of group membership and Muslim identity. In total, the radicalization process funneled these predisposed youths towards terrorist attacks, such that they became so bonded to the group, so committed to jihad, and so angry about the political deprivation of the Muslim community that they attacked the UK.

**Anger Over Political Deprivation**
Indeed, it appears that the 7/7 bombers became angry over the politically repressed status of the Muslim international community. Although the bombers left us very little direct evidence as to their feelings, we do have some evidence that the bombers identified with the Muslim community’s political deprivation. First, a cousin of Shehzad Tanweer stated that whenever Tanweer “would listen about sufferings of Muslims he would become very emotional and sentimental…He also wished to take part in jihad and lay down his life” (Rai, 104).

Perhaps the most telling piece of evidence is Mohammad Khan’s martyrdom tape, in which he attributes his actions to the political repression of the Muslim community. Khan stated,

Your democratically-elected governments continuously perpetuate atrocities against my people all over the world. And your support of them makes you directly responsible, just as I am directly responsible for protecting and avenging my Muslim brothers and sisters. Until we feel security, you will be our targets. And until you stop the bombing, gassing, imprisonment and torture of my people, we will not stop this fight. We are at war and I am a soldier (Khan, 2005).

In this quote, Khan identifies with Muslim community’s political deprivation. He internalizes this deprivation as his own, and responds with anger and frustration. This quote indicates that he chooses to respond to this political deprivation with violence. To support the idea that political deprivation drove the bombers to violence, Shahid Malik, one of four Muslim MPs wrote, “we know what drives these young men: the feelings of isolation and disaffection, the political anger at what they see as the double standards of the west in relation to international Muslim areas of conflict, whether that be Palestine, Kashmir, Afghanistan, Iraq or Chechnya…” (Rai, 147-148).
Rai describes the bombers’ anger over political deprivation. The bombers’ “anger mounts with, on the one hand, the growing realization of the scale and depth of suffering in the Muslim world, and, on the other hand, the complicity and active participation of the British government in causing much of this suffering.” Because these Muslim youths were themselves politically deprived- or detached from normative means of expressing grievances- they experienced a sense of helplessness from the “belief that no human action can actually change US/UK foreign policy.” The bombers desire to feel that they have effectively helped the Muslim ummah through violence, which is the only means available to them. Thus, the 7/7 bombers reacted to their frustration over political deprivation with homegrown terrorism (135-136).

**DISCUSSION**

This case study provides support to this paper’s central thesis. Although the bombers appeared to be relatively well assimilated into Western culture, the evidence demonstrates that they lacked an authentic British identity. Similarly, because the bombers were from an isolated, economically, socially and politically deprived Muslim Pakistani community, they were unable to develop authentic Muslim identities. Thus, their search for authentic identities drew them to Salafi Islam, where they became radicalized to militant, violent jihad.

Moreover, political deprivation is at the crux of their radicalization process. Atrocity videos about the political deprivation of the Muslim community served as a rallying point for group cohesion, and a driver of the radicalization process. Moreover,
the bombers referenced their anger over the Muslim community’s political deprivation, and Khan referred to this deprivation as the reason for the attacks.

For these bombers, the lack of authentic identity and political deprivation combined dangerously to make them both prone to radicalization and extremely angry. Because these young men were politically deprived, they did not choose to express their grievances through normative channels, but through violence. Indeed, this potentially deadly and volatile combination of factors exploded on July 7, 2005, in the London subway.

This case study leaves several unanswered questions, however. What type of counterterrorism policy is appropriate to address the homegrown terrorism threat? How can the United Kingdom effectively target homegrown terrorists if they are seemingly ordinary youths who play cricket one day and bomb the subway the next day? The following section evaluates the United Kingdom’s counterterrorism strategies in the context of these questions.

**COUNTERTERRORISM POLICIES**

This paper argues that 7/7 attacks represent a new type of terrorist threat to the United Kingdom. Whereas previously the biggest terrorist threat to the United Kingdom was from Al Qaeda and its affiliates, 7/7 and subsequent similar attacks demonstrated that the United Kingdom faced a new threat from homegrown terrorists. While the threat from Al Qaeda was centralized and traceable, the threat from these seemingly ordinary, self-radicalized individuals was diffuse and seemingly random.
Accordingly, the changing terrorist threat demands a changing counterterrorism policy. When Al Qaeda was the UK’s main terrorist threat, counterterrorism strategies emphasized traditional deterrence strategies such as pursuing and capturing terrorists, protecting the country from attacks, and adequately preparing for attacks by strengthening response capabilities. Indeed, the UK focused on these strategies in its post September 11, 2001 counterterrorism strategy entitled CONTEST (2003). These strategies were appropriate to counter Al Qaeda’s threat because the organization was highly centralized. Thus, the United Kingdom could successfully target its recruitment base, its finances, its members, and its future plans. However, the 7/7 bombings indicated that the nature of the primary terrorist threat to the United Kingdom had changed, and thus, its counterterrorism strategy needed to adapt as well.

The 7/7 bombings were committed by seemingly ordinary British Muslims against their own country. Indeed, the plot appeared to spring up randomly, as the bombers mostly radicalized themselves within the UK’s borders, with only a tenuous connection to Al Qaeda. Precisely because homegrown terrorists are homegrown, seemingly ordinary, and self radicalized they are difficult to pursue. Moreover, because homegrown terrorists generally lack strong ties to a larger organization, they are hard to target. For example, traditional counterterrorism pursuit strategies focus on eliminating sources of terrorist funding; however, because most homegrown terrorist cells fund themselves, it is virtually impossible for the government to track this funding.

Thus, when 7/7 changed the nature of the terrorist threat to the United Kingdom, the United Kingdom was forced to change the emphasis of its counterterrorism strategy.
As previously stated, the UK’s counterterrorism strategy- CONTEST- was introduced in 2003, and primarily focused on pursuit, protection and preparation; however, there was also a fourth strategic component aimed at preventing terrorist attacks. The UK admitted that it neglected this prevention strategy until after the 7/7 bombings, when it became the cornerstone of the UK counterterrorism policy.

The UK’s current counterterrorism strategy emphasizes prevention and recognizes that it needs to do more than stop attacks, but also to stop people from becoming terrorists or supporting violent extremism. Indeed, the diffuse nature of the homegrown terrorist threat has made this type of strategy necessary. Where it is difficult to pursue terrorists, a pursuit-based strategy is incomplete. Instead, a robust counterterrorism strategy needs to address why people become terrorists.

In this vein, in order to successfully counter the threat from homegrown terrorism, the United Kingdom needs to address the reasons its British Muslim youths are prone to radicalization. This paper argues that there are two main reasons Britain’s Pakistani Muslim youth population may be more prone to radicalization: its lack of authentic identity and its political deprivation. Accordingly, an effective counterterrorism strategy needs to address these two challenges. Without addressing the root causes of homegrown terrorism in the United Kingdom, a pursue, protect and prepare strategy is a band aid solution to cover much deeper social wounds.

**UK Prevention Policy**

The 2009 UK counterterrorism strategy emphasizes that prevention is a vital component of successful counterterrorism. Indeed, the 2009 strategy emphasizes that the
UK’s policy needs to address the root causes of terrorism. In order to develop its Prevention strategy, the Home Office consulted with the Muslim community in 2005 in order to “develop practical recommendations for tackling violent extremism.” The resulting prevention strategy focused on the following areas: supporting individuals who are vulnerable to recruitment, or have already been recruited by violent extremists; addressing the grievances which ideologues are exploiting; challenging the ideology behind violent extremism and supporting mainstream voices; increasing the resilience of communities to violent extremism; and disrupting those who promote violent extremism and support the places where they operate.

Although all components of this strategy are important to countering terrorism, this paper will focus on the first two: supporting individuals who are vulnerable to recruitment, and addressing the grievances which ideologues are exploiting. The reason for this focus is that these two strategies touch on the two factors that drive British Muslims to radicalization: a lack of authentic identity and political deprivation. The remaining strategies also important, but they are discussed only insofar as they contribute to building authentic identities or remedying political deprivation. The following two sections will review the UK’s prevention policies as they relate to supporting vulnerable individuals and addressing grievances.

Support Vulnerable Individuals

As previously stated, this paper argues that Pakistani Muslim youths in Britain are particularly vulnerable to recruitment because they lack authentic identities. These youths feel that, as members of somewhat isolated minority immigrant communities, they
will never authentically become assimilated, Westernized Britons. At the same time, many of these youths do not feel authentically Muslim because their community’s Islam is inaccessible and maladaptive to the demands of British society. Thus, in a quest to find an adequate identity, Muslims youths may be drawn towards violent jihadist Islam. In fact, the UK Counterterrorism Strategy notes that individuals are vulnerable to certain violent ideologies because of a range of reasons, including issues of identity.

Accordingly, the UK strategy focuses on helping Muslim youths develop authentic identities, whether they may be Muslim, British or hybrid identities. To help Muslim youths navigate the gaps between their two identities, and to develop their own authentic identities, the government has implemented several projects. In one of these projects, the government partnered with universities to work with Muslim scholars, leaders and academics to lead thinking on contextualizing Islam in Britain. In another move aimed at helping British-Muslims negotiate between their identities, the government introduced ‘identity and diversity’ as a new strand in public school citizenship curriculum.

Further, in order to help British Muslims develop authentic identities, it is necessary enrich their Muslim identities. To this effect, the government has partnered with local organizations to strengthen Islamic teaching in the United Kingdom. For example, the UK has worked to promote itself as a center of excellence of Islamic studies outside the Muslim world. Moreover, in 2007, the United Kingdom designated Islamic studies as a strategically important subject. Further, the UK has worked to make Islam more accessible and relevant to British youths. For instance, the UK partnered with the
Mosques and imam National Advisory Board (MINAB), an alliance of four Muslim groups, in order to set standards and establish a system of self-regulation for Mosques.

The government’s strategy also helps British Muslim youths to enrich their British identities. To this effect, the government has supported the development of citizenship education in mosque schools through the Islam Citizenship Education project in partnership with community-based organizations. Additionally, the UK has worked to remove barriers—such as discrimination and racism— which have kept Britain’s Muslims from feeling integrated. Accordingly, the government is working to implement a strong legislative framework to tackle discrimination and promote equality between different racial groups. For example, the government is working with local organizations to build community cohesion among individuals from different faiths and races.

Beyond addressing these inequalities through its counterterrorism policy, the UK has passed several pieces of legislation to address discrimination against Muslims. This discrimination is both a symptom and a cause of inequality. For example, the UK passed the 2001 Anti-Terrorism Crime and Security Act to ensure that “religious motivation for some violent offenses would constitute a racially or religiously aggravated form of that offense” (European Union, 2004). Further, in July 2004, the government announced its intention to introduce legislation to outlaw incitement to religious hatred” (European Union, 2004). Moreover, in response to potentially discriminatory counterterrorism legislation, the UK established a Stop and Search Action team to remedy the significant rise in stops and searches carried out against ethnic minority groups (European Union, 2004).
Further, another barrier to the development of authentic identity is the Muslim community’s economic, social and political inequality. The government’s counterterrorism policy does not specifically address these economic and social inequalities; however, it does state that the government works “with other government departments to reduce race and faith inequalities in education, health, housing and the criminal justice system as well as the labor market.” Additionally, the UK’s counterterrorism policy takes direct actions to combat the Muslim community’s political deprivation. These policies are addressed in the next section in the context of addressing grievances.

**Address Grievances**

This paper argues that these individuals are prone to radicalization because they have unaddressed grievances. According to the 7/7 case study, these grievances focus on the Muslim community’s political underrepresentation both at home and abroad. This paper argues that political underrepresentation does more than just anger young Muslims, but it also inhibits their integration into British culture and prevents them from expressing their grievances non-violently.

Fortunately, in regards to remedying political inequalities, the UK strategy is specific. The United Kingdom has undertaken (or proposes to undertake) the following projects with the aim of increasing the political representation of the British Muslim community, particularly its youths:
Partnersing with local government and local organizations to establish a range of programs designed to build civic leadership and strengthen the role of faith leaders and institutions.

Empowering local communities by giving them “a real say over the decisions and services which affect them.” Specifically, “citizens need to know that public bodies are committed to understanding their views and concerns.” To this effect, the government has developed an approach to passing power to local communities and giving real control and influence to more people in its 2008 document, “Communities in Control: Real people, real power.”

Established a young Muslim advisory group to advise government on their role in tackling violent extremism. This program has been expanded to engage young Muslims across the country, including by holding a national youth conference in 2009.

Established the Bringing Foreign Policy Back Home campaign to outreach to domestic Muslim communities in order to debate and explain foreign policies to challenging audiences.

Worked with local police officers to build links to community leaders and institutions to ensure that they are fully briefed on policy priorities and concerns.
Moreover, the fact that the United Kingdom’s Prevention policies resulted from a Home Office consultation with the Muslim communities indicates that the government intends to include Muslims in politics.

**EVALUATION OF COUNTERTERRORISM STRATEGY**

*Addressing Root Causes*

There are many positive aspects to the United Kingdom’s counterterrorism policy. Perhaps the best feature of this strategy is its focus on prevention by addressing the root causes of terrorism. The British counterterrorism experience demonstrates that a successful policy to counter the new homegrown terrorist threat to do more than pursue terrorists or even eliminate radical elements and influences. Instead, a successful strategy to counter the new threat from homegrown terrorism needs to address the reasons people become radicalized. In this specific case, the British Pakistani Muslim youths were prone to radicalization because they lacked authentic identities and were politically deprived. Although the root causes of radicalization may vary between countries, the central message of this policy remains the same: counterterrorism strategies must focus on prevention, on addressing a population’s vulnerabilities and grievances.

This focus is in line with Conflict Resolution Theory, which emphasizes that conflict intervention strategies need to address the root causes of conflict in order to be effective. According to Galtung, there are three underlying causes of conflict which need to be addressed in order to transform a conflict: conflicting attitudes, conflicting behaviors, and contradictions, or structures of the conflict. In the case of homegrown terrorism, conflicting attitudes would be the beliefs and feelings which cause terrorism.
For example, a conflicting attitude might be the feeling among British Pakistani Muslim youths that they lack an authentic identity. Conflicting behavior would be the actions that cause conflict, for example a homegrown terrorist attack. Contradictions are the structures which facilitate a conflict. For example, the structural political inequalities in British societies make conflict more likely (Ramsbotham).

While the United Kingdom’s counterterrorism strategy post-September 11, 2001, focused primarily on addressing the conflicting behaviors that cause terrorism, for instance, by deterring terrorist attacks, it changed its strategy after the 7/7 bombings in order to address the conflicting attitudes and behaviors. According to Galtung, the UK’s focus only on addressing the conflict behavior does not truly transform a conflict: without addressing attitudes and contradictions as well, a conflict will be latent and there will be negative, not positive peace (Ramsbotham). In other words, in order to fully transform the conflict that results in homegrown terrorism, the UK government needs to address attitudes and contradictions, vulnerabilities and grievances. Other governments would be wise to do the same.

**Incorporating Diverse Constituencies**

It is also important to note that the UK properly identified identity and political deprivation as the source of its population’s radicalization. Thus, it made its strategy address these vulnerabilities and grievances. Perhaps this strategy appropriately addresses the root causes of radicalization because the UK consulted with the Muslim community. One of the main strengths of the UK’s counterterrorism program is that it was developed through a program entitled Preventing Extremism Together. Through this
2005 program, the Home Office consulted with Muslim communities in order to develop practical recommendations for tackling violent extremism.

Moreover, the United Kingdom focused on incorporating diverse constituencies not only into its policy formation, but in policy implementation. The government relies on a broad base of local institutions, from elected governments to volunteer organizations to religious councils, to implement its prevention programs. Through this programming, the government engages and supports a wide-range of individuals and networks from across various sectors including mentoring, training, education, sport, culture and volunteering. Moreover, the government’s programs attempt to reach otherwise underrepresented constituencies, such as Muslim youths, for their program implementation. In this respect, the government not only includes diverse individuals, but incorporates varying opinions and perspectives into its policy.

Further, this inclusivity is essential for conflict resolution. In order for conflict resolution to permeate society, for a true transformation of attitudes, behaviors and contradictions to occur, it is necessary that this change affect all people. Accordingly, it is also necessary for all individuals to participate in and inform this transformation. With broad participation, conflict resolution will not only be more effective, but it will be more permanent. Indeed, Lederach identifies the importance of broad-based conflict resolution. He states that conflict resolution can not only occur on an elite level, but must also take place among local community leaders, and at a grassroots level among constituents.

This is particularly the case in the United Kingdom since the British Pakistani Muslim youths’ main grievance is that they are politically excluded. Moreover, allowing
diverse individuals to participate in policy making decisions can provide them with a channel for expressing grievances non-violently. Accordingly, the United Kingdom’s focus on broad-based inclusivity and public participation in its counterterrorism strategy is crucial to its success. Other governments should seek to emulate this broad-based participation into its policy making process, especially related to counterterrorism strategies.

*Critique*

Although the UK’s new counterterrorism strategy takes strides to address the root causes of conflict by working with a broad-based constituency, there are still some concerns about the UK’s policies. One of the primary concerns centers on the policy’s pursuit strategies, which tend to target Muslims in their search for terrorists. These strategies are generally applied wholesale to the Muslim community, and thus, they fail to distinguish between law-abiding citizens and terrorists.

For example, Sivanandan states that “if you are recognizably Muslim, you will be subject to official stops and searches by the police” under UK’s counterterrorism policy. Feteke adds that Muslims suffer from heavy-handed police raids on their meeting places. Similarly, trustees of mosques, Muslim charities and some Muslim NGO’s fall under suspicion for making charitable donations to international causes. In fact, they could be charged with passive support for terrorism because some of their money may have ended up supporting terrorism even if they did not intend it to (Fekete).

The effect of these policies is to “stigmatize whole communities as terrorist networks.” As Sivanandan states, “we are, all of us Blacks and Asians, at first sight,
terrorists or illegals. We wear our passports on our faces…” This targeting can make the Muslim community feel further isolated from Western culture and increasingly politically deprived, which can undermine the government’s prevention strategy and its attempts to better integrate Muslims. Thus, if the UK government is not careful, its pursuit strategy may work at cross-purposes to its prevention strategy.

Another critique of the UK’s counterterrorism strategy is that it might push too hard for Muslims to assimilate into Western society. While the UK has been a bastion of multiculturalism, the prevention strategy aims to better integrate the Muslim community into Western culture. For example, the prevention strategy will provide Muslims with citizenship classes in Mosques. At one extreme, Sivanandan argues that “Britain is now showing all the signs of reducing its policies to the lowest common denominators of those in Europe: core values, enforced language classes, citizenship lessons and the like. These will all shift the UK towards the standard European model of monoculturalism.” This view appears to be overly pessimistic considering the UK policy also works to strengthen Muslim scholarship and religious education; however, it illuminates an underlying tension between integration and assimilation, between supporting the development of a Western identity and doing so at the expense of a Muslim identity.

This paper takes no position as to what type of identity British Muslims should develop; rather, it argues only that it is essential for British Muslims to develop authentic identities. Insofar as these policies promote the development of authentic identities—be they British, Muslim or some hybrid thereof— they address a root cause of homegrown terrorism. The British government, however, does need to be careful that its policies
don’t push too strongly towards monoculturalism, lest it anger (and potentially further isolate) its Muslim population.

**CONCLUSION**

This paper touches on an emerging and evolving terrorist threat that now menaces the United Kingdom: it now faces homegrown terrorist attacks from its own seemingly ordinary Muslim youths, some of whom have traded in their Mercedes Benzes for bombs. This paper has examined what makes these individuals—particularly Pakistani Muslim youths—more prone to radicalization and violent jihad.

Indeed, as this paper has suggested, there are two factors which increase the propensity for radicalization among these youths. First, Muslim youths are driven to Salafi Islam by their search for authentic identities. These Muslim youths lack authentic identities—be they British, Muslim or hybrid identities—due to a variety of social factors, including communal economic and social deprivation, the inaccessibility of moderate Islam, and a lack of guidance on how to navigate conflicts between their Western and Muslim values and beliefs. Perhaps most important, these youths (and their larger communities) are politically deprived, which inhibits their development of authentic Western identities, angers them, and prevents them from remedying their grievances through normative channels. Thus, some British Pakistani Muslim youths are drawn towards Salafi Islam in their search for authentic identities, and choose to remedy their political grievances through violence.

Indeed, this combination of a lack of authentic identity and political deprivation can be deadly. The 7/7 bombings demonstrate that a lack of authentic identity can draw
seemingly well-integrated individuals to Salafi Islam. These bombings also illustrate the
danger of political deprivation, which angered the bombers and inclined them towards
remedying their grievances violently.

To address the threat from homegrown terrorism, the United Kingdom has altered
its counterterrorism policy to focus on prevention. Its prevention strategies focus on
addressing the root causes of homegrown terrorism in that its policies attempt to remedy
the Muslim community’s lack of authentic identity and political deprivation. As another
positive, the UK created and implemented these policies through broad-based
consultation and cooperation with the Muslim community.

There are, however, some potential drawbacks to the UK’s counterterrorism
strategy. The UK needs to disaggregate between Muslims and terrorists and take care to
limit its targeting of the Muslim community. Moreover, the United Kingdom needs to be
cautious not to encourage monoculturalism at the expense of its constituents’ Muslim
identities. However, if the United Kingdom can address these concerns, through
continued broad-based consultation and attention to the root causes of homegrown
terrorism, it may eventually counter this terrorist threat. Indeed, countering this threat
from homegrown terrorism is crucial to the United Kingdom’s safety, and addressing its
citizens’ grievances and needs is crucial to its prosperity and posterity.
Works Cited:


Abbas, Tahir (Ed.). Muslim Britain: Communities under pressure. London: Zed Books Ltd. 2005


Gurr, T “Psychological factors in civil violence” World Politics. Vol 20, No. 2, pp 245-278, 1968


Lederach, John Paul.


Moghaddam, Fathali. *From the Terrorists Point of View*, CITY: Prager International Security, DATE


