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Personal reflections on the *Prevent* programme

*Neil Denton and Kate Cochrane*

**Introduction**

We write this chapter as practitioners, doers with more than 20 years’ experience of working with individuals and communities that have endured harm motivated by hostility about the identity of the ‘other’. This harm is caused by destructive conflict between groups and structures and systems that result in inequality and injustice. Our perspective draws on learning a lot by making mistakes, observing and learning from other professionals, listening and trying to remain vulnerable when in dialogue with individuals and communities.

We share some of that learning here by describing how human-created human harm motivated by politics or ideology aim to change a system/nation-state by using force against a civilian population, creating sufficient harm and fear to change the everyday. Such endeavours can provoke a nation-state into entering into a cycle of revenge and retribution that can exacerbate rather than ameliorate the culture of fear.

As practitioners we work to build and maintain the social fabric using a philosophy of universal human rights centred on a belief of the universal commonality of human need. We then ask who operates in the local and what does it mean for us personally and in our practice? What might it mean for you? What impact might these challenges have on those who work at an individual and community level? What can practitioners do to stay true to a value structure of human rights and human needs? How best can practitioners promote constructive change processes that reduce violence, increase justice in direct interaction and social structures, and respond to real-life problems in human relationships? What should practitioners be cautious about, and where are the opportunities for social growth that could be harnessed to aid progress towards a positive tomorrow?

We live in a closely connected world where the how and who of our communications is very different than it was a decade ago. Changes in technology and communication are happening at an exponential rate, in a context of world economic and political structures that are offering global accessibility and opportunity for the few, while leaving the majority to look on from increasingly disconnected and disenfranchised places. In this chapter we argue that economic and political globalisation has excluded the masses, while the globalisation of communication about conflict is more inclusive in its reach. Conflicts that were localised and somewhat hidden
from those not directly affected are now evident anywhere at any time. Most people carry the receivers and transmitters of fear and hope in their pockets, a mere two clicks from real-time human conflict. ‘Them’ increasingly affects ‘Us’. Proponents of ideologies that describe a world embroiled in a war of values, with the global Ummah of Islam under attack by an intolerant, aggressive and expansionist conspiracy of nation-states, have embraced the opportunities of global to personal communications more successfully than most. Thus, in value based conflict, the global is now local. And people need to adapt accordingly.

Understanding political perspectives

Compared with other European states, the United Kingdom (UK) has more experience of coping with and countering the impact of domestic terrorism. To understand the present, it is helpful to understand the past. Ever since Prime Minister Gladstone’s self-declared 1868 mission to ‘pacify Ireland’, civil discord, violent strategies to address asymmetrical conflict, and discourse about domestic terrorism have been a part of governmental consciousness. Protecting citizens from violence, war and terror is a fundamental function of the nation-state. A century after Gladstone’s declaration, the Provisional IRA was formed in response to the perceived failure of the Irish Republican Army to defend Catholic neighbourhoods and communities from harm during the 1969 Northern Ireland riots. The outcome was a progression and evolution of groups wishing to effect political change, and a developing and iterative pattern of government legislation and action to respond to the ‘threat’. Volumes have been written about the ‘Troubles’ in Northern Ireland, making their insights accessible. However, the formation, development and activities of the Official Irish Republican Army, Provisional IRA, Ulster Defence Association, Ulster Volunteer Force, Irish National Liberation Army and the Real IRA provide the primary context within which the UK’s counter-terrorism legislation should be understood.

What connects all of these actions and counter actions is the commonality of structure employed by the key players, where ‘provocateur’ and ‘protector’ operate hierarchically. This context of command and control helps to describe the rationale behind past solutions and the current lack of fit among purpose, policy, practice and potential that is crucial to understanding the present and the future.

In 1973, the Provisional IRA extended its campaign to mainland Britain, to increase the pressure on the UK’s population, government and military capabilities to withdraw from Northern Ireland. On 21 November 1974, the Birmingham pub bombings killed 81 people and injured 182. According to the House of Commons Debates (Vol. 882 col. 743, 28 November 1974) then-Home Secretary Roy Jenkins described the actions of the IRA as ‘the greatest threat [to the country] since the end of the Second World War’. Within eight days, the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1974 had become law. This legislation proscribed the IRA as an organisation, introduced greater police powers for the arrest and detention of those suspected of being involved in or supporting the IRA, and introduced powers of exclusion and removal from the UK for any individuals identified as being a member or supporter. Sequential and temporary legislation based on this Act culminated in the Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Act 1998. This legislation had a common purpose: to disrupt and defeat the IRA. In 2000, the Terrorism Act was introduced to rationalise the previous temporary legislation. It contained the following.

A consolidated definition of terrorism to include action involving the use of firearms and explosives with the purpose of advancing a political, religious or other cause and designed to influence government, intimidate the public. This covered endangering life, violence against a person, serious damage to property, risks public health and/or safety, and disrupting electronic...
systems. The Act also identified proscribed groups and the concomitant police powers. Additionally, it broke from ordinary criminal law where suspects had to be charged within 24 hours of detention or be released (extended to 28 days in 2006); contained powers to ‘stop and search’ without suspicion; and a prohibition on collecting information that could be used by someone planning terrorist acts. Additionally, it endorsed bench trials instead of jury trials in Northern Ireland for scheduled offences, thereby continuing the system of Diplock courts established in 1973.

These measures were designed to combat the actions of a definable and hierarchical organisation, modelled on traditional military structures. This approach affirmed Fromkin’s (1977) analysis of the nature of asymmetrical conflicts involving terrorism, that ‘Terrorists don’t win, states lose’. This was demonstrated by the significant groundswell of public support for the Provisional IRA following the government’s adoption of internment without trial for those suspected of involvement in its activities.

Important lessons that remain universally relevant were learnt during this time of structural reactions to evolving threat. As social beings our evolutionary development and survival is based upon interdependence. However, these responses can have maladaptive consequences in the role they play in the escalation of inter-human conflict when these reinforce a sense of ‘us’ and intensify a sense of the differences that exist between ‘us’ and ‘them’. Social identity theory, fundamental attribution error, dehumanisation, and the nature of prejudice are well-evidenced characteristics of the human condition that cannot be ignored. Signs of hostility, hatred and what these symbolise about a security strategy that fails to attend to social cohesion should have signposted new policy directions. In this chapter, we demonstrate their continuing importance in understanding the unintended consequences of current governmental and structural responses to the new terrorist threat on social cohesion and the potential implications of forgotten lessons, and replicated transgressions from such learning.

**From a rigid hierarchy to a loose affiliation of like-minded individuals**

On 11 September 2001, the perception and reality of the ‘threat’ changed. This change has been variously described as ‘new terrorism’, ‘contemporary terrorism’ (Laqueur, 2003), ‘post-modern terrorism’, ‘super-terrorism’, ‘catastrophic terrorism’ and ‘hyper-terrorism’ (Field, 2009). Whatever the adjectives and thinking behind these narratives, it is clear that those described as ‘al Qaeda-inspired’ operated differently from those of the Provisional IRA. The IRA’s aim of minimising civilian casualties was replaced with an objective to maximise loss of life. Those promulgating the idea of the new global Jihad, perceived all citizens of nation-states opposed to the ‘(re)-establishment’ of the Islamic Caliphate as active combatants, as legitimate targets.

The attacks on the World Trade Centre created a tsunami of fear and anger that engulfed the US and made waves that swiftly travelled across the Atlantic to the Houses of Westminster. We could feel the ripples in our small northern city. ‘Why did they fly their planes into our buildings?!’ were questions regularly asked on our physical and virtual streets. These ripples became a tangible sea change in interfaith and intercommunity relationships of trust and solidarity in the UK, and it did not feel like a change for the good.

As the US declared its ‘War on Terror’ (a war on an adverb). It superseded geographic and political boundaries and looked to its historic allies for support and solidarity. Millions opposed this war. The Second Gulf War, and Afghanistan, the genocide in Bosnia re-kindled anger and dismay at the death of innocent Muslims due to the action or inaction of the West and an impotent ‘United Nations’ (UN).
The 2001 Anti-terrorism, Crime and Security Act contained measures rejected from the 2000 Act as excessive when the British government found itself in an iterative pattern of reactive legislation in response to the new threat. The ‘control orders’ contained within the Prevention of Terrorism Act 2005 gave the police greater powers to restrict the freedoms of those suspected to be a security threat than any previously seen during peacetime.

Discourses about the ‘enemy within’ prevailed following the 7/7 bombings and signalled the return to out-group thinking. Voices on the street claimed that ‘Not all Muslims are terrorists, but all terrorists are Muslims’. The resultant over-policing of Muslim communities – whether actual or perceived – perpetuates a legacy of resentment, mistrust and separation.

Newcastle is a city geographically and culturally far removed from ‘that London’. Although greatly diminished due to the dual distances of where and who, the tsunami 350 miles away, reached it. Some keenly felt its ripples. A noticeable impact upon this most northerly city in England was that the Islamic Society of Newcastle University distributed clear plastic carrier bags for their members travelling on the Metro.

By 2003, government began to recognise that a new narrative and strategy was required. This gave rise to CONTEST, as the new counter-terrorism strategy. It combined the more traditional aspects of counter-terrorism (CT):

- Pursue – intelligence-led operations to detect and prosecute those actively planning to do harm.
- Protect – work to strengthen the physical and security infrastructures to make terrorist attacks more difficult to implement.
- Prepare – planning and preparation to mitigate the impact of any attack that occurred.

However, Prevent was an important new development designed to encompass the learning gained from the experiences of responding to the IRA. Prevent aimed to provide a:

- Programme of activity aimed at hearts and minds, attempting to reduce and ultimately eliminate the support base for terrorist activity and its supporting ideology; ‘to stop people from becoming terrorists or supporting violent extremism’; and
- Coherent and accessible narrative that described how and why each of these elements co-existed and complemented each other to increase the safety of citizens.

Thus, CONTEST, and its constituent four ‘Ps’ of Pursue, Protect, Prepare and Prevent was born. When first published in 2006, those in charge clarified the importance placed on prevention.

**Prevent: an either/or question in which the need to identify those at risk of causing harm took precedence**

The Prevent programme aimed principally to affect hearts and minds, recognise ‘the way in which some terrorist ideologies draw on and make use of extremist ideas which are espoused and circulated by apparently non-violent organisations’. It principally focused on ‘challenging extremist ideas that are conducive to terrorism and also part of terrorist narrative’ (Home Office 2011: 11). The stated objectives were to:

- Respond to the ideological challenge of terrorism and threat from those who promote it;
- Prevent people from being drawn into terrorism and ensure they are given appropriate advice and support; and
• Work with a wide range of sectors (including education, criminal justice, faith charities, the internet and health) where there are risks of radicalisation to be addressed.

Prevent has recently become a Statutory Duty for all public bodies under Section 29 of the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015.

Despite clear statements of intention, this programme was designed to spot vulnerable individuals and acknowledge the need to address community grievances caused by foreign policy and experiences of Islamophobia. However, a disparity existed between the intention of the transmitter, and the emotional response of the receiver. Thus, work to engage hearts and minds was received by many in Muslim communities as a war on thought, and faith.

A needle in a haystack

The Prevent programme sought a unifying theory that explains why people do these things, identify those individuals, and stop them before they acted. Sadly, it is not that simple. There is no unifying explanatory theory about why people are moved to cause terrible harm to others (including themselves) by committing acts of terrorism. Research has not identified a single profile that can detect those most at risk of committing acts of terror. Different people connect with violent ideologies and groups for different reasons at different times.

How can these journeys to violence be understood? Many talk of these journeys as ‘Pathways’, ‘a dialectical process that gradually pushed an individual toward a commitment to violence over time’ (McCormick, 2003: 492). These pathways to, and motivations for, terrorism are varied and diverse. Individual, inter-personal, socio-cultural and interstate factors all play a part (Borum, 2011).

Instead of having huge numbers of front-line practitioners participating in ‘WRAP’ (Workshops to Raise Awareness of Prevent) training with a definitive list of indicators that would justify a referral to Prevent (all of which are subsequently screened by security services), a ‘better safe than sorry’ approach was advocated. Referrals into the Prevent process were encouraged for anyone who exhibited behaviour related to the relatively wide range of behaviours that correlate with vulnerabilities linked to identified pathways towards violent extremism. This has resulted in Prevent generating a large number of referrals, the vast majority of which become classified as not at risk of becoming violent extremists.

Government has responded to communities’ and practitioners’ concerns that the programme wrongly failed to include other forms of extremism, including the far right. While superficially positive, it has stigmatised more vulnerable individuals, and increased community resentment.

Securitised approaches to community development do not work

Prevent attempted to identify those individuals at risk of doing harm, and support Muslim communities in addressing grievances and strengthening their resolve against extremist narratives. These objectives are important and from an efficiency and delivery perspective there was logic to placing both programmes under one organisation.

However, this decision created a structural problem. From its inception to the present, Prevent has been funded, implemented and performance-managed by the Home Office, specifically the Office of Security and Counter-Terrorism (OSCT) which is also responsible for significant parts of the Pursue agenda. The Pursue model works by gathering information on and prosecuting individuals based on their criminal behaviour; communication with known terrorists, accessing information about potential targets or engaging in methods of causing harm, attempting to
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recruit others to a violent Islamist and hate-filled causes. Pursue has been successful as is shown by the rising number of convictions made within this process. Because these are criminal acts, the involvement of the police and security services is appropriate.

By contrast, Prevent, located in pre-criminal space, targets individuals engaging in behaviours that are not criminal, but of concern because they might indicate someone who possesses the ‘pre-conditions’ or ‘vulnerabilities’ that suggest they may move from thought to action. Prevent acknowledges that at this level, communities have the people best positioned to have a positive impact on these divisive narratives and identify ‘at risk’ individuals.

Significant resources allocated to Prevent shaped how Muslim communities perceived the programme. Specific funding to support Muslim communities (long justified from a fairness perspective), was a new phenomenon. As this funding was provided by OSCT to address ‘grievances’, this proved deeply problematic. Suddenly, after years of marginalisation and neglect, the government began to care about Muslims, not for their own sake, but to reduce the threat they posed.Yet, the vast majority of Muslims would describe the behaviours of extremists as entirely contrary to the core doctrines of their faith. ‘You only care because you’re scared that we might blow you up’ was the message received.

Prevent was intended to build community capacity. But securitised approaches to community development do not work. Any attempt to: engage communities in open and robust debate about contentious issues; surface latent conflict; help communities work through feelings of anger and resentment, ‘let the steam out’, cannot happen if facilitated by the same part of government responsible for Pursue. Securitisation of this work pushes these difficult debates even further beneath the surface, and away from the safe spaces that those aiming to build cohesion and embrace the positive possibilities of conflict aim to create and support. More than at any other time, communities experiencing conflict and change need space and support to define and re-define their identities, express strong emotions free from judgement and blame, and identify strategies and requests that respond to unmet need. When public and private spaces are removed, only secret spaces remain. These secret shadows are where those advocating violence and hate feel most at home and operate most freely. Without meaning to, Prevent has pushed many of vulnerable young people towards the very individuals/groups they were being protected from (Open Society Justice Initiative, 2016).

State agencies’ well-intentioned but clumsy approaches to promote equality by actively challenging prejudice and offensive language during their engagement with communities stifle honest debate, and leave many feeling unheard and unable to speak freely about important issues affecting them and their community. This continues to push latent community conflict beneath the surface. Because it is latent, it can be hard for state agencies to hear, but those operating at a local level are affected by these feelings of resentment and discontent. One author conducting private discussions with local marginalised groups, started each with the opening statement, ‘I think people round here are scared of saying how they really feel for fear of being labelled racist/extremist/prejudiced’. Everyone concurred with this.

These factors, combined with a lack of a coherent and robust government programme to promote community cohesion means that many communities live the ‘Parallel lives’ first described by Cantle (2001), with even fewer opportunities to facilitate meaningful dialogue than existed then. From a counter-terrorism and cohesion perspective, this increasingly avoidant behaviour between communities of identity is problematic. Without meaningful contact, the opportunity to be curious about the other, and facilitate debate about ‘difficult’ issues, the void is filled with rumour and conjecture, stereotyping and prejudice. Communities will ascribe internal and moralistic explanations to the behaviour of those in the out-group (Heider 1958).
Allport (1958) shows in *The Nature of Prejudice*, this anti-locution and avoidance provides the foundations for discrimination, physical attack, and ultimately extermination as ‘They’ become less than human in our eyes, and appropriate targets for the ‘creative evil’, dynamics that Zimbardo (2004) observed as a consequence of this thinking.

*Prevent* has succeeded in some regards by raising awareness of these issues with a large number of front-line workers in the public and third sectors. These have ensured that those referred as at genuine risk of becoming violent extremists have received support to divert their behaviour to more positive paths. These positives have come at significant costs: a further erosion of trust from Muslim communities towards agencies of the nation-state; an additional loss of trust from other communities towards Muslim ones; a large number of vulnerable people being potentially further isolated due to being labelled as potential terrorists; and a suppression of open and safe debate about important issues of collective security and identity, particularly among disenfranchised and disadvantaged white communities. To this day, the *Prevent* strategy remains deeply controversial. Critics believe that *Prevent* is counter-productive and discriminates against Muslims, while others point to the lack robust measures of effectiveness. Many believe the brand to be toxic (Muslim Council of Britain, 2011). Given these negative consequences, is there a better way?

### Conflict transformation: strengthening relationships and working towards a vision of a better tomorrow by embracing complexity and real-life problems

Approaching the issue from a conflict transformation perspective facilitates looking at the issue differently by promoting constructive change processes that reduce violence, increase justice in direct interaction and social structures, and respond to real-life problems in human relationships. Conflict can be viewed as neither inherently positive nor negative, but as energy for change. The strategies different parties involved in conflict adopt lead to constructive or destructive outcomes. In conflict transformation, process and outcome are indivisible because both the issue and the relationship between the parties involved are held in equal priority. Conflict transformation seeks to identify what lies at the heart of the matter to ascertain patterns from the past to help describe a better tomorrow. Contemporary socialisation encourages those faced with conflict to describe a situation by defining what is not wanted. From practitioners’ earliest childhood experiences through to those in the Criminal Justice System, ‘Good’ invariably means not engaging in behaviours considered ‘Bad’. Thus, conflict resolution does not focus on asking ‘What is wanted’? What would a positive future look like?

We believe that a society where conflict is dealt with positively (not ignored or brushed under the carpet, or reliant on rules and punishments to obtain desired change) is a society that has compassion and kindness at its core. Conflict resolution offers a win/win alternative to the win/lose one. This can be achieved by attending to the needs of all parties involved in the situation. Acknowledging these dynamics indicates that *Prevent* can be similarly approached. The definition of extremism in the *Prevent* strategy is:

Vocal or active opposition to fundamental British values, including democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect and tolerance of different faiths and beliefs. We also include in our definition of extremism calls for the death of members of our armed forces.

*(Home Office Counter-terrorism Policy 2015:9)*
**It describes what is not wanted**

Conflict transformation reframes issues in terms of what is wanted. We would reframe the Prevent definition towards a positive tomorrow to sound like this:

A society that values acceptance, understanding and diversity, where citizens are comfortable with British values including the opportunity to learn and improve from those with a different perspective; an active and inclusive democracy, a rule of law where everyone feels protected; self-actualised development of identity with a respect and curiosity for difference; and acceptance of the current need for armed forces, but engagement and dialogue about how they are used.

Additionally, it assists in shifting the emphasis of the work towards who delivers cohesion, integration and empowerment; facilitates the surfacing of latent conflict within and between communities; uses conflict as energy for change by encouraging dialogue about a new approach; and creates a process structure. Listening to language that judges and blames can identify real-life problems alongside unmet need and links emotional intelligence to belonging, identity, difference and positive contact (Allport, 1954).

Conflict transformation also attends to small and local concerns e.g. parking, places for children to play, saying hello, day-to-day acts of kindness that improve human relationships. This involves moving away from judging and blaming towards need and request, creating safe spaces wherein people can be deeply honest with themselves and others about their fears and hopes, hurts and responsibilities. For (re)defining identity(ies), asking questions, ‘Who am I, who are you, who are we?’ and using sport, music, arts, rituals, shared work, fun and laughter as dialogue. This can promote understandings of how perceptions of identity are linked to power, systems and structures which organise and govern relationships. This approach can also foster a new politics that also engages todays insecure majority in reducing inequality(ies) for all, as advocated by green social workers (Dominelli, 2012).

The characteristics of conflict transformational practice, also inherent within green social work, are:

1. Developing the capacity to see presenting issues as an opportunity to look through the issues and focus on the scene that lies beyond the immediate situation.
2. Having the capacity to integrate multiple time frames including short-term responses and long-term change.
3. Posing the energies of conflict as dilemmas for avoiding binaries such as ‘human rights versus terrorist threats’ to consider their complexity which requires ‘both/and’ thinking that holds issues in a situation together as interdependent goals.
4. A capacity to see complexity as a friend, not a foe. ‘[T]he capacity to live with apparent contradictions and paradoxes lies at the heart of transformation’ (Lederach 2003: 52). Abraham Lincoln observed, ‘I destroy my enemies when I make them my friends’.
5. A capacity to hear and engage with the voices of identity which often underpins most conflicts because identity protects the sense of self and group survival. Identity is lodged deep in the narratives of how people see themselves, who they are, where they have come from, and what they fear they will become or lose. Identity is dynamic and under constant definition and redefinition, especially during conflicts. Identity is also relational, and not all about inter-identity exchanges. Thus, the most critical parts of the process are about creating internal, self, or intra-group spaces, where safe and deep reflection about the nature of the situation, responsibility, hopes and fears can be perused.
There is no agreed understanding of what drives people to commit acts of terror, but widely accepted theories of what needs to be done to promote cohesive communities, and firm evidence about factors that support the development of emotionally intelligent, well-socialised and connected humans that conflict transformation can utilise.

**Everything to lose, nothing to gain**

Ideology, although important, is insufficient in moving people to act. This requires mobilisation (Zald and McCarthy, 1987) that increases perceived benefits and minimises perceived costs. Conflict transformation offers alternative strategies for mobilisation and connection with others through good socialisation and encouraging belonging to the wider community. This helps increase perceived costs whereby people realise that they have important things to lose. Practitioners and activists must, therefore, provide incentives and remove disincentives.

Reducing psychological costs uses diffusion of responsibility, de-individualisation, obedience, and social identity. Diffusion of responsibility is a socio-psychological phenomenon whereby individuals feel less responsible (culpable) for transgressive behaviour when committed in the presence of, or on behalf of a group (Darley and Latane, 1968). De-individualisation is a state or situation in which the focus of judgement is collective rather than individual. This reduces an individual’s inhibition or restraints by reducing self-awareness or by facilitating conformity to situation-specific norms (Silke, 2003). Obedience to authority also diminishes personal responsibility by transferring an actor’s moral agency from the self to the authority (Milgram, 1978). Finally, social identities (Tajfel and Turner, 1986), viewing the self in relation to social groups or categories, can also weaken individual responsibility by boosting the salience of group norms.

Such transference also blames and dehumanises potential victims. People with a sense of belonging to social groups that have positive agendas to do good can diminish the influence of a terror group. They become self-actualised and gain a wider understanding of Islam, accept race as a false construct and strengthen their capacity to resist and question authority. When seeing the other as human, they can retain extreme views but are less likely to act on them. Ensuring that these views can be discussed in private enables secret space to facilitate mainstream prevention, expression and dialogue. As J. S. Mill opined:

> The peculiar evil of silencing the expression of an opinion is, that it is robbing the human race; posterity as well as the existing generation; those who dissent from the opinion, still more than those who hold it. If the opinion is right, they are deprived of the opportunity of exchanging error for truth. If wrong, they lose, what is almost as great a benefit, the clearer perception and livelier impression of truth, produced by its collision with error.

*(1859, Chapter 2 online)*

**Responding to those with an actualised self/those not yet ready/able or willing to renounce violence/ideology of violence and harm**

Protective force and restorative approaches that encourage non-violence and dialogue have to be aligned to existing structures, particularly those building community(ies) and not securitised services. This is to facilitate a rethinking of the narrative that securitised services protect the public from those already actively engaged in causing harm. Achieving this aim requires communication, the development of trust between them and analytical tools that go beyond the securitised threshold. It also needs reflection upon taken-for-granted concepts and the fit (or
not) with other programmes and priorities if the militarisation of the streets and restrictions on universal freedoms and rights including free movement, free speech, and free association are to be avoided.

Emergency planning and recovery can be linked to social work’s responsibility to meet social need. Doing so means reframing analytical models that assess risk through security to refocus on everyday compassion, community courage and promoting political neutrality when coping with disasters. Additionally, targeting resources and moving towards sustainability and green social work would end residualist approaches to ‘problem families’. A change in paradigm and perspective could mainstream inter-group communication, community development and human rights and concentrate efforts upon what is wanted, rather than what is not wanted.

**Conclusion**

Robust research that explains what is happening, creates ‘a profile’ or single unifying theory to identify terrorists is unavailable beyond identifying some general pathways or vulnerabilities that many who have perpetrated terrorist acts have in common. However, from a conflict transformation perspective, identifying individuals is not especially helpful because investigation reveals many ‘false positives’ – that is, people who possess these vulnerabilities, or express extremist views, are deemed at low risk of translating thought into action. Moreover, their numbers are too great, the resources too costly and the delivery body inappropriate for organisations to encompass these effectively. A simple focus on what is not wanted is of limited use. It can impact negatively on cohesion, and push vulnerable individuals and their extremist views away from the public space of open and honest debate about difficult and contentious issues, into shadows beyond reach – the spaces where violent extremists operate without scrutiny and become the unopposed voice.

A paradigm shift towards what is wanted, where conflict transformation is a valuable piece of the jigsaw and the majority of the pieces are not securitised, is more promising. An interconnected strategy, where practitioners understand how the pieces fit together to make the whole, where pieces remain separate and distinct, can promote a positive future, provide guiding principles of navigating the journey, and a proportionate and compassionate response to those who have fallen victim to those peddling hate, division and violence. This holistic approach can promote the harmonious society sought by green social workers (Dominelli, 2012). Moreover, it enables practitioners to respond to these individuals and groups while providing clarity about socially acceptable behaviour and offering a path back to rehabilitation and re-integration into society. Moreover, those who have been helped along this path can become trusted guides for others who have lost their way.

The current War on Terror is a conflict without a peace process and risks being trapped in a cycle of ever-increasing violence and fear of retribution and retaliation, as polarisation constantly increases. These polarised positions gather gravitational force, pulling diverse communities further away from each other – from avoidance to discrimination, to physical attack and ultimately extermination. This direction of travel is taking society away from a positive horizon, but it is not yet too late to pause, to breathe, to re-consider this trajectory and help each other along the difficult, yet important, road back to each other and towards a safe place for all children. This journey will not be made through great leaps, nor inventing new technologies, but by acknowledging the value and contribution of many thousands of small steps. Steps that are made every day by social workers and those invested in maintaining and building our social fabric, of responding to individual human need from a universal human rights perspective. Steps that lead to a world where patterns of coercive violence are being replaced with respect,
creative problem-solving, individual and social capacities for dialogue, and non-violent systems for assuring human security and social change. Reaching this requires a complex web of change processes guided by a transformational understanding of life and relationships and courage. Keep your eyes on the prize, hold on, and remember, ‘Los Buenos, Somos Más’ (The good, there are more of us).

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