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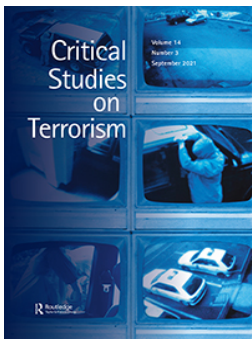
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## The hegemony of Prevent: turning counter-terrorism policing into common sense

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# The hegemony of Prevent: turning counter-terrorism policing into common sense

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## ABSTRACT

The British government's Prevent Duty puts an obligation on specified public sectors to "keep people from being drawn into terrorism". The policy has been a point of contention within the public discourse, but interview data shows that there is a grudging consent for Prevent policing amongst the civilians implementing it. This article explores how this consent is manufactured and what this tells us about the changing nature of counter-terrorism policing in civic life. Using Gramsci's concept of hegemony, this article will explain how Prevent is being transformed from a coercive statutory instrument into a common sense approach by the co-optation of civic norms. This enquiry is informed by the findings of interviews conducted with Prevent co-ordinators and employees of specified authorities in England. These interviews provide insights into how counter-terrorism monitoring is diffused within civic spaces and the nature of consent for this policing. Analysing these findings through a Gramscian lens explains how Prevent is normalised as a civic duty. It also helps chart a course for this hegemonic regime, which is moving beyond specific sectors towards a community of counter-terrorism citizens conducting surveillance as common sense practice.

## KEYWORDS

Prevent strategy; safeguarding; hegemony; consent; counter-terrorism; civic duty

## Introduction

The Prevent Strategy places an obligation on civilians working in specified authorities to monitor people for signs of radicalisation and vulnerability to extremism. By targetting different sectors of civic activity, the policy recruits medical personnel, educators, and social workers to serve as agents of the state tasked with keeping people "from being drawn into terrorism" (Home Office 2015a, 18). Prevent has been a subject of debate amongst policymakers, academics, and practitioners, who either champion it as protection against terrorism (Arbuthnot 2019; Baldet 2016) or critique it as Islamophobic surveillance (Ali 2020; Alam and Husband 2013).

However, interviews conducted with professionals in different sectors reveal that beyond the realm of public discourse, there seems to be a grudging consent for Prevent-led policing amongst those who have to implement it. This could partially be explained by the fact that, since 2015, the stipulations of the Prevent Strategy carry a statutory status. Nevertheless, a policy that encroaches on everyday interactions in a wide variety of civic

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spaces and relies on compliance by thousands of civilians, cannot solely operate through the coercive influence of a legal duty. This article will argue that the Prevent Strategy has worked as a hegemonic regime of civilian-led counter-terrorism policing that co-opts existing practices and norms to manufacture consent and turns the monitoring of fellow citizens into common sense. By situating the development of this hegemony in institutional norms of safeguarding and societal discourses of active citizenship and xenophobic mistrust of minorities, this article will demonstrate how the policy has intersected with existing common sense ideas to securitise different avenues of British civic life.

I will unpack the hegemony of Prevent by applying a Gramscian framework to identify the norms and practices that have contributed to make civilian-led counter-terrorism a routine activity. This is not an exact science there is uneven distribution of influence and some ideas emerge organically while others are manufactured by state and dominant social forces to carefully control the discourse. However, within this messy reality, we can identify broad themes that explain how Prevent intersects with established common sense. In some cases, it gets subsumed into existing dynamics, thus rendering it almost invisible, while in others, it dominates to create new common sense ideas. This interplay of old and new dynamics helps us understand how the Prevent Duty is changing our outlook on threats, vulnerability, safeguarding, and civic duty. As such, I will situate this discussion within three broad frames to understand how consent for Prevent enactment is manufactured by the British government and how this consent materialises in daily interactions. I will start the discussion by looking at how Prevent introduces radicalisation as a risk to be managed, without adequately engaging with the concept. This ambiguity about who can be a threat intersects with existing xenophobic attitudes to disproportionately target Muslims as a suspect community.

After establishing how a risk logic is embedded at the societal level, I will shift the focus to the mitigating strategies put forward by Prevent. This is achieved by presenting counter-terrorism surveillance work in a sanitised manner by diffusing it within the norms of safeguarding and civic duty. By embedding Prevent within safeguarding practices, the state repurposes an established framework of the duty of care. This helps us understand how sectoral dynamics have been used to diffuse, and to an extent, camouflage, counter-terrorism monitoring within professional practices. The third frame looks at the securitisation of civic duty, thus widening the scope of analysis beyond institutional dynamics to explore the role played by citizens' sense of civic responsibility in normalising surveillance. This will be done by looking at the concept of active citizenship and the neoliberal shift towards responsabilising citizens that then presents counter-terrorism work as a civic duty. By analysing the use of safeguarding and civic duty, this article will highlight how Prevent deploys a combination of professional and civic obligations to manufacture consent that materialises as a generally positive form of compliance with the policy. This consent is not necessarily uniform or consistent; however, there is a general consensus that the Prevent Duty has a place in both professional as well as personal interactions of ordinary citizens.

To understand how consent manifests within the three frames, I will draw on findings from 55 semi-structured interviews with medical staff, educators, social workers, and Prevent trainers and co-ordinators in England. These interviews were conducted over a one-year period between 2019 and 2020. Most of the participants had received one or two Prevent trainings, ranging from in-person full or half day sessions to online e-learning

modules. A few participants who had not received Prevent training were aware of the policy and had discussed it with their colleagues. These interview insights illuminate how the intersection of Prevent with common sense ideas and professional practices materialises in everyday interactions. This is where we can see how existing common sense collides with hegemonic tactics to infuse new ideas and norms in civic life. This discussion will also demonstrate what manufactured consent looks like, allowing us to map out a kaleidoscope of interactions that range from wholesale acceptance to guarded or reluctant compliance with Prevent's surveillance obligations.

It is important to explore these dynamics because the Prevent Strategy has not only normalised civilian-led counter-terrorism policing and opened different avenues of surveillance, it is presenting the creation of "counter-terrorism citizens" as the next logical step (Counter Terrorism Policing 2020a; Dearden 2018; Home Office 2016). Understanding how consent is manufactured for this policy will help us chart a course for this ever-expanding hegemonic regime. As such, this article speaks to existing work on Prevent and takes the analysis forward by providing an overarching framework to understand why Prevent is perceived as a safeguarding issue or a component of civic duty.

The similarity in empirical insights generated by different qualitative studies demonstrates a certain consensus about Prevent within British welfare state sectors. By arguing that Prevent should be seen as a hegemonic project, this article explains how this consent is manufactured by the state and reinforced through intersecting with common sense ideas within different societal interactions. In this way, while we can trace the roots of this project to the state, it flourishes within the civic sector through a continuous reproductive loop created by civilian enactment of the Prevent Duty. I will start this discussion by explaining why the Gramscian concept of hegemony that was originally coined to contextualise economic and social transformations should be used to understand the diffusion of civilian-led counter-terrorism policing in civic life.

### **Hegemony and consent – applying a Gramscian lens on Prevent**

Hegemony as a concept has not only undergone several iterations within Gramsci's work, it has also been adopted widely across different disciplines and ontological framings. It has been used to analyse a cross-section of issues, from youth subcultures and management strategies to garment manufacturing, to name a few (Arnold and Hess 2017; Jones 2006; Joseph 2002). Before I discuss how this is a suitable framework for understanding the Prevent Strategy, it should be noted that the usefulness of this concept lies in treating it as a "travelling theory" (Salem 2021, 5). Hence, rather than applying the framework of Gramscian thought literally, this study will follow the model set by others and use the conceptual scaffolding of hegemony to delineate interactions of control and problematise what consent means within a counter-terrorism context (Hall 1986, 19; Joseph 2002, 19). As such, this article will look at the conceptual building blocks that have contributed to the development of Prevent Strategy as a hegemonic regime in civic life since its first public release in 2006.

Hegemony can be seen as a system of control deployed by the state through social practices that cultivate norms in order to establish authority (Martin 1998, 119). It differs from authoritarian modes of domination because it relies on securing the consent of those who are being controlled. Within the context of the Prevent Strategy, this manifests

as people adopting counter-extremism responsibilities within their professional, and to some extent, personal conduct. In Gramsci's work, the concept underwent a continuous transformation as it was deployed to problematise socio-political problems (Boothman 2008, 212). He articulated different versions of hegemony before starting work on the Prison Notebooks. At this stage, the focus was predominantly on how the proletariat can strategise against the ruling class. However, later in his writings, he used hegemony to capture the practices and tactics of the ruling class (Mouffe 2014, 179). As such, hegemony can be studied as a prescriptive programme to be followed for developing well-represented political coalitions that disrupt the status quo (Jones 2006, 44; Martin 1998, 88). Alternatively, it can be deployed as an analytical frame for understanding how control is exercised by securing the consent of the governed. Hegemony does not have to be seen as either positive or negative to understand the "conditions of rule that create powerful effects" (Salem 2021, 3). These can manifest in the development of a political movement that aims to represent the interests of the grassroots, or can result in a system of ruling that co-opts the values of social groups to neutralise their opposition (Mouffe 2014, 183). It is the latter framing of hegemony that can be used to understand how the Prevent Strategy has emerged as a system of normalising citizen-led surveillance.

To understand the origin and utility of hegemony, it is important to start this discussion with an exploration of the different ways in which Gramsci approached the idea of the state. This is useful because the development of hegemony in Gramsci's work runs parallel to how he articulated different understandings of the state. Furthermore, by approaching hegemony through the idea of the state, we can anchor it in a framework of power. This is not to claim that hegemony only rests within the structure of the state. Gramsci also talks about the hegemony of social groups i.e. civil hegemony (Anderson 1976, 22–23). However, situating hegemony within the state serves this enquiry into understanding how the British state manufactures consent for a civilian-led counter-terrorism policy. In this way, starting this discussion by interrogating the concept of the state explains why, how, and where hegemony gets deployed.

The different iterations of the state that emerge in Gramsci's work can be seen as his attempts to map the centre of power in social relations. Anderson has put these enquiries into the nature of the state in three oscillating categories whereby Gramsci takes civil society as his guide and first, defines the state as being in contrast to the civil society, then as encompassing two separate spheres of civil society and political society, and finally, as being identical to civil society (Anderson 1976, 12–13). In order to identify ideal conditions for revolutionary change, Gramsci moved between these explanations to delineate the reach of the state.

The second conceptualisation is most useful for this enquiry as it deconstructs the state into two spheres of activity and helps us explore how the exercise of control differs from one to another. As such, we go forward with the understanding of the state as comprising "political society", that serves as its coercive arm, working in tandem with the "civil society" institutions that shape conducts and ensure compliance to the state's rule without using coercion (Cox 1993, 51; Gramsci 1971, 543; Schulzke 2015, 63–64). It is in this conceptual split between the political society and civil society where we find both the emergence and utility of hegemony, because it serves as the distinguishing feature between the two spheres of the state. While the political society is the terrain of coercive control, the exercise of power in the civil society is done by building consensus through

a hegemonic system of governance (Gramsci 1971, 145). In this way, hegemony is the framework, incorporating different social interactions that serve to perpetuate control through consensual means.

Through the concept of hegemony, Gramsci opened up the terrain of control to influences by “intellectual and moral leadership” (Martin 1998, 65). As such, we see an articulation of state rule that is not reliant only on the use of force or the monopoly of economic resources, but also on soft power techniques. What makes hegemony useful for analysing control is not just the focus on *how* power is exercised, but also *where* this politics of control unfolds. With different iterations of the idea of the state, Gramsci is attempting to delineate the scope of its control. The concept of hegemony allows Gramsci to problematise new technologies that widen the reach of the state to civil society, making all civic institutions available for the channelling of control (Anderson 1976, 21; Cox 1993, 51). This factor, in particular, makes hegemony a good framework for analysing the Prevent Strategy because the policy takes counter-terrorism work beyond the coercive sphere of the state and expands it into different areas of civic life, ranging from schools and hospitals to more private spaces, such as people’s homes. By situating this discussion in the concept of hegemony, we can highlight the norms and practices that enable this shift of an otherwise coercive activity into the civic sphere.

Joseph’s deconstruction of hegemony into structural and surface adds further to our understanding of how hegemonic projects operate and interact with existing societal dynamics. In this classification, structural hegemony refers to the material conditions i.e. societal structures, practices, cultures, that make way for establishing surface hegemony or hegemonic projects (Joseph 2002, 213). This makes hegemony an all-encompassing reality that accounts for the material/ideological conditions and societal interactions involved in either maintaining or changing the status-quo (Joseph 2002, 139). The critical realist approach put forward by Joseph advocates looking at hegemony as a symbiotic relationship between underlying social conditions that make way for the “political or class struggle moment” manifesting as a hegemonic intervention (ibid, 39). This approach helps us map out hegemonic projects along the corresponding conditions in the society, as this article will do in the following sections by unpacking how Prevent has co-opted existing ideas and processes.

As such, we arrive at an understanding of hegemony as a system of ruling that taps into existing societal dynamics to create conditions of compliance. This can be deployed by either civic groups, political movements, or the ruling blocs. For the purposes of this enquiry, the focus is on the state as an actor that deploys hegemonic tactics to reproduce existing norms and structures for counter-terrorism purposes. However, it should be added that while the site of emergence of hegemony is the state – the ruling bloc, the sites of enactment are the various societal avenues defined by different power dynamics. In this way, following Joseph’s framework, we can find structural hegemony in the mundanity of everyday life that is open for an intervention. Within this terrain, hegemonic projects co-opt “structures of lived reality”, such as the institutions and practices of the British welfare state, to manufacture consent (Jones 2006, 48). The exercise of control is channelled through consent, with coercive measures taking a back seat.

Consent within hegemony can be seen as the wide-ranging adoption and perpetuation of a programme by dominant sections of the populace. It does not just mean a social group’s agreement with a set of policies; it is a belief amongst the group that the act of

following the dictates of a policy is an act of self-determination and personal choice (Anderson 1976, 30). As such, consent represents the confluence of structural and surface hegemony. People adopt hegemonic projects because these are seen as extensions of the existing ideas. In this way, even when new ideas are being introduced within the civic sphere, this is done by recalibrating norms that are already present in the society. These could be cohesive ideas of civic participation or existing divisions or fault lines such as the use of anti-immigration rhetoric during the Brexit referendum (Cap 2017, 67). This demonstrates that hegemony as a system of ruling is an objective framework that can be deployed by any social grouping to advance a project.

Before we further unpack how consent is manufactured, it should be noted that while hegemonic projects operate through the widespread support of those being controlled, the consent of the latter is not necessarily uniform. Some forms of consent demonstrate a whole-hearted agreement, while others come in the form of reluctant compliance. This inconsistency can also be observed within a single phenomenon; while an idea can be adopted by a vast section of the society, the commitment to the idea and its materialisation can vary from one person to another. As such, consent within hegemony covers a wide range of interactions and thought processes that signal an overall agreement with certain values or the need to conform to an edict, despite a lack of uniform commitment (Femia 1987, 38).

The route to manufacturing consent can be found in the concept of common sense. In Gramscian terms, common sense denotes a system of beliefs and ideas commonly held by a group of people. These are neither concrete nor uniform and do not necessarily belong to the intelligentsia or the opinion makers. These thought processes are embedded within the collective psyche in a way that they are taken as a given, such as being a good neighbour or a patriotic citizen. People know they have to follow them without thinking too much about it. Their ideas on what it takes to be a good neighbour or a patriotic citizen may vary, but there is an unspoken consensus on the primary fact that one should be neighbourly and patriotic. As such, common sense is intuitive and spontaneous; it is the "language of the street", the conventional wisdom of "people in ordinary, everyday life ... calculating how to survive" (Hall 1988, 163; Hall and O'Shea 2015).

However, common sense is not static and is subject to change over time. As old truisms come into contact with new ones, some get rejected while others stick around and add a layer of sedimentation on existing common sense (Crehan 2016, 45). This gives common sense a dynamic quality; it can be transformed owing to its ability to absorb new ideas that enter ordinary life, creating the "folklore of the future" (Gramsci 1971, 630). It is this very dynamism that makes common sense vital to hegemonic projects that can diffuse new norms onto existing ones to manufacture consent. Since this "folklore" is open to external influences, it is easy to slip in new ideas that can merge with commonly held beliefs. Hence, by turning certain ideas into an undeniable fact of peoples' lived reality, hegemonic regimes do not have to exercise coercion; rather, the control gets channelled through consensus. As this article will demonstrate, Prevent Strategy co-opts everyday ideas of being a good citizen and looking after other people to normalise counter-terrorism monitoring.

We can also approach common sense from Joseph's critical realist framing of structural and surface hegemony. The former refers to the material conditions, i.e. societal structures and divisions, that allow hegemonic projects to take root and thrive



(Joseph 2002, 213). We can expand the scope of structural hegemony to also include ideas and truisms that facilitate the introduction of new norms and practices. Joseph discusses the idea of getting married that gets passed down through generations as culture and practice, as a “collective occurrence of certain actions” (ibid, 117). However, this does not mean these ideas cannot change, as Crehan has explained in her discussion of changing attitudes to gay marriage (Crehan 2016, 57). Hence, while the idea of marriage is part of common sense, the acceptance of gay marriage, for example, shows that an idea can be transformed. This change enables hegemonic projects to introduce new ideas that speak to the existing ones. Within the context of Prevent, we can see these changes in how the common sense around the duty of care and civic responsibility has undergone a gradual alteration with the diffusion of a security logic.

A discussion of consent and common sense would not be complete without acknowledging the latent element of coercion within hegemonic projects. As such, to understand the hegemony of Prevent, it is important to note that while hegemony is predominantly defined by the manufacturing of consent, Gramsci did not excise coercion completely from this concept; instead, he approached hegemony as a “synthesis of consent and coercion” (Anderson 1976, 22). Within a hegemonic regime, coercion is embedded within consent in a manner that when coercive measures are deployed, they are grounded in consent (Salem 2021, 8). Within the context of the Prevent Strategy, we can see both consent and coercion working together. While the policy is presented through the common sense prism of safeguarding and duty of care, it is enforced through a legal obligation. As such, this policy enters the civic domain with the coercive weight of its statutory status deployed through the development of consensual politics. By combining the two, the policy also makes coercive control more acceptable.

Approaching Prevent as a hegemonic regime allows us to understand how and why counter-terrorism policing has been diffused within civic life. Using this framework, we can delineate the contours of this regime that has co-opted civilians as street-level counter-terrorism agents, securitised civic spaces, and turned social interactions into surveillance opportunities. Viewing these interactions through the analytical lenses of common sense and consent, we can explore the social norms that have been repurposed to make the recalibration of civic life palatable.

The next section will explore the hegemonic manufacturing of consent for the implementation of the Prevent Strategy. It will start by unpacking how the concept of radicalisation is introduced as a risk to be managed, without adequate discussion of how this manifests. This creates a general psyche of suspicion that intersects with existing xenophobia to target minorities that are already identified as a threat in mainstream discourses. This risk logic leads to the co-optation of safeguarding principles within the professions of health, education, and social work, and facilitates acceptance of Prevent’s surveillance obligations as common sense practice. This section will also analyse how a citizen’s sense of civic duty is mobilised to encourage compliance with Prevent as a good citizen’s responsibility. Having discussed how consent and common sense contribute to making a hegemonic regime, the following discussion will unpack the tools that provide a consensual veneer to coercive counter-terrorism policing within the hegemony of Prevent.

## Manufacturing consent, preventing terrorism

Prevent is one of the four components of the British government's flagship counter-terrorism policy CONTEST that tackles different stages of the culmination of terrorism threat (Home Office 2011a, 2009, 2018). What sets Prevent apart from the other strands of Pursue, Protect, and Prepare is that it is designed to address the threat before it manifests by conducting counter-terrorism surveillance within the "pre-criminal space" (Heath-Kelly 2017). With its aim to "safeguard and support those vulnerable to radicalisation" and to stop them from "becoming terrorists or supporting terrorism", Prevent pre-emptively targets wide sections of the society (Home Office 2018, 10). The policy identifies radicalisation as a process "by which a person comes to support terrorism and forms of extremism leading to terrorism" (Home Office 2011b, 108).

This understanding puts the focus on policing individuals who have not yet committed a crime. By targeting a vulnerability and not a crime, the field of action for implementing the Prevent Strategy is wide open and provides a justification for shifting security responsibilities to citizens. By focussing on this responsabilisation of citizens, we can unpack the hegemonic dynamics of Prevent and understand how Prevent has taken counter-terrorism surveillance beyond the coercive sphere of the state, i.e. Gramsci's political society, and put it in the civil society, through the co-optation of civic actors and social ideas. This section will highlight the material and ideological foundations of this hegemonic project by discussing how Prevent interacts with certain common sense ideas and alters them to provide a consensual veneer to an otherwise coercive policy (Gramsci 1971, 630).

By stoking citizens' sense of insecurity and appealing to their sense of duty, Prevent has intersected with existing positive and negative common sense ideas to manufacture consent. To understand the role of insecurity, I will start the discussion by looking at how Prevent has established radicalisation as a prevalent threat model. This has played an important role in manufacturing consent because the presence of a ubiquitous threat provides the justification for introducing coercive security practices within civic life. Alongside this, Prevent has also co-opted positive norms of safeguarding and civic duty as mitigating strategies for countering the risk of radicalisation. Hence, once citizens have been convinced there is a threat, they are given the means to mitigate it. In both stages, we can see the infusion of security logics into common sense ideas that normalise and to an extent camouflage the securitisation of British civic life.

### *Embedding risk*

As discussed above, one of the primary aims of Prevent is to tackle radicalisation. From its earliest iterations, Prevent Duty Guidance reiterates this mission by putting forward a "risk-based approach" that requires specified authorities to be aware of and understand the "risk of radicalisation in their area, institution, or body" (Home Office 2008; Home Office, 2015b, 2021). This is to be done either through existing practices or by establishing new mechanisms to identify and tackle this risk. As such, Prevent has introduced a logic of risk directed at tackling radicalisation that leads to terrorism and can occur in different areas of civic life. While this may sound like a neutral threat identification process, this discussion will demonstrate that by diffusing a paranoia of "risky" bodies who could

become terrorists, Prevent speaks to, and exacerbates, existing xenophobic attitudes. However, before exploring how Prevent intersects with racist norms, it is important to unpack the concept of radicalisation to understand how it helps Prevent frame itself as an objective programme that does not target any specific minority.

The concept of radicalisation gained traction in the post 9/11 academic and policy-making discourse to understand “what goes on before the bomb goes off” (Neumann 2008; Walker 2018). However, despite its popularity in the policymaking circles, radicalisation remains a contested subject (Hörnqvist and Flyghed 2012; Kundnani 2012; Sedgwick 2010). Even though there is a general consensus that radicalisation should be understood as “a process that leads to terrorism”, there have been several inter-disciplinary interventions on what the process looks like, what are its causes, and how and when could it result in a terrorist attack (Borum, 2011; McCauley and Moskalenko 2008; Sageman 2004; Sedgwick 2010; Wiktorowicz 2005). There is no certain way of knowing how far along an individual is in the process of radicalisation and when and if at all they will commit an act of terror.

This ambiguity should make it an unstable idea for assessing risk. However, the uncertainty inherent in the concept has actually become its strength for policymaking purposes. Within the context of Prevent, the lack of definitive answers about how and when an individual will be radicalised and the unknowability of the threat has allowed the state to put forward a risk-based approach that mobilises ordinary citizens in different social sectors to monitor “everyone”, hence rendering the uncertainty actionable (Aradau, Lobo-Guerrero, and Van Munster 2008, 150; Gearson and Rosemont 2019, 1044). With the logic of “we don’t know who the threat is therefore we have to police everyone”, the lack of concrete evidence ceases to be a problem and the mere presence of uncertainty becomes evidence. This not only situates the risk of radicalisation within the community, it also turns the unknowability of the risk into a moral justification for securitising civic life. This risk philosophy enables the diffusion of policing within everyday life and brings entire communities within the sphere of governance.

This ubiquitous uncertainty also allows the state to move the goal-posts of threat identification to a “pre-criminal space” where an individual is a threat even before they have committed an act of terror (Heath-Kelly 2017, 298). The threat is not tangible or visible; there are no answers to the questions of who, when, where, why, and, how the threat will manifest. This absence of answers creates a “permanent ontological condition of waiting for terror” which can only be addressed with the governance of vulnerable bodies and responsabilisation of citizens (Jackson 2015, 35). The lack of information about the threats in itself becomes a knowledge which is articulated through the pre-emptive policing of citizens by their fellow citizens.

While on paper Prevent starts with a seemingly objective idea of targetting everyone/ anyone at risk of radicalisation, within the enactment of the policy, this ambiguous objectivity facilitates the xenophobic policing of identities that are already seen as a threat. By introducing a logic of risk but entrusting the articulation of what this risk could look like on citizens, the end result is policing based on mainstream understandings of threat and insecurity. As such, while Prevent claims to only target “Islamist extremists”, it has rendered British Muslims a suspect community (Awan 2012; Pantazis and Pemberton 2009). This targetting of the Muslim identity predates Prevent or the security panic following 9/11 or 7/7 terrorist attacks because anti-immigration and Islamophobic

rhetoric has been part and parcel of the British political discourse demonising minorities including Muslims based on their religious and ethnic identity (Goodfellow 2020; Kundnani 2007). The events of 9/11 and 7/7 cemented the securitisation of the British Muslim community in a way that when Prevent was introduced with the idea that the threat can be present in anyone, the process of threat construction was already part of the mainstream discourse and the target had already been identified (Abbas 2012).

In this way, the hegemonic project of Prevent has intersected with the structural hegemony of Islamophobia. This has been explained by Ali as a “hypervisibilisation of the threatening difference of Muslim others” that not only makes the outsider status more pronounced, it also turns it into a risk to be managed (Ali 2020, 581). Therefore, the existing xenophobia gets further exacerbated when Prevent’s risk logic is disseminated across the different sectors with a simplified understanding of radicalisation as a process that can lead to terrorism.

By adopting this approach, Prevent has eschewed any discussion of the complexities and ambiguities inherent in the concept. When Prevent reaches citizens tasked with implementing the policy through government and non-government issued guidance documents, training manuals, and online/in-person tutorials, the discussion of complex subjects is condensed into a list of easily identifiable signifiers that are mostly rooted in cultural prejudices (Home Office 2012, 2021). As Heath-Kelly and Strausz have explained, in the Department of Heath’s Prevent guidance risk identifying symptoms are racialised with characterisations such as “feeling of distance from cultural and religious heritage” and discomfort regarding one’s place in the society (Heath-Kelly and Strausz 2019, 93). While previously, the figure of the Muslim “other” was seen as a threat to British culture and societal cohesion, under Prevent this figure also becomes a security threat. In my own research, this overlap of xenophobia and securitised risk was articulated in a number of different ways. A junior doctor explained how the Prevent Strategy was useful because most of their patients were refugees:

Where I worked in XXX, it had a lot of homeless, a lot of refugees, probably quite a high, more high chance of most GP surgeries of having extremist behaviours really, quite multicultural as well. (HE02, Trainee Doctor)

Here a direct link is being made between refugees and multicultural communities and the risk of radicalisation. During the course of the interview, this young doctor reflected on their statement and admitted they were being “quite judgemental” by identifying refugees as a threat. This introspection was followed by an assertion that Prevent tackles all forms of threat and hence could also pick up “English-born . . . well-educated people”.

However, this statement further demonstrated how the risk of radicalisation intersects with xenophobia because the immediate threat identification is situated in the figure of the non-English refugee, and the inclusion of the “English” suspect comes as an after-thought. This was also noticeable in an interview with a social worker who declared that their geographical area did not need Prevent because it was predominantly white British (LA04). This form of dichotomous framing has been captured by Younis and Jadhav in their study of Islamophobia and Prevent in the NHS. They explain that Prevent is presented as a “colour-blind” policy by giving the justification that it also targets far-right extremism. This assertion of colour-blindness is also noticeable in Prevent trainers providing corrective assertions not to identify religious

practices with radicalisation. However, Younis and Jadhav explain that these efforts serve to highlight a racialised common sense that primarily situates the threat in the non-white, Muslim identity (Younis and Jadhav 2020, 614–15). Despite the rhetoric of colour-blind threat identification, Prevent has relied on these underlying prejudices for its implementation, creating a moral panic in the process. A safeguarding consultant I interviewed was approached by a school enquiring if a Prevent referral had to be made about a Muslim student who had written an essay saying wearing a hijab did not make her a bomber:

That's the kind of anxiety that's started to come through because if anybody was kind of saying ... mentioning those kind of words I'm not a bomber, I'm not a terrorist, people were just going do we have to report it? Do we have to refer to Channel Panel? (TR-ED01, Independent Safeguarding Consultant, Schools)

This quote shows how Prevent has exacerbated suspicion rooted in xenophobia to an extent that even innocuous expressions of faith or identity markers get re-cast as threat assessment criteria. All a Muslim student has to do is utter the words “terrorist” or “bomber” and that raises red flags immediately.

While Prevent is presented as a colour-blind policy that also targets far-right extremism, the threat identification threshold for far-right extremism is set higher than for religious extremism, with the latter securitising mundane aspects of the British Muslim existence. This disproportionate focus has been enabled by the existing common sense consensus on viewing religious minorities as the “other”. In this way, Prevent has intersected with existing xenophobia and infused a security logic within it to create risky bodies that threaten not just community cohesion and integration, but also national security.

### ***Mobilising safeguarding***

As discussed earlier, hegemony operates through intersecting with existing common sense and cultivating new social practices and norms. We have seen how Prevent as a hegemonic project starts with introducing a new risk logic in the civic life. The common sense ideas intersecting with Prevent’s risk logic cover negative attitudes of racial prejudice and Islamophobia. We can now turn to positive norms and practices that have facilitated the diffusion of Prevent in welfare sectors. The following discussion will focus on the practice and philosophy of safeguarding that has been co-opted to embed the Prevent Duty within different sectors. This approach has allowed the state to frame Prevent as an extension of existing professional practices, creating the impression that implementing Prevent stipulations is not only efficient but also logical given the duty of care norms in these sectors.

It is useful to start this discussion with safeguarding because even though it is a professional practice, it goes beyond procedures and rules. Safeguarding should be seen more as a mindset that tasks citizens working in different social welfare institutions to protect the people they serve from any kind of vulnerability (Edwards 2021, 50). As such, while it is rooted in a professional ethos, safeguarding has a folkloric common sense quality because it gets adopted as a normative duty by frontline professionals. Therefore, I would recommend approaching safeguarding as professional common sense, because

as this discussion will demonstrate, safeguarding is the default response for addressing any form of harm. This framing also helps us understand why and how Prevent has entered these sectors with relative ease.

To understand how safeguarding is used to manufacture consent, this research has focussed on the health, education, and social work sectors. While Prevent places a legal duty on a variety of civic institutions, these three have been chosen because these sectors have established safeguarding frameworks. Furthermore, the interactions that take place within these sectors come with an expectation of trust and confidentiality. Therefore, diffusion of Prevent within the norms and practices of these sectors can have a disruptive impact on all the citizens involved. These considerations would not be an issue within a coercive regime; however, Prevent is a hegemonic project that relies on establishing control through consensual means. As such, the diffusion of counter-terrorism measures within these civil society institutions has been done by pre-emptively addressing issues of confidentiality and efficiency by presenting Prevent as an extension to already existing practices of safeguarding.

Practically, this has resulted in different sectors embedding Prevent policing within not just professional practices but also professional common sense. Local authorities have to incorporate counter-terrorism monitoring within multi-agency arrangements, such as local safeguarding boards and youth offending teams. In the education sector, school teachers have to monitor students for signs of radicalisation and incorporate the teaching of British values in lessons under the Prevent Duty guidance issued by the Department for Education (Winter et al. 2021). In the health sector, reporting extremist views is done by doctors and nurses within the same framework as safeguarding against substance or sexual abuse (Heath-Kelly and Strausz 2018, 10). In mental health services, radicalisation screening of all service users has been integrated in the Comprehensive Risk Assessments (ibid, 3).

This not only adds a normative value to counter-terrorism work being embedded in professional services, it also gives the impression that surveillance is a natural component of upholding duty of care. The Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015, that gave statutory footing to Prevent regulations, “(de)politically legitimised counter-radicalisation” by diffusing surveillance obligations in the daily tasks of these sectors (Dresser 2018, 148). The Prevent Duty Guidance 2015 underscores this point by stating that the duty does not “confer new functions on any specified authorities” and counter-radicalisation policing should be conducted along with the regular dispensation of duties by using existing mechanisms for understanding the risk of radicalisation (Dresser 2018; Home Office, 2015b, 5). By making Prevent part of everyday practices, the policy becomes inseparable from other norms and practices that contribute to forming a professional common sense within these sectors. Consent is manufactured by camouflaging extra security work within existing safeguarding frameworks. As a Prevent trainer put it:

Everything is underpinned by working together and your safeguarding responsibilities and obviously Prevent. In relation to children who get involved in radicalisation or young people, clearly that's a safeguarding issue ... most social workers would come to it from at least young people being safeguarded ... If they're at risk of being radicalised, they are also at risk of harm, essentially, that's how you deal with it, in terms of safeguarding. (TR-LA02, Prevent and Safeguarding Trainer)

This demonstrates that Prevent repurposes the ideas of harm and safeguarding to diffuse Prevent priorities in otherwise routine activities. By putting the risk of radicalisation on the same footing as other risks children may face, this Prevent Trainer is rendering Prevent enactment almost invisible by merging it with safeguarding.

Similar insights can be found in other qualitative studies of Prevent implementation. Busher et al. found this to be the case in their investigation of Prevent Duty in British schools and colleges where a majority of their respondents saw the duty as a “continuation of existing safeguarding responsibilities” (Busher, Choudhury, and Thomas 2019, 453). This narrative of “professional continuity” not only reassures the frontline staff that they are carrying out existing institutional responsibilities, it also allows the institutions to take ownership of the policy by delivering Prevent training through existing programmes (ibid, 455). This gives actors at the grassroots level a sense of agency, a dynamic that has been picked up by Lakhani in their exploration of the role of social capital within Prevent enactment in the education sector (Lakhani 2020). Lakhani explains how frontline staff utilise informal professional relationships, support networks, and institutional knowledge to assert some form of agency in both implementing Prevent and tackling challenges associated with the policy.

This sense of agency is indicative of manufactured consent that instils a belief in people that they “exercise an ultimate self-determination within the existing social order” (Anderson 1976, 30). By intersecting with the structural hegemony of educational institutions, the surface hegemony of Prevent succeeds in turning the co-optation of frontline staff into a proactive exercise of agency. As such, even though Prevent is changing the common sense around safeguarding and surveillance, because it is being done by diffusing the two disparate dynamics, it gets camouflaged by the state as an organic development.

Routing Prevent stipulations through safeguarding also helps to establish a narrative of vulnerability. When framed as a component of the safeguarding duty, Prevent is seen as a means of protecting those vulnerable to radicalisation rather than conducting surveillance on one’s patients, students, and service users. In their research on Prevent in the NHS, Heath-Kelly and Strausz found that even when frontline staff did not fully accept Prevent as safeguarding, they did accept their sector’s involvement and saw Prevent as a “pathway” to help those who have “fallen through the safety net” (Heath-Kelly and Strausz 2019, 96). As such, Prevent is not just intersecting with existing practices, it is also appealing to the professional common sense regarding duty of care obligations and providing alternative avenues for meeting those needs. A Prevent trainer I interviewed credited the policy for highlighting safeguarding issues that were previously being overlooked:

It has raised awareness of the vulnerabilities, particularly for schools, of some young people who might have been off the radar before ... We have had a couple of ... quite significant concerns and things that have come through, so I think that’s a big change with schools’ understanding that some pupils actually are at risk wherever they are, particularly with the Internet and that kind of stuff. (PC03, Prevent Trainer)

This shows that Prevent is being framed as a way to dispense the safeguarding duty better. A similar claim was also made by a Prevent Co-ordinator (PC-ED01) who spoke of Prevent’s positive impact on higher and further education that has assisted in “fine-tuning the safeguarding mechanisms that FE colleges provide and HE have in place now”.

These insights show that the process of manufacturing consent for Prevent is not only intersecting with existing common sense, it is also altering it to make counter-terrorism a duty dispensed by the British welfare state. This underscores the importance of analysing Prevent as a hegemonic project because once the security logic gets embedded within common sense, it can expand to other areas of civic life as well. This has already started happening as Prevent is presented as something that one should continue to do in both personal and professional situations. A Prevent Co-ordinator framed safeguarding under Prevent as the same as medical staff helping injured people they encounter outside of work:

It is part and parcel of the safeguarding process ... people want to keep other people safe and if your job as a professional, be it social worker, it's all about safeguarding, I don't think you can get away from that duty if you are truly professional. If you're a doctor and somebody is bleeding out on to the street, you're gonna go and help them, you know, there is no real difference! (PC01, Prevent Co-ordinator)

This framing is quite deliberate to blur the distinction between the personal and the professional. It is designed to encourage people to first think of Prevent as safeguarding and then as just general duty of care that can be dispensed anywhere with or without the support of institutional frameworks.

Approaching Prevent as safeguarding also precludes opposition to the policy because refusal to engage with Prevent gets perceived as a failure to uphold one's professional obligations. A social worker put resistance to Prevent as failure to protect vulnerable people:

If they're not looking out for the safety of vulnerable people who might be being groomed or the safety of citizens in the community who might be harmed by a terrorist act, then any teacher or social worker has a duty to make sure that we uphold the human rights of all the citizens. (LA06, Independent Social Worker)

This observation shows how thoroughly Prevent has become diffused in safeguarding practices and norms that any deviation from the policy can be tantamount to a dereliction of duty. A secondary school teacher shared similar views:

If they resisted and thought that it [Prevent] was unnecessary or wrong, they could miss key things, they might not be on the lookout for things that they should be, so, yes it could impact the safeguarding responsibilities. (ED12, Secondary School Teacher)

Both of these participants had a general positive outlook towards the policy so their framing of Prevent as safeguarding is understandable.

However, this approach also came through in cases where participants were wary of some or most aspects of Prevent and the impact it can have on certain communities. Despite their reservations with the policy, they conceded reluctant compliance with Prevent stipulations on safeguarding grounds. This is very interesting, as it shows how deeply and successfully the logic of Prevent has embedded itself in common sense. While the consent is accompanied by caveats, it is consent, nonetheless. A teacher acknowledged there is criticism of Prevent but justified their engagement with the policy by prioritising their duty of care obligations over their personal misgivings:



I know there's quite a lot of opposition to Prevent and even though I'm far from an expert, I'm not completely comfortable with it, although I also see some reasons for it too, so, yes, it's not like I'm just fully behind, it's more a case of ... I just feel there is a duty in terms of just as an adult in the position of care, it is my duty to help children or vulnerable people. (ED09, Primary School Teacher)

A social worker shared concerns that the policy could discriminate against people based on arbitrary vulnerability factors such as change of clothing etc. However, they separated that risk with the overall principle of safeguarding, advising that everyone should follow the policy:

Every good citizen should be looking out for the well-being of others, whether that includes counter-terrorism, but it would also include preventing hate crime, it would also include preventing trafficking. (LA06, Independent Social Worker)

As discussed earlier, consent is not uniform but it signals an overall, albeit inconsistent acceptance of an idea. These responses show that frontline professionals are willing to put aside their unease because despite their discomfort with the policy, they continue to associate it with the more important responsibility of safeguarding people. It is within these interventions that we find the strongest case for framing Prevent as a hegemonic project. These people display a certain amount of critical engagement with the policy, but they still accept it as a professional obligation. This was also visible in the responses of participants who had negative views of Prevent and did not want to enact it in their work. A physician's associate, who had several misgivings about Prevent as a programme that can unfairly target minorities, reluctantly agreed to engage with the policy for safeguarding purposes:

If the individual is vulnerable and they are at prey from more powerful groups, I can see why it would fall under safeguarding. However, like we discussed before, it all depends on what happens afterwards. (HE06, Physician's associate)

Similarly, a trainee teacher strongly opposed to Prevent said they would have to implement it as it is a legal duty and not doing so could result in negative consequences for them (ED03). Both of these insights show that despite personal views on the policy, frontline professionals see Prevent as part of their institutional infrastructure.

By embedding surveillance practices within the professional frameworks of health, education, and social work sectors, Prevent has normalised counter-terror self-governance in spaces that are not just routine and mundane, but also considered safe. Furthermore, by making counter-terrorism an extension of the safeguarding duty, Prevent has not only made this acceptable but something that should be actively pursued by all the professionals in these sectors.

### *Securitising civic duty*

While safeguarding is a sector-specific norm that has been repurposed by Prevent to embed counter-terrorism work in civic institutions, data collected for this research shows that more commonly held ideas of civic duty and citizenship have also been used to manufacture consent for Prevent. In interviews, both the civilians tasked with implementing Prevent, and Prevent trainers and co-ordinators, articulated compliance with the policy through the professional obligations of safeguarding and a more general sense

of civic responsibility. This section will focus on the idea of neoliberal active citizenship to explain how the risk logic of Prevent is also being embedded in a wider narrative of an individual's duty to the state and their citizens.

"Being a good citizen" as a social dictum can be found in the common sense thinking across different cultures. What differs in these common sense approaches is the understanding of being a good citizen. Every culture and belief system can proffer their own interpretation of this duty to be a good citizen. However, as discussed earlier, common sense ideas are not static and undergo changes over time. As such, the idea of good citizen is also open to transformation as new norms interact with the existing ones.

One such variation is the concept of neoliberal citizenship, that shifts the rights and duties equation within the citizenship contract towards the idea of active or earned citizenship (Cowden and Singh 2017, 276). From states fulfilling the rights of citizens, the balance has shifted to citizens increasingly taking on more obligations. This shift was first observed in the governmental strategies targeting welfare systems in social democratic societies, when states switched from unconditional provision of social rights to making them conditional on a demonstration of autonomy and individualism by their "neoliberal subjects" (Isin et al. 2008, 5). This impacted citizenship practice by redefining a good citizen as a responsabilised citizen, giving new significance to civic duty obligations. To qualify as a good citizen, an individual must perform certain duties and exhibit certain qualities (Clarke 2005). Those who adequately fulfil their responsibilities are good citizens, those failing to do so are bad citizens who can be excluded or are at least pushed to the margins of the society. Van Houdt et al. have highlighted these dynamics in their work on "earned citizenship" in UK, France, and the Netherlands. By focussing on citizenship acquisition procedures, they bring to the fore norms of social participation and civilised behaviour that dictate the process of earning citizenship privileges (Van Houdt, Suvarierol, and Schinkel 2011, 420).

To understand how the discourse of neoliberal citizenship intersects with counter-terrorism, a good starting point is Jarvis and Lister's work on "stakeholder security" that contextualises the responsabilisation of citizens within counter-terrorism work (Jarvis and Lister 2010). They chronicle the gradual co-optation of citizens into security frameworks by shifting welfare and security responsibilities to them. The state presents this process as a "social commitment", an obligation that should be honoured by citizens (ibid, 182). Similarly, McKendrik and Finch take this forward by deploying a Gramscian analysis of Prevent enactment in social work. They explain how the focus on individualised neoliberal ethos within the policy helps the state avoid any discussion of the wider structural inequalities (McKendrick and Finch 2019, 24). These studies demonstrate that embedding Prevent within professional and civic norms not only makes it a problem to be solved by citizens, it turns it into a normative duty. This article will build on this existing work to highlight how the co-optation of civic norms manifests in consensus for Prevent enactment in everyday interactions.

Within Prevent Strategy documents, this responsabilisation of citizens is presented as an important factor in enhancing community resilience. According to the 2011 iteration, "Communities who do not (or in some cases feel they cannot) participate in civic society are more likely to be vulnerable to radicalisation" (Home Office 2011a, 61). By making a lack of citizen participation symptomatic of vulnerability to radicalisation, Prevent makes "active citizenship" an antidote to radicalisation. The policy recommends "a stronger sense of

belonging and citizenship ... to make communities more resilient to terrorist ideology” (ibid, 61). This framing also helps to expand the scope of the policy. While deploying Prevent through safeguarding channels helps to establish compliance within professional sectors, presenting it as a component of civic duty turns surveillance into a responsibility that is not just restricted to professional roles. A Prevent trainer, who conducts training across different community organisations and civic institutions, highlighted this:

Some of this is community-based, so some of them is a man who has been on a building site, or a taxi driver or a parent, so they got no duty to anything, except to be a good citizen ... We have a duty of care to protect our community from radicalisation, yes, gangs, yes, criminality, yes, bigotry yes. So, let's not be too specific, it isn't a human duty based on counter-terrorism strategy, we have a duty as community members to look after our communities, that's it. (TR-LA01, Prevent and Safeguarding Trainer)

By taking Prevent on as a duty to protect one's community, this trainer is highlighting the expansive scope of Prevent. Unlike safeguarding that is restricted within professional roles, this framing can be applied to anyone.

We can also see an overlap between the norms of safeguarding and civic duty that signals a further blurring of boundaries between the personal and the professional. A junior doctor who received Prevent training as part of their safeguarding training repeatedly referred to it as a “moral duty” that defines norms of good citizenship:

Prevent Duty is just a moral duty, just to be an upright citizen yourself ... moral values whereby you can be a good example yourself, and then just being vigilant to your surroundings. I think that's how you do it, just being morally upright and just being a little vigilant, be more aware of your surroundings, your environment, that's all you can do. (HE04, Trainee Psychiatrist)

The use of the phrase “moral duty” demonstrates the normative value that is being allocated to Prevent Duty obligations. Here, the norms of safeguarding and civic duty are being fused to articulate the importance of enacting Prevent in not just professional but also personal spheres.

In some other interviews with frontline staff, the connection between Prevent and civic duty also came up unprompted:

If you see something that is very concerning, other people or another person might get hurt, then you should be doing what you can to stop that, that's with crime, harm to children, harm to adults ... it's not just Prevent, that's a general [sic] what a good citizen would do. (LA07, Independent Social Worker)

Even though almost all of these participants had been introduced to Prevent within the context of safeguarding in their professional responsibilities, they also articulated this as a duty they need to conduct outside of their professional roles. This could be explained by the fact that those employed in the public sector have a sense of obligation to the community, the professional common sense of protecting vulnerable people. However, this overlap also demonstrates that common sense ideas are fluid and by intersecting with different sensibilities, the hegemonic project of Prevent has developed a coherent worldview rooted in serving the community.

Framing Prevent as civic duty also instils a sense of agency that is embedded within common sense. By presenting Prevent as a responsibility that citizens undertake to protect themselves and their communities, the surveillance element fades into the

structural hegemonic norms of civic obligation and service. Instead of becoming a security imposition, the counter-terrorism responsibilities become an organic element of civic life. This, as discussed earlier, is indicative of manufactured consent. When I asked a Prevent trainer about the role of citizens in implementing the government's security policy, they replied by reframing the premise:

We are not there playing a role in the government agenda, but we are there playing a role in our community's agenda that says actually certain behaviours and actions are just not acceptable within the society. So, I think you need to turn it on its head a bit and not necessarily be because government says, this is what you should do . . . As good citizens, we should be saying to government, this is what is going on in our communities and we're not having it and if the Prevent Duty enables us to do that then that's fine. (TR-LA02, Prevent and Safeguarding Trainer)

By presenting Prevent as the "community's agenda", this trainer is overestimating the input grassroots actors have in the policy's design or enactment. However, this framing works because while it is not an accurate description of power dynamics within Prevent, it puts forward an interpretation of the policy that makes it sound like an organic development.

This need to present an invasive social programme as emerging from within has been the common thread throughout this discussion. From the ideational foundations of Prevent in risk logics of radicalisation and intersection with existing xenophobia, to the mobilisation of safeguarding and civic duty norms, the enactment of Prevent Duty is reliant on the policy becoming part of the structural hegemony. Once the idea of conducting surveillance diffuses within common sense, we can see that manufacturing consent becomes relatively easier, even within those who hold certain reservations.

## Conclusion

The Prevent Strategy has been part of British civic life for over a decade now. The policy has permeated different social institutions and reshaped practices and norms. This article argues that Prevent should be analysed as a hegemonic regime because the policy is expanding the coercive sphere of the state into the very heart of civil society. To establish Prevent as a hegemonic project, this article started by looking at how the policy manufactures consent amongst citizens by co-opting a range of existing norms and thought processes to diffuse surveillance activity within social interactions. By embedding a logic of risk directed at stopping radicalisation, Prevent has created a sense of insecurity and by co-opting common sense ideas of duty of care and responsibility, it has put forward mitigating strategies. In the process, Prevent has embedded surveillance logics and practices in duty of care principles. This has not only softened the policy's reception within the civil society, it has rendered invisible the securitisation of British welfare state.

Analysing Prevent as a hegemonic project is useful because it not only accounts for the coercion inherent in the policy, it also provides the tools to see how this coercion is given a consensual veneer. As Prevent moves surveillance work from traditional security infrastructures into everyday spaces, it gets coded in the language of safeguarding and civic duty. This is recalibrating social dynamics whereby the narrative towards coercive security enforcement is changing in both discourse and practice. It's not just a change in professional practices and

institutions infrastructures, but also a change in the mindset – the common sense. In my research, I have found educators, medical staff, and social workers speak of Prevent in the language of vulnerability and protection and see it as an extension of the work they already do. Even in the cases where participants are a bit uneasy about Prevent or oppose it, there is a reluctant acceptance that the policy has to be enacted. As such, Prevent has come to be seen as part and parcel of social life, a duty that has to be undertaken to protect people.

This extension of the coercive sphere of state into civil society is not only normalising civilian-led counter-terrorism work, it is blurring the boundaries between the professional and the personal. When surveillance becomes associated with safeguarding and vulnerability, the monitoring of conducts does not end with professional duties; people carry over the logic of risk into their personal interactions as well. As a result, we are moving towards a common sense where counter-terrorism work is becoming a routine civic activity to be undertaken by everyone. Hence, a police chief can now declare that all good citizens should be “counter-terrorism citizens” and counter-terrorism training can be taken from the comfort of one’s “kitchen table” (Counter Terrorism Policing 2020b; Dearden 2018).

This inclusion of civilians in security measures is not a new development; campaigns asking people to stay vigilant, like *See it, Say it, Sorted*, have been around for some time now (Amoore 2007; Jarvis and Lister 2010; Larsson 2017). Hence, the idea of a security or counter-terrorism citizen is not entirely created by the Prevent Strategy. However, Prevent is building on this existing culture and formalising it by diffusing a security logic in professional infrastructures. Running parallel to policies like Hostile Environment that turn frontline professionals into immigration enforcers, Prevent is accelerating the bifurcation of British civil society into legal/illegal, suspect/agent, and citizen/alien binaries. By intersecting with existing positive and negative norms, it is also reframing the wider narrative to turn something imposed by the state into a product of personal choice. Therefore, this article advocates applying a Gramscian lens on the Prevent Strategy so we can analyse how control is being exercised, received, and reinterpreted in a way that it becomes unrecognisable.

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