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To cite this article: John Gearson & Hugo Rosemont (2015) CONTEST as Strategy: Reassessing Britain's Counterterrorism Approach, *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, 38:12, 1038-1064, DOI: [10.1080/1057610X.2015.1099991](https://doi.org/10.1080/1057610X.2015.1099991)

To link to this article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/1057610X.2015.1099991>



Accepted author version posted online: 25 Sep 2015.
Published online: 21 Oct 2015.



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CONTEST as Strategy: Reassessing Britain's Counterterrorism Approach

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The appropriateness of the United Kingdom's counterterrorism strategy, known as CONTEST, divides opinion. This article reassesses CONTEST as strategy rather than simply examining its effectiveness as policy, or critiquing its individual parts. Reviewing the development of CONTEST in the context of wider analytical discussions on what makes for good strategy, the authors argue that several important strands of CONTEST are either underdeveloped or not yet as "strategic" as some analysts and the U.K. government itself have professed them to be. Fresh thinking on aspects of counterterrorism is urgently needed to counter the challenge of contemporary and future terrorism.

As the 10th anniversary of the terrorist attacks on London's transportation system on 7 July 2005 (7/7) passes, it is striking to note that the United Kingdom's counterterrorism (CT) strategy known as CONTEST is still essentially unchanged from the original policy document developed in secret in 2003 (and first released in public form in 2006), despite having initially only been designed for a five-year period. At this anniversary juncture, this article takes the opportunity to consider the background to the policy and reassess the effectiveness of CONTEST *as a strategy*, rather than simply seeking to assess its utility as a policy, or critiquing any of its individual parts. In this way we seek to inform ongoing debates on the future of the United Kingdom's counterterrorism approach and build on the work of those who have argued in favor of developing and using "strategy" to counter the problem¹— however contested or "much debated"² the notion of what constitutes strategy has now become.

Received 26 July 2015; accepted 20 September 2015.

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Whereas past scholarly contributions on this subject have tended to offer either supportive or highly critical appraisals of various aspects of British CT law and policy, this article offers a fresh way of assessing CONTEST, focusing its analysis on the cohesiveness of the strategy itself, in the context of wider discussions on what actually constitutes “strategy.” To achieve this, we consider the proper meaning of strategy and CONTEST’s core characteristics in that context, before highlighting what we argue can be considered some of its limitations as a strategic approach. In particular, three important elements of CONTEST: the United Kingdom’s efforts to “prevent” individuals turning to (or sympathizing with) violent extremism; the military’s contribution to CT; and, efforts at public–private cooperation in this sector are shown to be either underdeveloped or not as “strategic” as they have been claimed to be. As these three issues continue to be among the most challenging and controversial aspects of CONTEST, the case for more progress in these areas is, we argue, overwhelming. U.K. policymakers and their advisors need to accommodate fresh, more strategic, thinking in the battle of ideas against transnational violent extremism and terrorism more broadly defined, re-setting their engagement with partners and external nongovernment actors on the most challenging and unfinished aspects of counterterrorism. While we deliberately focus on arrangements in the U.K. context, and how they might be improved through the adoption of a more strategic mindset, it is hoped that the conclusions offered have broad utility for counterterrorism policies elsewhere.

Judgments on the state of contemporary British CT policy tend toward either high praise or significant criticism. For some, it represents the “best case” in U.K. government coordination and security policymaking;³ others are vociferous in suggesting that the measures overseen by the Office for Security and Counter Terrorism (OSCT) in the U.K. Home Office are disproportionate, or even reflective of moves toward a surveillance state.⁴ With so much attention afforded to CT within the United Kingdom’s emerging national security approach—and so much associated public and media interest on the nature of the threat and the responses to it—it is striking how little consideration has been given to the potential merits and disadvantages of CONTEST itself. More often than not, assessments on the proportionality and effectiveness of the measures implemented within the bounds of the U.K. government’s CT strategy have been scathing, with one critic describing it as “. . . inadequate, inconsistent, and too often driven by the concerns of politics instead of the needs of security.”⁵ In contrast, not a single account to our knowledge has previously sought to evaluate in any detail the potential strengths and weaknesses of CONTEST as an overall strategy.

This oversight matters because a full and proper debate has yet to emerge, and we believe is urgently needed, on the relative strengths and weaknesses of CONTEST as the basis of a continuing long-term and comprehensive CT strategy for the United Kingdom. Rather, discussions over the effectiveness of British CT policy have become polarized, and arguably represent a clear case of where terrorism research more generally has genuinely become stagnant.⁶ On one hand, some of the fierce criticism that has been leveled toward the U.K. authorities’ CT efforts has appeared harsh, if not exaggerated; prominent civil liberties campaigners’ assertions that the country’s measures resemble the arrangements found in totalitarian states such as North Korea, for example, appear off the mark. By contrast, it is also fair to observe that the praise CONTEST has often received in both domestic and international security policymaking circles may have served to conceal its limitations in strategic terms—as will be shown, important aspects of the strategy are far from being fully addressed. Indeed, we would go so far as to suggest that, had CONTEST’s evolution been more strategic from the outset, some of the difficulties and

problems now facing British CT practitioners might have already been substantially mitigated, if not largely avoided.

Reassessing the effectiveness of CONTEST in strategic terms is important because it offers a fresh way to consider how to develop an optimal, long-term CT policy approach. Analysis of this nature allows one to consider the most appropriate response for the longer term, and move beyond the tired, often politicized debates that focus on the proportionality of individual measures, and that overly dominate CT-related research today. In so doing, this article seeks to provide a new perspective on how British and other international authorities could develop their approaches to CT more productively. Not all will agree on the utility of applying “strategy” to CT, but, as CONTEST describes itself as strategy and indeed is now being explicitly used as the basis of other published U.K. and international security strategies, it is crucial to reassess a fundamental and to date under-examined question: how effective is CONTEST as strategy?

Origins and Development of CONTEST

It is a recognized truism that, well before the terrorist attacks in New York and Washington, D.C., in September 2001 (9/11), the United Kingdom had already gained substantial experience of dealing with the problem of terrorism, and thus the country’s move toward the development of a comprehensive approach to CT policy long preceded this date. The U.K. government’s policy for addressing terrorism prior to 9/11 was not solely limited to addressing the particularly acute problem of “domestic” terrorism arising from Northern Ireland—even if this would have understandably been at the forefront of ministers’ minds at the time. Indeed, as early as 1996 the main recommendation of a high profile review for the government on the future of U.K. counterterrorism legislation recognized this backdrop, and the centrality of both the anticipated longevity and international dimensions of terrorism. “Once lasting peace has been established in Northern Ireland, there will continue to be a need for permanent counter-terrorist legislation to deal with the threat of international and domestic terrorism.”⁷

The process of publishing the “Lloyd Report,” and the adoption of its key recommendations, led to the United Kingdom’s CT policy approach being placed on a statutory and thus even more comprehensive footing—evidence that, while it was certainly novel and innovative, CONTEST was never actually designed to start from scratch.

The events of 9/11 nevertheless focused attention in Whitehall, raising CT as a top governmental priority, and resulted in a significant new emphasis on the development of an over-arching and centrally developed strategy to deal with the heightened problem. Initially devised and developed within the Cabinet Office—the central policy-coordinating department adjoined to the prime minister’s office at Number 10 Downing Street⁸—the United Kingdom’s revised counterterrorism strategy was developed from November 2002 and became known as CONTEST—an acronym originally drawn from Counter-Terrorism Strategy.⁹

It is important to note that—at least in theory—a (if not *the*) central idea within CONTEST was that it would dispense with the traditional home/away distinction associated with different forms of terrorism (and the variety of policy responses to it), and thus seek to introduce a genuinely “joined-up” and “fully integrated” approach across government in order to tackle the problem comprehensively. In 2006, the first of three published editions made this abundantly clear: “the threat has grown and it has changed in character. It has both domestic and international dimensions.”¹⁰

In order to achieve the level of inter-departmental coordination that would be needed to address the complex challenge, the basic organizing structure of the strategy was the so-called 4Ps—four main organizing themes or functional areas, as summarised in the latest edition of the strategy:

- *Pursue*: to stop terrorist attacks;
- *Prevent*: to stop people becoming terrorists or supporting terrorism;
- *Protect*: to strengthen our protection against a terrorist attack; and,
- *Prepare*: to mitigate the impact of a terrorist attack.¹¹

The longevity of the “4P” structure is important for any assessment of CONTEST, not least because it remains its guiding format almost 15 years since its invention. Similarly, it is also valuable to note for context CONTEST’s central stated aim: “to reduce the risk to the United Kingdom and its interests overseas from international terrorism, so that people can go about their lives freely and with confidence.”¹² Often referred to as the preservation of normality (whatever such an expression means), the longevity of this “strategic” objective of CONTEST is important to bear in mind within the context of the evolution of contemporary terrorist threats facing the United Kingdom and its citizens today.

The development of CONTEST was not always perceived to be as effective as it could have been—indeed, questions were initially raised over the Cabinet Office’s competence and capacity to take on leadership for its delivery.¹³ It was in this context in 2007, against the backdrop of the then Home Secretary, John Reid’s, controversial assessment that the Home Office was not “fit for purpose,” that the government moved CT policy from the Cabinet Office to the Home Office, establishing the OSCT as an executive directorate there.¹⁴ The OSCT drew on the expertise of officials and outsiders drawn from a wide variety of departments and agencies—most notably secondees from the Ministry of Defence (MoD), the Police, the intelligence agencies, and a handful of other organizations—proving over time to be a consistent advocate of the need for a “multiagency” approach to addressing terrorism. Since the creation of CONTEST, this strong emphasis on “cross-departmental” cooperation has also been a consistent feature of other “strategic” U.K. security policy documentation (however effectively implemented), and the government’s adherence to seeking more effective coordination was later reflected in the first National Security Strategy document in 2008, and in subsequent iterations.

Ultimately despite this high level, (almost) persuasive rhetoric around the crucial need for effective coordination, the CONTEST strategy has proven actually more “siloed” and reflective of the longstanding “lead department” model for addressing cross-cutting issues across Whitehall—in practice, the Home Office formulates the policy largely unhindered and engages other departments only as required, to highly variable degrees. More seriously in several important areas of policy, we argue below that CONTEST is not as strategic as it is often professed to be. That it has always called itself a “strategy” means that the content of the document itself, and its orientation, has to be judged to a higher measure than other more tactical Whitehall policy initiatives, whether in the security area, or on wider societal issues.

Applying “Strategy” to Counterterrorism

What is “strategy” and how should it be applied to counterterrorism today? We find that the utility of posing such questions is often overlooked in contemporary U.K. security policy debates, and that it is an exercise frequently avoided by many senior British

policymakers. CONTEST is generally considered among officials to have been effective at achieving its central stated aim, and it is evident in this context that many appear to see little need to contemplate more deeply its merits as strategy. Indeed, a prevailing attitude among busy practitioners appears to be that one should not succumb—nor can one afford to succumb—to the British tendency to *beat ourselves up* over the more theoretical, longer-term aspects of the United Kingdom's CT approach when, so far, CONTEST has proven to be remarkably successful at achieving the “real” central operational aim (that agency leaders and ministers care about)—preventing attacks.

These are fair points to consider, but one should not overlook that the case for using “strategy” to structure and address the *longer term* response to contemporary security challenges such as international terrorism has long been successfully made, not least by the original author of CONTEST. For David Omand, formerly the U.K. government's security and intelligence coordinator, an important lesson from history is that “good strategy, political as well as military, is needed to focus national will.”¹⁵ Applying this to the CT context, he justified the importance of utilizing what he calls “strategic planning” in corraling the means necessary to address issues such as terrorism:

Such a process is the only proven way of harnessing and aligning the efforts of dozens, if not hundreds, of different agencies and organisations to a common purpose recognising that most of them have many important missions other than counter-terrorism, without falling into the trap of over-management, which will offend their sense of autonomy and lead to discord, or stultify them with over-prescription, or both.¹⁶

While such an approach can obviously help to avoid bureaucratic inertia, it is not clear, when considered in the context of wider discussions on the meaning and merits of strategy, whether it is actually ambitious enough, nor whether Omand's vision has even yet been truly applied in practice. This article argues that the United Kingdom's CT policymaking architecture has not been sufficiently structured to allow the concept of strategy to be utilized to better effect. In so far as many areas of CONTEST have been implemented, the United Kingdom's approach has essentially been a pragmatic and reactive one—while this is clearly not to be discouraged in addressing immediate or urgent issues, the effectiveness of the approach in addressing longer-term components of the strategy (such as counterextremism) is suffering because CONTEST has not adopted a deeper, more “joined up,” or properly thought-through appreciation of what could—and arguably should—be done across all instruments of national power to address the threat. In essence, CONTEST may well be labeled a “strategic” document, but it certainly does not reflect, or fit within, what scholars have labeled either a “military strategy” or a “grand strategy” for the United Kingdom's CT purposes—both of which we suggest are relevant for addressing this particular challenge.

Many existing scholarly contributions have illustrated the different levels at which “strategy” appears, and serve to illustrate how difficult it has become to agree a common understanding of the concept—as Freedman notes in his recent major work on strategy, “[t]here is no agreed-upon definition of strategy that describes the field and limits its boundaries.”¹⁷ That having been said, it is possible to break these levels down. As Betts explains: “strategies are chains of relationships among means and ends that span several levels of analysis, from the maneuvers of units in specific engagements through larger campaigns, whole wars, grand strategies, and foreign policies.”¹⁸

For Strachan, strategy is conceptualized similarly as “a declaration of intent, and an indication of the possible means required to fulfil that intent”¹⁹; in short the “matter of combining means, ways and ends.”²⁰ This three-way combination (and the business of aligning them) is central to strategy as we suggest it should be applied to the CT context today, as is the importance of its temporal dimension and capacity for adaptation, where “grand strategy” is “as much reactive as prudential; as much an exercise in flexibility and adaptability in the short term as a narrative.”²¹ Freedman summarizes it well, by conceiving of strategy as “the art of creating power,” explaining: “Having a strategy suggests an ability to look up from the short term and the trivial to view the long term and the essential, to address the causes rather than symptoms, to see woods rather than trees.”²²

It is this interpretation of strategy that we adopt in our contemplation of the effectiveness of CONTEST as strategy, because it provides a balanced and more suitably nuanced appreciation of how it is that states should approach complex security challenges such as terrorism. It is a truism to state that the causes of terrorism are much debated by commentators and academics, but it has been the symptoms of terrorism that drive policy practitioners and decision makers in the United Kingdom and elsewhere. Indeed, it is the more rounded, upstream view of addressing security issues that is arguably sorely missing from some U.K. policymaking today. As we examine later, despite often declared best intentions, those responsible for designing, overseeing, and implementing CONTEST have in practice found it difficult to “look up” from the serious, day-to-day terrorist challenges they face.

How “Strategic” is CONTEST?

Using the understanding of “strategy” presented above and applying it to CONTEST, how should one judge its effectiveness? No dedicated policy-orientated scholarly analyses have been completed on the efficacy of CONTEST as a strategy; few have even sought to analyze the workings of the OSCT, or offered detailed assessments of the structure and operation of the U.K. government’s CT machinery.²³ Shaw produced one of the most positive appraisals of the OSCT’s achievements in advancing the idea that CONTEST is a model of effectiveness and “joined-up” strategy making, arguing that Whitehall has “the slickest counter-terrorism governmental machinery in the world.”²⁴ Omand has been a prolific author on the evolution of CONTEST²⁵ and his analysis reveals some of the thinking and rationale behind the overall aim of the strategy, reflecting a “distinctly British approach” to contemporary counterterrorism.²⁶ Some of the more important characteristics that form the basis of the strategy include: risk management; an emphasis on resilience; limited use of the military; a declaratory commitment to the rule of law; a multiagency approach (despite the Armed Forces’ curtailed role); and, attempts at international cooperation.

Most significantly, unlike the approach sometimes adopted by certain of the United Kingdom’s allies, the aim of CONTEST has never actually been to *eradicate* or even it appears to actually prevail over terrorism, at least not according to all published versions of the strategy. While it could be argued that any alternative approach would be highly illogical, it is crucial when considering the distinct characteristics of the United Kingdom’s “strategic” approach to understand that CONTEST adopts a risk management approach as opposed to one that would seek to *destroy* or *defeat* it, militarily or otherwise. For Omand, this explains the policy’s longevity:

The prevailing approach to domestic security planning in the UK after 9/11 was heavily influenced by the growing application of risk management as a planning tool in government generally. Risk management was built in to the British counter-terrorism strategy, CONTEST. . . . That driving logic may well be the main reason why CONTEST is still in force today under its third prime minister.²⁷

This longstanding approach is important because while the application of this risk management approach to CONTEST has been one of *the* key drivers of the strategy, its appropriateness as a driver of *all* aspects of British CT strategy for the longer term is more open to question. The development of CONTEST has also been influenced by another defining philosophy—the need and desire to ensure “national resilience”²⁸ and “it is now common to talk of minimising the terrorist risk by developing *resilience*.”²⁹ Omand defined “national resilience” as “strengthening the overall ability of society to bounce back as quickly as practicable into the patterns of normal life after a major disruption.”³⁰ An important characteristic of the post-9/11 U.K. policy framework for counterterrorism policy, therefore, is that, despite the emphasis on *preventing* atrocities, the document itself (as opposed to political statements³¹) has never accepted as a realistic objective, or pretended to pursue the aim of completely *removing* the risk of terrorism—rather, the United Kingdom should be as equally well prepared to respond to, and recover from, any incident.

Many of the defining principles of CONTEST would certainly suggest that by virtue of its design it meets the classical conceptualization of a carefully considered strategy. The longstanding principle of U.K. counterterrorism strategy that any CT measure must be in accordance with the Rule of Law, for example, is an apparently obviously desirable aspiration, yet it is striking how often the principle has been tested, whether deliberately or inadvertently. Despite considerable criticism of some of the Home Office’s actions and inclinations in this respect,³² the principle has featured as a driving aspect of CONTEST. The first point under the “Principles” that the government would follow within the first published edition of CONTEST states:

The Government believes that respect for international law and human rights standards must be an integral part of its efforts to counter terrorism. The promotion of good governance and human rights internationally is also a key element of wider efforts to combat terrorism and extremism.³³

Subsequent editions of CONTEST have been equally clear in expressing the need for the United Kingdom to maintain its adherence to this essential principle.³⁴ Many critics would argue that the United Kingdom has struggled to do so at times—for example, the government’s explicit bar³⁵ on the use of five techniques, including the hooding of detainees from 1972 (and restated in 1977) had been “forgotten” by the MoD by the time of the Iraq intervention in 2003.³⁶

The centrality of driving a cross-departmental and multiagency institutional approach toward the implementation of British CT has been another core element of CONTEST,³⁷ and in this, it appears that the U.K. government has been striving to properly align the “ends, ways and means” that characterize effective strategy-making. Contemporary U.K. counterterrorism policy has received particular praise for its design and efforts in this regard, following the introduction of a considerable range of organizational reforms, new structures, and innovative (and also sometimes contentious) new powers and measures.³⁸

The effectiveness of this machinery in respect of those aspects of CONTEST judged to be either incomplete or even flailing has, however, been subject to noticeably less consideration.³⁹

Strengthening the country's intelligence machinery to counter domestic and international terrorism since 9/11 has been another important way by which the United Kingdom has sought to implement its strategic approach to countering terrorism⁴⁰ and an area that has attracted considerable additional resources, if not similar additional oversight given the scale. It has also long been recognized (if not always acted on) by senior British CT professionals and policymakers that an essential element of any counterterrorist campaign in principle is effective engagement of the community to detect and disrupt terrorism and, ideally, prevent an ideology underpinning it from taking root. Substantial efforts have been made by police services in particular to work with communities to counter extremism, thereby extending well beyond central government's encouragement of society to enhance its own emergency preparedness through the development of such concepts as "community resilience," even if the scorecard for CONTEST in this area (Prevent) is less impressive than in a number of the other "Ps." The aspiration inherent in Prevent is in fact one of the most strategic aspects of CONTEST and so its limited success is very telling in any assessment of the CONTEST as strategy. Finally, the emphasis that CONTEST has placed on both harnessing and developing meaningful international cooperation in its efforts to counter terrorism—whether bilaterally or through such supranational entities such as the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the European Union (EU) has been another central and consistent component of the U.K. approach.⁴¹ The importance to practitioners of the United Kingdom's participation in EU counterterrorism measures such as the European Arrest Warrant (EAW) is clear, for example—this was famously used to speedily extradite from Italy one of the suspects of the attempted bombings in London on 21 July 2005, Hussain Osman, a development that was seen as being a "test case" of the new measure.⁴²

The effort to incorporate these and other diverse, multifaceted aspects of CT into an overarching strategy document, CONTEST, is we judge encouraging and arguably reflects the OSCT's intention to develop a genuinely cross-departmental and comprehensive approach to the problem. However, when revisiting the concept of "strategy" in the classical, longer-term sense, and more importantly its effectiveness in practice, it does not appear that CONTEST has necessarily exhibited the outlook that is required. Somewhat surprisingly for such an apparently "successful" policy approach to a cross-cutting challenge, CONTEST has *not* actually sought to counter the problem of terrorism using *all* elements of state power. It remains, and arguably always has been, to all intents and purposes a *non-military* counterterrorism strategy. In other words, it is a strategy that has focused primarily on preventing terrorist attacks *within* the United Kingdom, delivered mainly through *civilian* institutions and means, under the leadership of the Home Office (at least for most of its lifecycle)—and even domestically has often not embraced all possible partners. On our reading of strategy, CONTEST is in this sense not truly "strategic" because it has not included proper consideration of the military's contribution to CT within a broader, overarching, and long-term national vision of how to address the problem—what one might call a Grand Strategy for CT—nor has it engaged in as wide-ranging a policy conversation with partners agencies beyond the core CT actors and one or two other ministries.

What accounts for the development of CONTEST in this way? The "criminal justice model" of counterterrorism policy has long since fallen in and out of favor in Washington, D.C., and indeed has limitations in confronting transnational terrorism, but it has

exhibited considerable longevity in the United Kingdom for several reasons. The observation that “[t]he main burden of containing and defeating terrorism in liberal democratic states is carried out by the police services”⁴³ has a long heritage and resonates strongly in the U.K. policymaking context. Reflecting this, the United Kingdom has maintained in CONTEST a loyalty to the traditional practices of the processes known as “military aid to the civil authorities” (MACA) when military support has been sought.⁴⁴ During the Northern Ireland “Troubles” this meant:

Under MACP the military’s role is strictly limited to support of the police and the civil authorities, and the army is responsible to the Chief Constable of the RUC for assisting in the maintenance of law and order and the protection of the community, and can be held accountable for its actions under the criminal and civil laws.⁴⁵

This has tended to inform the continuing doctrinal development of MACA including its various constituent elements. Whatever impact this principle may have on considering the appropriate role of the military in U.K. counterterrorism policy more broadly, this basic attitude toward the use of the military in CT has persisted through all three published editions of CONTEST.

It could be argued that the use of U.K. Armed Forces in Afghanistan was primarily justified for counterterrorism purposes (and often was articulated as such by politicians) but, as shall be argued below, this element of the strategy has to a large extent been left to the MoD. In practice, the military’s contribution to CT has become a segregated component of broader U.K. defense policy. It is barely ever mentioned within the text of CONTEST and has arguably been under-developed as an element of defense policy.

The MoD completed a major review process (the Strategic Defence Review or SDR) in 1998 designed to look forward 17 years, but following 9/11 began consideration of a “New Chapter” to supplement that review and test whether the challenge of the new CT mission required fundamental changes. By 2002, the MoD was considering radical ideas for supporting home defense/security, possibly by using reserve forces in a recalibrated posture to support a homeland defense mission, but in the event “blinked” in the face of Home Office and Whitehall obduracy. Instead a Civil Contingencies Reaction Force (CCRF) of 7,000 reserve troops across 14 brigade districts of the country (500 in each) was created as a pool for emergency reinforcement. The CCRF concept was flawed from the start due to: existing demands on reserve forces; the difficulty of identifying obvious tasks for the units; and, most worryingly, its proven inability to be rapidly and easily deployed—which was the point of the project. The CCRF concept was quietly dropped after a few years following scathing criticism from a number of quarters, including the House of Commons Defence Committee.⁴⁶

The failure of the CCRF initiative to provide a sufficiently robust framework for implementing the military’s contribution to *domestic* emergencies⁴⁷ led to a very limited evolution in strategic thinking around what constitutes the military’s role in domestic security generally, and CONTEST in particular.⁴⁸ The later decision of the Coalition government in 2010 *not* to implement the Conservative Party’s National and International Policy Panel’s proposal for a new home defense military command structure is a striking example of this tendency in action, but is not an isolated one. As the MoD turned from Afghanistan to Iraq and back to Afghanistan in the decade following 9/11, the focus was on what MoD termed “away” tasks, with “home” missions left to others. This reflected institutional bias and inertia as well as an alleged unwillingness on the part of politicians

to see the Armed Forces used at home. Policymakers accidentally (or deliberately) conflated two distinct tasks: using troops for law enforcement, and protecting society from lethal threats, through vague references to historical incidences of the use of Armed Forces against citizens (such as the Peterloo Massacre of 1819) as grounds for not thinking innovatively about the military's contribution to CT. "This has long been a delicate issue in British history, reflecting a certain squeamishness at the prospect of armed troops being seen on the streets of mainland Britain."⁴⁹

Civil servants in Britain commonly speak of ministerial hesitancy to deploy Armed Forces at home, but when pressed have often been unable to cite specific examples. On the other hand one Home Secretary was reported to have questioned the deployment of armored vehicles to Heathrow airport at a time of alert.⁵⁰

The British experience of the last two decades has actually been of regular use of Armed Forces at times of national pressure, generally supported wholeheartedly by the public.⁵¹ The deployment of thousands of military personnel to provide security for the London 2012 Olympic Games and Paralympic Games in the "biggest security operation in the UK for nearly 70 years"⁵² may have defied the underlying attitude, but this was an exception in peculiar circumstances, not the rule. It is in this context that, with only a few exceptions,⁵³ U.K. security policymakers and indeed the Armed Forces themselves have been hesitant for the military to play anything other than a limited supporting role in U.K. domestic emergency preparedness generally, and CONTEST in particular.⁵⁴ As a former minister for the Armed Forces for the 2010–15 Coalition government (a Liberal Democrat) observed in an under-reported speech following the riots in London in 2011, "...putting military forces on the streets themselves in a public order role should only happen as a last resort."⁵⁵ Such approaches do not appear to meet the test of a strategic approach of assessing which elements of state power are best suited to the particular circumstances of a CT challenge rather than public order. The omission of appropriate planning for such contingencies appears odd.

Contrasting CONTEST with the CT approach of other international governments can cast further light on how "strategic" it really is. Despite a number of shared interests in countering terrorism in the wake of 9/11, several divergences between British and American approaches to counterterrorism strategy nevertheless opened up⁵⁶—suggesting to some that the "special relationship" was degrading in this policy area, or more generally that a "transatlantic counterterrorism gap" may even have been emerging between the United States and Europe.⁵⁷ There are of course similarities; since 9/11 both the United States and the United Kingdom have placed a significant emphasis on enhancing domestic emergency preparedness and intelligence capabilities, in broadly similar ways and manner. Both countries committed their Armed Forces on "away" missions to tackle Al Qaeda and its associated networks in Afghanistan. Views are mixed on the effectiveness of the initial operation and particularly the successor operation under NATO command, and of the strength of the respective contributions, but there can be little doubt that the two countries stood "shoulder to shoulder" in this and at least some other elements of the campaigns conducted in the name of the "War on Terror." The two allies maintained a broadly similar view of the transnational character of the threat of terrorism—even a cursory review of threat assessments within CONTEST and the Department of Homeland Security's (DHS) equivalents reveals significant similarities.

The two countries have differed in tackling terrorism in several important respects, however, both strategically and tactically. Firstly, even the significant increases in the resources that have been committed to domestic counterterrorism in the United Kingdom through CONTEST (dedicated CT spending by the Home Office grew from £114,162m⁵⁸ in 2002–03

to £1,237m in 2012–13⁵⁹) are vastly outweighed in real terms by the spending dedicated to U.S. “Homeland Security” where, overall, “federal government spending on homeland security for 2009 was \$75 billion, or \$50 billion more in 2010 dollars than in 2001, adjusting for inflation.”⁶⁰ Recognizing that the DHS’s policy portfolio extends beyond CT to cover related priorities as immigration and border control, this reflects both the relative capacity and arguably the marked difference in the appetite for risk exhibited by the respective governments.⁶¹

Despite some suggestion that since 9/11 the U.S. military may (like the MoD) have been “ambivalent about its new role in homeland defense,”⁶² the United States has placed its response to Al Qaeda and international terrorism firmly on a *war footing and posture*, even after the use of the expression the “Global War on Terror” (GWOT) went out of fashion. U.S. global military CT operations continue to operate within the bounds of the Authorization for the Use of Military Force (AUMF) passed by the U.S. Congress shortly after 9/11, providing the military and other agencies with (domestic) legal authority for action globally. The level of resources that have been devoted by the United States to these campaigns is also staggering. One credible indication of overall spending has suggested, for example, that: “Congress has approved a total of \$1.283 trillion”⁶³ in the military campaigns associated with the GWOT. Whatever one’s view of the effectiveness of the U.S. approach, it has undeniably opted to develop a *military strategy* as an important component of the country’s overarching vision for CT.

By contrast, the ambition and scale of the United Kingdom’s contributions to such military operations is of a completely different order and reflective of a fundamentally different approach to the challenge of terrorism. In the history of counterterrorism after 9/11, and despite the outlooks of some individual British politicians and commentators,⁶⁴ the U.K. government has generally not been enamored or indeed comfortable with waging a “War on Terror.”⁶⁵ The wording of CONTEST itself has never made reference to this term, and as noted above it has only ever referred to the military’s contribution to CT cautiously, or in terms of a limited or “niche” domestic contribution; indeed, the 2006 edition of CONTEST was explicit that “[t]here will always be considerable challenges in doing so [using military force] because before we could consider the use of force in a particular case we would have to pinpoint the terrorists precisely, which is usually extremely difficult.”⁶⁶ The lack of innovation in this area of military thinking in the United Kingdom has been striking; this arguably reflects the fact that British policymakers have not been comfortable in discussing—publicly or otherwise—the inclusion and development a military strategy for CT within the bounds of CONTEST, as opposed to the use of such means against “terrorists” in the context of legally recognized conflict zones such as Iraq and Afghanistan. Whether the United Kingdom’s commitment to the risk management approach—and broader adherence to the principle of avoiding the use of the military for CT—might have been too dogmatic is a fair question, and one that deserves review, particularly in view of the evident need to reconsider the military’s contribution to combating Al Qaeda and Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) related entities overseas.⁶⁷ This is despite the occasional emergence of the cliché on both sides of the Atlantic that, when it comes to counterterrorism policy and its effectiveness, “the Brits do it better.”⁶⁸

Limitations of CONTEST as a Strategy

While generally positive appraisals of many aspects of CONTEST have been made by some observers, there are particular areas where the U.K. government urgently needs to develop and adopt a truly strategic approach to CONTEST; areas that would clearly benefit from more coherent coordination.

The Challenge of Extremism

Among the most high profile and controversial aspects of CONTEST since its inception has been its emphasis on the need; “to stop people becoming terrorists or supporting terrorism.”⁶⁹ The logic here is that efforts to counter terrorism have a stronger likelihood of being successful in the longer term if they address the oft-posed question; “What leads a person to turn to political violence?”⁷⁰ The argument is that armed with knowledge on this tricky issue, the government should then be able to develop smarter and more sensible policies that can stop people from turning to terrorism in the first place. The Prevent strand of CONTEST is supposed to provide this and has faced some of the toughest challenges and has yielded the fewest tangible results. It has long been observed by terrorism scholars that attempts at “deradicalization” have not featured significantly in previous British counterterrorism campaigns, and observed that, in the U.K. context, “[t]he government has deliberately avoided using any objective measures for assessing its counter-radicalisation efforts.”⁷¹ Nevertheless, the counterextremism agenda in U.K. CT policy has remained a cornerstone of successive governments’ approaches.

Other motivations underpin the U.K. inclination to place an emphasis on prevention, rather than cure, in the battle against terrorism. Cost has no doubt been a factor, but more importantly a widespread recognition exists among policymakers that the application of some of the more coercive powers deployed, however necessary, will never be enough to eradicate the problem—indeed, they may well play a role in perpetuating it. The Prevent section of the 2011 iteration of CONTEST is explicit about this: “We do not believe it is possible to resolve the threats we face simply by arresting and prosecuting more people.”⁷² It is in this context that a broad suite of measures have been implemented by the OSCT, and more widely, in an effort address the so-called root causes of terrorism, and engage in a “Battle of Ideas,” and narratives. One of the more successful initiatives has been the “Channel Project,” which has sought to identify and provide support to people believed to be “vulnerable” to radicalization. After initial suspicions about the true intent of the program, partly rooted in the fact that it was led by local police officers (but usually from community policing backgrounds) it settled down and developed a more positive reputation along with a greater involvement of partner agencies. Channel is now a national program often praised and supported by practitioners and some commentators, but it has still received criticism and suffered from a lack of resources and the unexpected rise of radicalization linked to Syria and ISIL, which has complicated the picture in the sense of enlarging significantly the pool of possible targets for intervention and support.⁷³

Prevent as a whole then has experienced significant evolution in its lifecycle and has been subject to extensive scrutiny, attracting no shortage of criticism.⁷⁴ Indeed, a fierce public debate has long been underway, which shows no sign of abating, around the appropriateness of the Prevent strand of CONTEST. As part of this hotly contested discussion, much criticism has been leveled against the policy (and those who implement it) for targeting innocent members of the British Muslim community. Recently, the U.K. government also appears to have lost support among even those academics who are sympathetic to the aims of Prevent—its decision to enshrine in law a poorly defined statutory duty upon the higher education sector to prevent radicalization on university campuses has raised concerns that the measure may have the effect of undermining academic independence and freedom of speech. While any policy that attempts to “prevent” radicalization and extremism is going to be subject to scrutiny and potential criticism, the Prevent strand of CONTEST has remained controversial through every published iteration of the strategy—one former senior police officer has even been reported to have said that Prevent

“has become a toxic brand and is widely mistrusted.”⁷⁵ Fair or not, it is now generally accepted—including within government—that there is substantial room for improvement. This must start with a proper assessment of why this aspect of CONTEST has proven to be so challenging.

Part of the reason is an apparent lack of consensus at the highest political level of the United Kingdom’s security policy machinery—and among senior officials within it—around the best way of tackling violent (and nonviolent) extremism in British society today. The United Kingdom is not the only country to face this problem, of course, but two events that occurred during the previous Parliament (2010–15) illustrate how difficult it has been to reach a consensus on this issue in Britain. Initially, the Conservative-Liberal Democratic Coalition government, which had criticized the previous Labour government’s approach to Prevent while in opposition, conducted a wide-ranging review of this strand of CONTEST upon entering government and decided to discard significant elements of the previous government’s approach. The new approach was summarized in 2011’s CONTEST:

We believe that Prevent work to date has not clearly recognised 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, very often operating within the law.⁷⁶

The revised approach argued that, especially in respect of Islamist terrorism, more had to be done to challenge extremist ideas in general, not just the explicitly *violent* variants of it, marking a distinct shift in policy. This controversial approach continues to attract criticism as the now Conservative majority government has determined to go further and push through a strategy of tackling extremism in all its forms.

Having initially appeared a party political matter, this issue later spectacularly evolved into an internal Conservative Party disagreement in May 2013, when it transpired that two senior Cabinet ministers—Theresa May (Home Secretary) and Michael Gove (then Education Secretary)—differed starkly on the approach that should be adopted toward eradicating extremism in schools.⁷⁷ According to one report of the incident, Mr. Gove had briefed a journalist at *The Times* newspaper that the Home Office was “failing to ‘drain the swamp’ of extremism.”⁷⁸ The episode did not end well for the government—Mr. Gove was moved to a different Cabinet post, and the Home Secretary’s Special Adviser who became embroiled in the affair lost her job. The incident served as an important reminder of the difficulty of achieving a consensus even at the highest political levels on the “best” approach for handling this complex and sensitive issue.

Why should there appear to be so little agreement on this issue? As most researchers within the field of the behavioral sciences report (but often are apparently ignored by policymakers), it is accepted by most terrorism scholars that there is *no single explanation* for why individuals turn to terrorism.⁷⁹ It follows, therefore, that it is unlikely that a single (or simple) way to “prevent” people from being drawn into terrorism can be found. This uncomfortable reality places an emphasis on governments encouraging communities and society more generally—and in a strategic way—to help in preventing individuals turning to violent extremism. Despite recent indications that the government may now be attempting to improve its dialogue with external partners through the creation of a new “Prevent Innovation Fund,” the experience of the last 20 years is that western governments are not currently well-equipped to be able to handle the level of external (i.e., non-governmental) or empathetic engagement that is needed for this task. Rather they should

accept the reality that government agencies cannot and perhaps should not deliver “Prevent” type agendas on their own. While the authorities may often pay lip service to the need for “partnership” in strategy documents, in practice they tend to want (and need) to do this on their own terms, thereby often alienating themselves from those with whom they need to work and those they need to reach. It now seems that the emerging view of the current government in the United Kingdom is that violent extremism is linked to nonviolent extremism and that, accepting the limitations of governments and intelligence agencies in challenging this, it intends to place a significant part of the burden of confronting this ideology on Muslim communities themselves.⁸⁰ Whether there is anything clearly identifiable as “the Muslim community” in the United Kingdom that can be tasked with this agenda remains less clear, and the terms of any partnership are even harder to articulate, as will be identifying an agreed definition of “extremism.” From a strategic perspective, the government now has little choice but to incorporate as a core element of its approach, the need to engage even more with external (nongovernmental) actors.

The Military Role in U.K. Counterterrorism

A second area where CONTEST could be structured to operate more effectively and strategically is around how the military could, and arguably should, be better integrated into the strategy. As previously stated in the three previous CONTEST policy documents and their associated published material, the role that the Armed Forces play in countering contemporary terrorism is only ever briefly mentioned; where references do appear, they tend to be in respect of the military’s contribution to security and resilience on the U.K. mainland. Despite the significant and successful level of coordination on counterterrorism issues across the *civilian* security-related departments and agencies, the role of the military in countering transnational Islamist terrorism overseas has simply not been considered by the United Kingdom in a consistently strategic way. Indeed, despite high-level political insistence around the fact that CONTEST is fully coordinated across Whitehall, a home/away distinction has in effect become deeply institutionalized in the delivery of CONTEST; this reflects, we believe, the Home Office’s policy leadership in this area through the OSCT, and institutional shibboleths within the MoD, which has remained deeply sceptical about any distinct CT role outside of large scale overseas deployments such as Afghanistan and Iraq.

There have been some attempts in recent years to align the defense and security aspects of the United Kingdom’s overall approach to “national security” in the round; the creation of a National Security Strategy in 2008; the establishment of a National Security Council (NSC) and initiation of a Strategic Defence and Security Review (SDSR) process in 2010 are examples of this at the highest level, and this has permeated to other areas of policy including procurement and security-related exports.⁸¹ Several high profile reviews have taken place since 9/11 that explicitly sought to reassess the military’s role in CT; indeed, as noted above, the New Chapter of the 1998 Strategic Defence Review was essentially predicated on assessing what changes were needed in light of 9/11—but little if any significant policy effect followed.⁸² The impression remains that the military in the United Kingdom does not see CT as a “proper” mission for an Armed Forces still essentially structured and trained for inter-state conflict, almost 15 years on from 9/11 and following repeated engagements in intra-state conflicts. Despite the stated intention of the SDR’s New Chapter to provide for a global counterterrorist capability, nothing like the innovations seen in the United States such as the development and growth of Special

Operations Command, even at an equivalent scaled effect to reflect the size of the British Armed Forces, has been attempted in the United Kingdom beyond the rebranding of certain surveillance units and the designation of one battalion of the Parachute Regiment as the nucleus of the Special Forces Support Group. On the contrary, there has been surprisingly little reform or formal guidance in this area, and it is fair to say that consideration of the military's CT role and in domestic security issues has become a "siloed" or secondary issue, only ever considered in their own right by members of the long-established defense community. Given the importance of the Armed Forces in the security structures of the United Kingdom and the scale of spending still devoted to defense (2 percent of Gross Domestic Product [GDP]), it is perhaps surprising that the national security approach of the Conservative government has not led to a greater effort to embrace all elements of state power in the fight against terrorism.

The outcome of this state of affairs is that the contribution that "defense" makes to CT has not received the analytical attention it deserves at the strategic level. While there were signs that the United Kingdom might have been considering a greater level of military involvement in the Middle East following the 2015 General Election, the frankly limited contribution to the campaign against ISIL by the United Kingdom up to then (politically rooted in the shock of the 2013 Parliamentary vote against military action against the Assad regime in Syria) speaks volumes about the level of strategic thinking from the NSC downward about an appropriate posture for the world's fifth largest spender on defense for confronting the global challenge of violent transnational Islamist extremism.

The absence of a coherent approach is particularly noticeable in respect of the serious threat posed to U.K. and international security by ISIL, especially in (but not limited to) Syria and Iraq. It had not gone unnoticed internationally that, in contrast to the approach taken by other governments including the United States, the United Kingdom had until the August killing of a British *jihadi* in Syria, opted to engage the organization militarily only in Iraq, *not* elsewhere.⁸³ Political opinion clearly remains divided on this issue, but the apparent absence of *any* strategic thinking on how the military could tackle this growing threat in the medium to long term, especially should the situation deteriorate is odd. The latest CONTEST annual report did not hold back in outlining the severity of the problem, but failed to offer any policy guidance on the role of the military—the document did not even refer to the military, the MoD or the Armed Forces.⁸⁴ By contrast, the MoD has on occasion published the limited actions it has taken to combat ISIL in Iraq, making no reference to CONTEST.⁸⁵ This absence of a connection reflects the lack of joined-up strategy between the Home Office and the MoD on CONTEST, further promoting the impression that on CT issues the U.K. government believes that "defense" and "security" should be considered separately—notwithstanding the much trumpeted "Comprehensive Approach"—or cross department collaboration—that is supposed to exist.

Public–Private Cooperation

The third area of improvement in the development of CONTEST's strategic approach we identify is in respect of engagement with the private sector in the implementation of the United Kingdom's strategic CT objectives. As with the lack of clarity around the military's involvement in supporting the overseas aspects of CONTEST, a similar dynamic has emerged whereby the Home Office has found it difficult to engage with private and corporate entities on CONTEST—many of which it depends on to implement the strategy.

A full assessment of the detail and breadth of these engagements is outside the scope of this article,⁸⁶ but brief reference to two areas of public–private interaction on U.K. CT issues serves to illustrate the challenge, and indicate why (and where) significant reform would be beneficial. One of the fall-outs of the disclosures of sensitive information on the activities of the United States and U.K. intelligence agencies by Edward Snowden has been to put considerable pressure on the U.K. government’s engagement with communications service providers (CSPs) such as Facebook, Yahoo, and Google. Significant tension now exists between such companies and state agencies around achieving the level of cooperation in the area of digital intelligence that is arguably now essential. The “backlash” arising from the Snowden revelations may be understandable and reflective of inadequate mechanisms of oversight, but the level of uncertainty it has created has not proven helpful in the context of the hundreds of British citizens who have, or may be considering traveling to Syria and Iraq for reasons contrary to national security and in breach of legislation.

With a small number of notable exceptions, it is also apparent that in the non-military U.K. security sector since 9/11 the U.K. government has overseen a number of costly and often failed CT-related procurement projects. Worse still, few lessons appear to have been learned from them—schemes such as the Information Technology (IT) project for the U.K.’s electronic borders (“e-Borders”) program, for example, have not been delivered as intended, incurring significant losses for the U.K. taxpayer—in this case a settlement of £150m was made to the Prime Contractor (Raytheon Systems UK) by the end of the unfortunate episode.⁸⁷ Appropriate structures and processes have not been developed to enable joint working and collaboration on future acquisition challenges in non-military security sectors such as CT, despite many years of activity.

The lack of more considered, longer-term strategic thinking on this aspect of policy became worryingly apparent during the final stages of planning for the London 2012 Olympics, at which time the U.K. authorities were presented with what the director of Olympic Security in the Home Office has since acknowledged was the “toughest thing” the United Kingdom faced from the security perspective.⁸⁸ The failure of the security company, G4S, to deliver the number of security personnel that it was contracted for, after a late revision in the requirement, led to a substantial manpower shortfall becoming apparent just weeks before the Opening Ceremony for the Games and resulted in the U.K. Armed Forces needing to deliver the largest operation on the mainland since the Second World War. The government’s contingency plans ensured that the shortfall did not adversely affect the security operation, but it is now apparent that the House of Commons Home Affairs Select Committee’s widely reported finding that the company was “firmly and solely” to blame for the failure to deliver on the contract was an over-simplification.⁸⁹ The reality was that *both* government and industry were unable to prevent, or resolve this issue satisfactorily together, despite having been discussing the matter for many years before, following the awarding of the games to London in July 2005, one day before the 7/7 attacks.

While an Olympic Games is arguably a unique type of event with peculiar requirements, unresolved issues such as this illustrate the lack of structure and vision that currently exists at the strategic level around the types of public–private CT and wider security coordination that will be needed for the future, and reflect a pattern whereby the government struggles to engage effectively with external actors in the implementation of its security strategies. This has long been unfamiliar work for many officials, with CONTEST and other contemporary security policy documents not properly recognizing that, as a result of the growing interdependency with the private sector, the government now

has *no choice* but to craft a more strategic relationship with a wide range of companies and sectors operating in the U.K. economy. Notwithstanding recent efforts to improve the quality of “security industry engagement” for CONTEST,⁹⁰ these are at an early stage of development and there appears to be a lack of creativity in the strategy—perhaps even a lack of openness—in seeking to develop new, publicly accountable mechanisms that will enable more effective policymaking as it relates to the private sector’s contributions to security issues. As such, one of the core “means” by which the U.K. and other governments can realize their CT and wider security objectives are being under-utilized from a strategic perspective.

CONTEST’s Failure to Develop as Strategy

Despite its longevity and, for some, its success, CONTEST has failed to properly develop into a genuinely “strategic approach” during its 12 years. The reasons for its incomplete development in strategic terms since 2003 are multifaceted, but we believe essentially revolve around two main issues: first, the perception in policymaking circles that the “strategy” has generally achieved its objectives and is working well as currently designed, and second, the United Kingdom’s longstanding adherence to a domestic approach to CT, as demonstrated by the positioning of the OSCT in the Home Office. Other issues that may have contributed to the lack of strategic development include limited capacity and resources within the government’s non-military security policy machinery (including the Home Office) to develop the approach in this way and a conscious decision by senior politicians not to apply notions of “strategy” to contemporary CT and indeed wider security policymaking. An awareness of what we judge to be strategic stagnation will hopefully prompt policymakers to revisit elements of the existing approach.

CONTEST Is Not Broken, So Why Fix It?

One central explanation for the lack of CONTEST’s strategic development is the absence of significant numbers of terrorist attacks (as opposed to plots) within the United Kingdom. In short, the strategy has been seen by senior policymakers to have largely achieved its main objective of preventing atrocities within the country, and so is judged by and within government to be “fit for purpose.” Since CONTEST has been adopted the United Kingdom has suffered a limited number of fatalities *within the United Kingdom* as a result of terrorism, even as the United Kingdom has been the target of numerous attempted terrorist plots during the lifetime of the strategy.⁹¹ While there have been notable and tragic exceptions to this statement (particularly in London in 2005, and in Northern Ireland), the number of civilian fatalities within U.K. borders since 9/11 has totaled 77 (an average of just under seven deaths per year) according to the START Consortium’s Global Terrorism Database.⁹² Caution should be applied to engaging in any “numbers game” around such issues, or drawing any firm conclusions from them, but reflecting what can be considered a clear success on the part of CONTEST to allow British life to continue (quite literally), it can be observed that the terrorist incident to have inflicted the largest single loss of life on U.K. citizens was 9/11, when 67 U.K. citizens and 16 foreign nationals with close U.K. ties, perished.⁹³

We contend that it is the *prevention of fatalities* (and casualties more broadly) in the United Kingdom that remains what matters most to counterterrorism practitioners working in the security and intelligence agencies; not discussions on the merits and limitations of strategy in this context, important as these may be. Accepting this logic, those

implementing CONTEST appear to have decided not to fundamentally reform the strategy because it is apparently “what works” in countering terrorism. This does not mean to say that terrorism and its underpinning ideology has been “prevented” or even effectively challenged, as a truly strategic approach might advocate, or that this is not an equally important policy objective. For hard-pressed security officials (civil and military) and their political masters the priority has been (and is) stopping attacks. Nonetheless, given CONTEST’s stated central aim to “reduce the risk to the United Kingdom and its interests overseas from international terrorism, so that people can go about their lives freely and with confidence” any belief that CONTEST has succeeded is a narrow reading of the aim—the risk of terrorism can hardly be said to have been reduced and public concerns about terrorism remain high. Indeed, the head of the United Kingdom’s Security Service (MI5), Andrew Parker, issued one of the starkest warnings about the continuing terrorist threat since CONTEST was written when he said in September 2015: “The UK is facing an *unprecedented level of threat* with Syria and Iraq increasingly at the forefront of MI5’s work.”⁹⁴

Another characteristic of CONTEST that may have forestalled strategic development is the apparent successful implementation and operation of new policymaking structures, which have evolved substantially since 9/11 and 7/7, to implement the strategy. While these changes have been catalogued elsewhere,⁹⁵ a number of commentators have understated the significance of developments that have actually been quite innovative and sweeping, if not little short of revolutionary (for the United Kingdom). As Hennessy notes: “Since 2001 Whitehall’s secret state has remade itself to a remarkable degree, which is not fully appreciated by the public. . . .”⁹⁶

The transfer of CT policy responsibility from the Cabinet Office to the Home Office with the establishment of the OSCT in 2007 was an important moment, not least as CONTEST was placed firmly in a government department concerned with “domestic” issues. In practice, through OSCT’s location in this *domestic-focused* department CONTEST was excluded by design from developing into a comprehensive military and security strategy for CT, the focus being on developing civilian structures for coordination. Another example of this domestic focus was the creation and evolution of the Civil Contingencies Secretariat (CCS) in the Cabinet Office, which while not created solely to support the United Kingdom’s approach to handling *terrorist* incidents (the new structures handle *any* type of emergency⁹⁷), introduced a much more organized way of coordinating major, domestic national emergencies. Only the creation in 2003 of the Joint Terrorism Analysis Centre (JTAC), hosted by MI5, appears a true exception to the “siloe,” domestic approach in the design of new structures for CT after 9/11. JTAC was, as one author has put it, “the most significant structural development within the intelligence community to date,” pooling “all international terrorism-related intelligence in one central location and under the direction of one central authority.”⁹⁸

In the CT space CONTEST has ensured the creation of a sound framework for an effective cross-departmental approach through the “4Ps” outlined above, which have been maintained as the “building blocks” of CONTEST. In essence, each “P” has a different emphasis, but the strategy has sought to be explicit about which agency (or agencies) is responsible for what within them. This pragmatic, four-pronged design and approach has proven simple to understand and arguably the “4Ps” (and CONTEST more broadly) have been well crafted to meet the needs of the U.K. bureaucratic system. Instead of a more centralized system (like the U.S.’s DHS), through the establishment of a Ministry for CT or Internal Security, or even a Department for National Security (which the Cabinet Office could have become), Whitehall has retained a “lead department” model, albeit

enhanced by a greater focus on coordination and supported more keenly by other departments and agencies. The emphasis has been on clear, pragmatic, and easily understandable objectives combined with a logical structure, designed to enable all relevant arms of the state to play their part in the delivery of CONTEST. While possibly reflective of innate British conservatism and bureaucratic inertia, as well as the wish to retain the primacy of the big spending departments within Whitehall, it is not clear whether this is the best model for countering a generational terrorist challenge.

Despite these new structures, questions have persisted over whether the arrangements have actually remained ad hoc, traditional, and even out-dated, while the threat itself has evolved considerably. Had the OSCT been placed in the Cabinet Office, for example, there might have been a greater emphasis on the comprehensiveness of the approach—with policy responsibility in the Home Office and the tensions that clearly exist across Whitehall departments, it is perhaps hardly surprising that the level of cooperation that has emerged between the civilian and military authorities on CONTEST has not been optimal. Arguably, the pragmatic approach established by CONTEST has at least ensured a level of cross-departmental cooperation not seen in other areas of national security policy,⁹⁹ even with repeated clashes over the responsibilities regarding the “Prevent” strand, which potentially has no obvious lead department to take things forward.

Another explanation for CONTEST’s limited strategic development is that it has drawn on and evolved out of the United Kingdom’s longstanding experience of tackling terrorism, which has provided the United Kingdom’s policy machinery with recent (and often bitter) lessons of “what works” in addressing this difficult problem. Countering Irish-related terrorism has provided a context for addressing the types of terrorism that entered public consciousness since 9/11 for British policymakers. Despite many debates on the nature of terrorism, and how far it has or has not changed in the last two decades, the experience of structuring government to wage a 29-year campaign against a determined and resilient terrorist threat shaped the careers of many officials behind the delivery of CONTEST. Thus the development of the United Kingdom’s CT experience has not been a post-9/11 phenomenon, (nor even wholly domestic, since it includes lessons that arise from the country’s post-colonial experience) as the 2009 edition of CONTEST explained: “CONTEST is based on principles that reflect both our core values, *the lessons we and others have drawn from experiences of terrorism to date*, and the broader security principles set out in the National Security Strategy. . . .”¹⁰⁰

Perhaps the main lesson taken from the United Kingdom’s specific historical experience that stands out from all others is, as English puts it, the need for all those concerned to “learn to live with” terrorism.¹⁰¹ In CONTEST terms this meant the maintenance of “normality” as Omand explained to the decision makers in 2003. This is undoubtedly a difficult posture for policymakers to adopt, given the political sensitivity of (and media interest in) the issue, but, in the Irish case, it is one that shows how a strategy cognizant of the need to play a “long game” with a view to establishing a sustainable political solution based on community support can bear fruit. An associated lesson in this respect is that any government’s effort to tackle terrorism will be doomed to failure unless it maintains the support of the population it purports to want to protect.¹⁰² How far the objective of “normality” is an appropriate aim for CT policy in an era of transnational and ideologically based Islamist extremism remains a difficult question. While Irish-related terrorism has not completely disappeared, the community-engaged political settlement that was reached with the 1998 Good Friday agreement clearly mitigated the worst effects of that conflict and many of the political grievances underpinning terrorism are being addressed. The challenge now is to understand and frame future policy for the campaigns against

AQ affiliates and ISIL fully appreciative of the same essential context—that the grievances of today’s terrorists (whether perceived, actual, or indeed highly misguided) are still essentially political.

Domestic Focus

CONTEST has consistently recognized in declaratory terms the strategic context of terrorism globally and the need for international cooperation to combat it effectively, but, as noted above, it has in practice largely acted as a *domestic* counterterrorism strategy primarily concerned with preventing terrorist attacks *within* the United Kingdom, and developing measures *inside the country’s borders* to do so. Indeed, such has been its orientation and sensitivity to domestic considerations it is little wonder that so many people, not least ministers, appear to have been so comfortable with it. These positions have been challenged by attacks on British citizens overseas and the issue of many hundreds of British citizens traveling overseas apparently to engage in terrorism (a problem of the past two decades, not just since the start of the Syrian Civil War).

It might be argued that CONTEST’s relative silence on the role of the military overseas (in contrast to those of the civil authorities) can be explained by the security-sensitive nature of the issues. We would argue that the main reason for limited controversy around the “away” tasks is because CONTEST has simply largely overlooked them as too difficult and perhaps too ambitious for pragmatic managers of risk. This does not mean that there has not been close military (and intelligence) cooperation with allies in the post-9/11 era, or indeed that this has not somehow taken place for CT purposes. Nonetheless, it is clear that in the ten years since 7/7, despite the high level of coordination among *domestic* departments, the delivery of CONTEST by the Home Office has meant that it has effectively evolved into a strategy for what Americans term “homeland security,” not a strategy for countering the terrorist threat to Britain and its interests arising from overseas, despite rhetoric to the contrary.

CONTEST has in practice displayed limited ambition in respect of ever attempting to “destroy” terrorism (or even effectively degrade terrorist networks) overseas. This might be politically sensible and popular—some would suggest that any other stated aim would be senseless—but, in effect, the U.K. government has outsourced this aspect of the campaign to others, especially the United States and its controversial “drone” campaigns outside of areas of defined military conflict such as Afghanistan and now Iraq. As such the United Kingdom has had little if any obvious influence on how that campaign has evolved or will in the future. In respect of policies such as the targeted killing of terrorist suspects overseas, the policy of the British government has actually diverged significantly from that of its U.S. partner, despite—from a national security perspective—having benefited from the campaign. As one recently published report put it: “The UK simply does not accept the specific US legal justification for using RPA [remotely piloted aircraft] for the targeted killing of AQ-related terrorist targets.”¹⁰³ Whether a profound policy shift is emerging as of August 2015 remains unclear, but the record to date is that the United Kingdom has been reluctant to embrace the United States’s chosen policy response, not least as its long-term utility (even accepting short-term tactical gains) remains unproven, but also has had no strategic or conceptual basis from which to proffer any alternative.

The deeper question for CONTEST, therefore, is whether the U.K. government should develop as part of its “Comprehensive Approach” a more capable and potentially sharper politico-military strategy of its own in delivering the overseas elements of countering transnational terrorism? It should be remembered that the British have been willing

to use similar tactics operationally within the borders of Afghanistan as part of their military campaign against the Taliban—itsself a declared CT mission—and are operating Reaper Remotely Piloted Aircraft (RPA) against ISIL in Iraq, alongside manned aircraft. The current situation is doubly problematic in the sense that the U.K. government has never actually crafted in the pages of CONTEST a coherent strategy for guiding the British military's contribution to CT. The strategy's domestic focus may happily have "worked" in the sense of limiting the number of fatalities on U.K. soil, but members of the Armed Forces and the MoD looking to CONTEST for clarity may justifiably feel disappointed. This oversight, deliberate or accidental, now risks appearing dangerously complacent in the sense that the apparent growing ability of terrorist entities to operate globally looks set to threaten U.K. national security more directly for many years to come.

One other explanation for the lack of strategic development around CONTEST might include the fact that the Home Office clearly lacks the capacity of the MoD—in terms of personnel numbers, the maturity of its training infrastructure and its level of financial resources—to develop the approach that is being advocated here. In this context, it is also noticeable that in line with the diversity and scale of the threat that the OSCT confronts, considerable daily demands are placed on it to "fight fires" when constantly faced with short term, urgent priorities. There are also undoubtedly many political factors at play which complicate matters and given the United Kingdom's standing today as a medium-sized power, British security policymakers may simply be uncomfortable with the notion of applying a strategic approach to the country's top contemporary security challenges. As the Minister for Policy in the Conservative–Liberal Democratic Coalition government of 2010–15, Oliver Letwin, explained in Parliament, "We are not devotees of what I believe is called 'grand strategy.'"¹⁰⁴

A Future for CONTEST as "Strategy"

Given this context and the limitations of CONTEST as a strategy, is CONTEST the optimal government strategy that some have suggested?¹⁰⁵ In our view, the 2015 Strategic Defence and Security Review process now underway in the United Kingdom offers an opportunity to reassess CONTEST's strategic utility, particularly in the important areas we have identified. In the context of wider scholarly and political debates on "what is strategy"¹⁰⁶ we believe that in some key areas the approach resembles less of a strategy than it does a checklist of activity. CONTEST and for that matter other individual sectoral security strategies can be developed as part of a proper SDSR process that actually embraces the oft-stated mantra that the division between domestic and international terrorism has disappeared. Currently though this mantra is simply that—a mantra—and in practical ways CONTEST has overseen a process where, despite much change, only limited strategic reform of existing bureaucratic structures has occurred. What reform has occurred does not fully reflect the truly transnational nature of the violent Islamist terrorist threat that the United Kingdom and its allies now face.

This is not to suggest that strategy-making in the counterterrorism arena is somehow an easy endeavor, but in the absence of a proper, fully engaged strategy encompassing at least the three areas we have identified (and potentially others), we doubt that the United Kingdom will be able to achieve its stated CT objectives in the coming years. These three challenging areas of CT are as pressing for a number of the United Kingdom's allies as they are for the United Kingdom and the same observations might apply elsewhere. A comparative analysis of CONTEST with other international CT

approaches and strategies is beyond the scope of this article, but since British CT policy in general and CONTEST in particular appears to have been embraced as a potentially optimal approach in international security policy circles, its limitations need to be understood.¹⁰⁷ While CONTEST has demonstrated some success, it is by no means a properly developed strategy in our opinion.

As CONTEST and other international CT approaches frequently recognize, the terrorism context is fast moving, placing a premium on new, agile structures and methods of cooperation, often with nongovernment partners and allies. CONTEST's mixed track record to date on external engagement urgently needs to be addressed from a strategic perspective if the United Kingdom's long-term CT objectives are to be achieved—a requirement to harness the contributions of such external partners should now be considered part of the essential “means” by which contemporary CT strategy should be pursued. In structuring the next iteration of CONTEST (assuming the framework is retained), the Home Office should re-set, within a broader review of British counterterrorism, its relationship with the armed services, the private sector, with communities, and especially with those other external organizations upon which it relies on the PREVENT agenda. A recommendation equally relevant for other nations as they ponder the future development of their own respective approaches to, and strategies for, counterterrorism.

It is not to deny CONTEST's track record, particularly in the context of the few “successful” terrorist attacks to have taken place on U.K. soil since 9/11, to emphasize the undeniable fact that the radicalization of a significant number of young British citizens has not been significantly undermined—rather the opposite. In recognizing this, we have placed our review into a broader context of what constitutes “strategy,” identifying many distinctive features of the U.K. government's approach to tackling the problem. Overall, CONTEST has proved resilient and shown itself to be in many ways effective as policy.

Whether CONTEST has remained ambitious enough, or is a sustainable model in the context of the continuing challenge of transnational terrorism and the recent emergence of ISIL overseas has yet to be seen. As it stands the United Kingdom's CT approach represented by CONTEST is not as “strategic” or even as well coordinated in some key areas of activity as has often been asserted and therefore is no longer succeeding as strategy in the proper sense of ways, ends, and means. Such is CONTEST's increasing level of dependence on external actors that it is vital that the strategy evolves to meet the contemporary context it faces. Fresh thinking will be needed in the coming period to ensure that the government engages in a more strategic way with all those on whom it depends, to ensure that CONTEST's policy record can be maintained long into the future. Adopting a truly strategic perspective will we believe provide the context for a successful counterterrorism approach.

Notes

1. David Omand, “Countering International Terrorism: The Use of Strategy,” *Survival* 47(4) (2005), pp. 107–116.
2. Chester A. Crocker, “The Strategic Dilemma of a World Adrift,” *Survival* 51(1) (2015), p. 7.
3. Jonathan Shaw, *Britain in a Perilous World: The Strategic Defence and Security Review We Need* (London: Haus Publishing, 2014), p. 30.
4. See Carly Nyst, “The Government is Trying to Create a Surveillance State,” *The Telegraph*, 17 July 2014. Available at <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/technology/internet/10974012/The-Government-is-trying-to-create-a-surveillance-state.html> (accessed 20 July 2015). A former U.K. Information Commissioner, Richard Thomas, also famously suggested that the United Kingdom was

developing into a “surveillance society.” BBC News. “Britain is ‘surveillance society,’” *BBC Website*, 2 November 2006. Available at http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/6108496.stm (accessed 10 July 2015).

5. Steve Hewitt, *The British War on Terror: Terrorism and Counter-Terrorism on the Home Front since 9/11* (London: Continuum, 2008), p. 120.

6. For a recent critique on the state of terrorism research along these lines, see Marc Sageman, “The Stagnation in Terrorism Research,” *Terrorism and Political Violence* 26(4) (2014).

7. The Rt Hon Lord Lloyd of Berwick, “Inquiry into Legislation Against Terrorism, Volume I,” *Cm 3420*, October 1996, p. xii.

8. In scale and capability not to be confused with the U.S. National Security Council machinery.

9. Its author explained that “CONTEST” was an acronym derived from “COuNter-TERRORism STRategy.” David Omand, *Securing the State* (London: C. Hurst & Co., 2010), p. 86.

10. HM Government, “Countering International Terrorism: The United Kingdom’s Strategy,” *Cm 6888* (July 2006), p. 3.

11. HM Government, “CONTEST: The United Kingdom’s Strategy for Countering Terrorism,” *Cm 8123* (July 2011), p. 10.

12. HM Government, “Pursue Prevent Protect Prepare: The United Kingdom’s Strategy for Countering International Terrorism,” *Cm 7547* (March 2009), p. 56.

13. Hewitt, *The British War on Terror*, pp. 99–100.

14. Accompanied by a decision to shift prisons and probation policy into a Ministry of Justice with the Home Office concentrating on security, policing, and borders.

15. Omand, “Countering International Terrorism,” p. 108.

16. *Ibid.*

17. Lawrence Freedman, *Strategy: A History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), p. xi.

18. Richard K. Betts, “Is Strategy and Illusion?,” *International Security* 25(2) (2000), p. 6.

19. Huw Strachan, “Strategy and Contingency,” *International Affairs* 87(6) (2011), p. 1281.

20. *Ibid.*, p. 1281.

21. *Ibid.*, p. 1288.

22. Freedman, *Strategy*, p. ix.

23. Hennessy arguably comes closest, offering revealing insights into the governance and operation of the OSCT, in Peter Hennessy, *The Secret State: Preparing for the Worst 1945–2010* (London: Penguin Books, 2010), especially chapter 9. Paul Wilkinson also covered in impressive detail many aspects of CT policy from aviation security to the need for international intelligence cooperation, in Paul Wilkinson, ed., *Homeland Security in the UK: Future preparedness for terrorist attack since 9/11* (London: Routledge, 2007). On the overall rationale, design, and operation of the strategy see: David Veness, “The Safety of the Realm in Retrospect and Prospect,” *RUSI Journal* 148(4) (2003), pp. 14–17; Wyn Q. Bowen and Andrew Stewart, eds., *Terrorism in the UK: Broadening the UK Government’s Counter-Terrorist Response—CONTEST*, The Airey Neave Papers, Occasional 50 (UK: Strategic and Combat Studies Institute, 2005); Charlie Edwards, “The UK Counter-Terrorism Strategy: A Return on Investment,” *RUSI Analysis*, 10 April 2013. Available at <https://www.rusi.org/go.php?structureID=commentary&ref=C5165370EE3D28#.VWxgeM9Viko> (accessed 1 June 2015); and Frank Foley, *Countering Terrorism in Britain and France* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013). See Paul Cornish, “Technology, Strategy and Counterterrorism,” *International Affairs* 86(4) (2010), pp. 875–888, on the interaction between technology and policy in U.K. counterterrorism strategy. Chapter four of Andrew Stanforth’s *Preventing Terrorism and Violent Extremism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014) includes a dedicated section on CONTEST. See also Hewitt, *The British War on Terror*, especially chapters four and five.

24. Shaw, *Britain in a Perilous World*, especially p. 30.

25. Omand, *Securing the State*. See also David Omand, “Emergency Planning, Security and Business Continuity,” *RUSI Journal* 149(4) (2004), pp. 26–33; David Omand, “What is the Future for the Critical National Infrastructure?,” *RUSI Monitor* 7(4) (2008), pp. 8–15; and David Omand, “The Terrorist Threat to the UK in the Post-9/11 Decade,” *Journal of Terrorism Research* 3(1) (2012). Available at <http://ojs.st-andrews.ac.uk/index.php/jtr/article/view/412> (accessed 4 April 2015).

26. David Omand, “How the UK Managed Counter-Terrorism after 9/11,” *RUSI Analysis*, 2 September 2011. Available at <https://www.rusi.org/analysis/commentary/ref:C4E60F78A0E3A4#.VfvmN9VhHw> (accessed 18 September 2015).

27. Omand, “The Terrorist Threat to the UK.”

28. Omand, delivered a detailed overview of the concept and its associated activities when he was still serving in government. David Omand, "National Resilience Priorities for UK Government," *RUSI Analysis*, 1 July 2004. Available at <https://www.rusi.org/analysis/commentary/ref:C40AB913E66BA2/#.VW8YXc9Viko> (accessed 2 June 2015).

29. Jon Coaffee, "From Counterterrorism to Resilience," *The European Legacy* 11(4) (2006), p. 396 (emphasis in original).

30. Omand, *Securing the State*, p. 60.

31. Interestingly, the "Queens Speech" of 2015 outlined the United Kingdom's ongoing intention to contribute to international efforts "to ultimately defeat terrorism in the Middle East." Cabinet Office, "Queen's Speech 2015," London, 27 May 2015. Available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/queens-speech-2015> (accessed 21 July 2015).

32. The U.K. government has undoubtedly faced major obstacles in persuading critics and the wider public that U.K. CT policy is aligned with the Rule of Law. In a major defeat the then-Labour government failed to get its proposal to extend the length of pre-charge detention of terrorist suspects to up to 90 days through parliament in 2006; in a high profile decision, the House of Lords struck down legislation not judged to provide sufficient protections to foreign terrorist suspects. As another example, one analyst has recently criticized the reported inclination on the part of the U.K. government to introduce far-reaching new measures, such as the revocation of citizenship, in order to disrupt the travel movements of individuals posing a threat to the country, see Benoît Gomis, *Counter Terrorism: Reassessing the Policy Response* (Boca Raton, FL: CRC Press, 2015), pp. 134–136. Another prominent critic has decried the development of an "authoritarian arms race in British politics for at least 20 years with both major parties attacking the basic rights and freedoms of ordinary people." Shami Chakrabarti, "Speech by the Director of Liberty, Shami Chakrabarti, to the TUC Annual Congress," 16 September 2015. Available at <https://www.tuc.org.uk/about-tuc/congress/congress-2015/union-issues/speech-director-liberty-shami-chakrabarti-tuc-annual> (accessed 18 September 2015).

33. *Cm 7547*, March 2009, p. 9.

34. The 2009 edition of CONTEST states: "Our approach to national security in general and to counter-terrorism in particular is grounded in a set of core values. They include human rights, the rule of law, legitimate and accountable government, justice, freedom, tolerance and opportunity for all." *Cm 7547*, March 2009, p. 157.

35. "The Government of the United Kingdom . . . now give this unqualified undertaking, that the 'five techniques' will not in any circumstances be reintroduced as an aid to interrogation." Statement by Sir Samuel Silkin, UK Attorney General see: 28th Report of the Joint Committee on Human Rights, 15 July 2008, fn 1.

36. MoD, Aitken Report, 25 January 2008, also reported in *The Guardian*, 26 January 2008. The five techniques used during interrogation in the 1971 period of internment in Northern Ireland were: wall standing; hooding; subjection to noise; sleep deprivation; and deprivation of food and drink.

37. Foley, *Countering Terrorism*, p. 78.

38. See Foley, *Countering Terrorism*, pp. 78–84; Staniforth, *Preventing Terrorism*, pp. 87–104; Hennessy, *The Secret State*, chapter 9; and Shaw, *Britain in a Perilous World*, pp. 30–32.

39. One account that might be an exception to this statement is Hewitt, *The British War on Terror* (especially chapters four and five). See also Gomis, *Counterterrorism: Reassessing the Policy Response*.

40. Veness has explained the logic: "Clearly intelligence in the sense of understanding, pre-empting and pursuing terrorists before they can commit murder is the primary asset and ambition." David Veness, "The Fight against Terrorism: Achieving a New Balanced Normality," *RUSI Journal* 148(4) (2003), p. 15.

41. CONTEST (2011) states explicitly, "Success in counter-terrorism depends on international collaboration." *Cm 8123*, July 2011, p. 11.

42. "Extradited Bomb Suspect Charged," *BBC News*, 22 September 2005. Available at <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/4265572.stm> (accessed 18 September 2015).

43. Paul Wilkinson, *Terrorism Versus Democracy: The Liberal State Response* (London: Frank Cass, 2005), p. 110.

44. The range of powers that can be used under authorization within the MACA policy framework (including Military Aid to other Government Departments [MACD], Military Aid to the Civil Power [MACP], and Military Aid to the Civil Community [MACC]) are detailed in full in Ministry

of Defence, "Operations in the UK: The Defence Contribution to Resilience," *Joint Doctrine Publication 02 (2nd Edition)*, September 2007.

45. Wilkinson, *Terrorism Versus Democracy*, p. 102.

46. House of Commons, Defence Select Committee, "A New Chapter to the Strategic Defence Review," *Sixth Report of Session 2002-03*, HC 93-I, May 2003. Available at <http://www.parliament.the-stationery-office.co.uk/pa/cm200203/cmselect/cmdfence/93/93.pdf> (accessed July 21, 2015), pp. 26–30.

47. These failures are detailed in the context of the large-scale flooding across the United Kingdom in 2007 by Jennifer Cole in "The Need for a UK Civil Defence Force?," *RUSI Analysis*, 30 July 2007. Available at <https://www.rusi.org/go.php?structureID=commentary&ref=C46AD9E1302254#.VXGsqM9Viko> (accessed 5 June 2015).

48. An exception to this is Mark Phillips, "Redefining the Military's Role in Domestic Security," in Michael Codner and Michael Clarke, eds., *A Question of Security: The British Defence Review in an Age of Austerity* (London: I.B. Taurus & Co., 2011).

49. Paul Cornish, ed., "Domestic Security, Civil Contingencies and Resilience in the United Kingdom: A Guide to Policy," June 2007. Available at <https://www.chathamhouse.org/sites/files/chathamhouse/public/Research/International%20Security/0607ukresilience.pdf> (accessed 5 June 2015), p. 19.

50. See Stephen Pollard, *David Blunkett* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 2004).

51. The Foot and Mouth Crisis saw significant use of the armed forces, although the MoD was released from the demands of standing ready to provide cover for strikes by fire service crews (Op. Fresco) following a change in legislation.

52. Robert Raine, "Reflections on Security at the 2012 Olympics," *Intelligence and National Security* 30(4) (2015), p. 422.

53. Such as the Labour government's decision to deploy military personnel and hardware including armored vehicles at Heathrow Airport in February 2003 in response to a terrorist plot.

54. This tendency has also been observed in the U.S. CT context. Martha Crenshaw, "Counterterrorism Policy and the Political Process," *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 24(5) (2001), p. 332.

55. Nick Harvey, "Supporting Civilian Authority: What Role for the Military?," *The Politeia Autumn Address*, East India House, London, 14 October 2011. Available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/2011-10-14-supporting-civilian-authority-what-role-for-the-military-2> (accessed 10 July 2015).

56. See especially Wyn Rees and Richard J. Aldrich, "Contending Cultures of Counterterrorism: Transatlantic Divergence or Convergence?," *International Affairs* 81(5) (2005), pp. 905–923.

57. Jeremy Shapiro and Daniel Byman, "Bridging the Transatlantic Terrorism Gap," *The Washington Quarterly* 29(4) (Autumn 2006), pp. 33–50.

58. Comprising £87,149 in Resourcing and £27,013 in Capital Spending. Home Office, "Departmental Report 2008," *Cm 7396*, May 2008. Available at https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/238727/7396.pdf (accessed 10 July 2015), p. 94.

59. National Audit Office, "The Performance of the Home Office 2012–13," December 2013. Available at <http://www.nao.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2013/12/10330-001-Home-Office-Departmental-overview.pdf> (accessed 5 June 2015), p. 9.

60. John Mueller and Mark G Stewart, *Terror, Security and Money: Balancing the Risks, Benefits, and Costs of Homeland Security* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

61. U.S. GDP is roughly six times that of the United Kingdom.

62. Crenshaw, "Counterterrorism Policy and the Political Process," p. 332.

63. Congressional Research Service Report "The Cost of Iraq, Afghanistan, and Other Global War on Terror Operations Since 9/11," 29 March 2011, Summary.

64. See especially Hewitt, *The British War on Terror*.

65. Omand has argued that the British approach to CT was "... [a] very different approach from the US 'war on terror' strategy, that sought risk elimination in relation to AQ." Omand, "The Terrorist Threat to the UK."

66. HM Government, "Countering International Terrorism: The United Kingdom's Strategy," p. 29.

67. The targeted killing of two British *jihadists* in Syria by a U.K.-operated Reaper Piloted Aircraft (RPA) in August 2015 may portend a change in U.K. policy, yet to be articulated in CONTEST and related documents.

68. One American legal commentator famously argued as such. David Cole, "The Brits Do It Better," *The New York Review of Books*, 12 June 2008. Available at <http://scholarship.law.georgetown.edu/facpub/5/> (accessed 23 July 2015).

69. *Cm 8123*, July 2011, p. 10.

70. Sageman, "The Stagnation in Terrorism Research," p. 565.

71. Andrew Silke, ed., *The Psychology of Counter-Terrorism: Critical Issues and Challenges*, in Andrew Silke, ed., *The Psychology of Counter-Terrorism* (Oxford: Routledge, 2011), p. 14.

72. *Cm 8123*, July 2011, p. 11.

73. Critical analysis of the development and effectiveness of the "Channel" program is contained within works including Charlotte Heath-Kelly, "Counter-Terrorism and the Counterfactual: Producing the 'Radicalisation' Discourse and the UK PREVENT Strategy," *The British Journal of Politics and International Relations* 15(3) (2013), pp. 405–406; and Keiran Hardy, "Resilience in UK Counterterrorism," *Theoretical Criminology* 19 (1) (2015), p. 12.

74. The body of critical literature is large—for a selection of policy-orientated examples on PREVENT, see Heath-Kelly, "Counter-Terrorism and the Counterfactual," pp. 394–415; and Jonathan Githens-Mazer and Robert Lambert, "Why Conventional Wisdom on Radicalization Fails: The Persistence of a Failed Discourse," *International Affairs* 86(4) (2010), pp. 889–901.

75. Josh Halliday and Vikram Dodd, "UK Anti-Radicalisation Prevent Strategy a 'Toxic Brand,'" *The Guardian*, 9 March 2015. Available at <http://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2015/mar/09/anti-radicalisation-prevent-strategy-a-toxic-brand> (accessed 21 August 2015).

76. *Cm 8123*, July 2011, p. 12.

77. This followed a high profile inquiry into the so-called Trojan Horse scandal in Birmingham (West Midlands) where it was alleged there was an attempt to introduce a Salafist ethos into several schools.

78. "Michael Gove apologises over 'Trojan Horse' row with Theresa May," BBC News, 8 June 2014. Available at <http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-politics-27750921> (accessed 17 June 2015).

79. See especially John Horgan, *The Psychology of Terrorism* (Oxford: Routledge, 2005).

80. This was the approach of a section titled "Non-violent and violent" within a recent speech by the prime minister launching the "Counter-Extremism Strategy," anticipated for publication in autumn 2015. David Cameron, "Extremism: PM Speech," Birmingham, 20 July 2015. Available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/extremism-pm-speech> (accessed 21 July 2015).

81. See the combination of these aspects of policy in MoD, "National Security through Technology: Technology, Equipment, and Support for UK Defence and Security," *CM 8278*, February 2012.

82. See House of Commons Defence Select Committee, "The Defence Contribution to UK National Security and Resilience," *Sixth Report of Session 2008–09, HC 121*, May 2009. A former MoD Minister for the Armed Forces, Adam Ingram, also conducted an unpublished review of the MoD's contribution to CT and resilience in 2008 at the request of the prime minister.

83. This despite the prime minister's recent insistence to a U.S. broadcaster that he now wants the United Kingdom to "do more" to tackle ISIL in Syria militarily. "UK Will Help Destroy Islamic State, David Cameron Tells US," *BBC News*, 19 July 2015. Available at <http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-33584548> (accessed 21 July 2015).

84. HM Government, "CONTEST: The United Kingdom's Strategy for Countering Terrorism: Annual Report for 2014," *Cm 9048*, March 2015. Available at https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/415711/contest_annual_report_for_2014_print.pdf (accessed 17 June 2015).

85. See, for example, MoD, "Update: Air Strikes in Iraq," *MoD News Story*, 21 July 2015. Available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/update-air-strikes-in-iraq> (accessed 23 July 2015).

86. See Hugo Rosemont, "A UK 'Security-Industry Complex'? A Reassessment of the Origins, Characteristics, and Consequences of Private Sector Involvement in the Counter-Terrorism Aspects of Contemporary UK National Security Strategy," Ph.D. Dissertation, King's College London, 2015.

87. Home Office, "Home Secretary Letter on e-Borders Settlement," 27 March 2015. Available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/home-secretary-letter-on-e-borders-settlement> (accessed 17 September 2015).

88. Raine, "Reflections on Security," p. 430.

89. Hugo Rosemont, "H-Diplo Article Review of Robert Raine, Reflections on Security at the 2012 Olympics," *Intelligence and National Security* 30(4) (2015), pp. 422–433. Available at

<https://networks.h-net.org/node/28443/discussions/85237/h-diplo-article-review-555-%E2%80%9CReflections-security-2012-olympics%E2%80%9D-1> (accessed 1 October 2015).

90. The Home Office's early attempts in this regard have been examined in Hugo Rosemont, "Private Sector Engagement in the UK's Counter-Terrorism Strategy: A New Agenda," *Behavioral Sciences of Terrorism and Political Aggression* 6(2) (2014), pp. 147–161.

91. For example, it has recently been revealed that the United Kingdom was subject to "at least three major terrorist plots" in 2014 alone. *Cm 9048*, March 2015, p. 9.

92. Comprising 58 fatalities in Great Britain and 23 fatalities in Northern Ireland between 2001–2013 (most recent data); Data sourced via <http://www.start.umd.edu/gtd/> (accessed 13 June 2015). The exclusion of the four 7/7 suicide bombers explains the variance in our stated figure above.

93. Bradley Bamford, "The United Kingdom's 'War Against Terrorism,'" *Terrorism and Political Violence* 16(4) (2004), p. 741. See also "British Victims of September 11," *The Guardian*, 10 September 2002. Available at <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2002/sep/10/september11.uk> (accessed 24 July 2015).

94. "MI5 Today and Our Challenges Tomorrow," *Security Service Website*, 17 September 2015. Available at <https://www.mi5.gov.uk/home/news/news-by-category/speeches-and-statements/mi5-today-and-our-challenges-tomorrow.html> (accessed 17 September 2015) (emphasis added).

95. See especially Staniforth, *Preventing Terrorism*, pp. 87–104; Foley, *Countering Terrorism in Britain and France*, pp. 77–84; Hennessy, *The Secret State*, pp. 367–389.

96. Hennessy, *The Secret State*, p. 367.

97. Tobias Feakin, "UK Perspectives on Security in an Age of 'Shock and Aftershock,'" in Klaus Thoma, ed., *European Perspectives on Security Research* (Berlin: Springer-Verlag, 2011), p. 47.

98. Bamford, "The United Kingdom's 'War Against Terrorism,'" p. 744.

99. Shaw, "Britain in a Perilous World," pp. 30–32.

100. *Cm 7547*, March 2009, p. 54 (emphasis added).

101. Richard English, *Terrorism: How to Respond* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), p. 120.

102. It has been similarly argued that public support is "a major factor in helping operative democracies to fight terrorism." Paul Wilkinson, *Terrorism versus Democracy: The Liberal State Response*, Third Edition (Oxford: Routledge, 2011), p. 11.

103. University of Birmingham, "The Security Impact of Drones: Challenges and Opportunities for the UK," *The Report*, October 2014. Available at <http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/Documents/research/policycommission/remote-warfare/final-report-october-2014.pdf> (accessed 17 June 2015), p. 83.

104. Joint Committee on the National Security Strategy, "First Review of the National Security Strategy 2010," First Report of Session 2010–12, HC 1384, March 2012. Available at <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/jt201012/jtselect/jtnatsec/265/265.pdf> (accessed 21 August 2015), p. 16.

105. Shaw, *Britain in a Perilous World*, pp. 30–32.

106. Variants of this question were addressed in an inquiry by the House of Commons Public Administration Select Committee. "Who Does UK National Strategy? First Report of Session 2010–11," *HC435* (12 Oct 2010). Available at <http://www.parliament.uk/business/committees/committees-a-z/commons-select/public-administration-select-committee/inquiries/uk-grand-strategy/> (accessed 10 July 2015).

107. CONTEST has been used as the basis of the European Union's (EU) Counter-Terrorism Strategy, as the EU's Counter-Terrorism Coordinator explained to the U.K. Parliament in January 2014; "The EU CT strategy, for instance, is in a way replication of the four Ps of the CONTEST strategy: prevent, protect, pursue, prepare." House of Commons Home Affairs Committee, "Counter-terrorism," Seventeenth Report of Session 2013–14, 9 May 2014. Available at <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201314/cmselect/cmhaff/231/231.pdf> (accessed 17 September 2015), Ev. 75.