

# Citizenship and education in an age of extremisms

Gholami, Reza

DOI:

[10.1007/978-3-319-67905-1\\_24-1](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-67905-1_24-1)

License:

None: All rights reserved

*Document Version*

Peer reviewed version

*Citation for published version (Harvard):*

Gholami, R 2018, Citizenship and education in an age of extremisms. in A Peterson, G Stahl & H Soong (eds), *The Palgrave Handbook of Citizenship and Education*. 1 edn, Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 1-15.

[https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-67905-1\\_24-1](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-67905-1_24-1)

[Link to publication on Research at Birmingham portal](#)

**Publisher Rights Statement:**

Checked for eligibility: 23/10/2018

**General rights**

Unless a licence is specified above, all rights (including copyright and moral rights) in this document are retained by the authors and/or the copyright holders. The express permission of the copyright holder must be obtained for any use of this material other than for purposes permitted by law.

- Users may freely distribute the URL that is used to identify this publication.
- Users may download and/or print one copy of the publication from the University of Birmingham research portal for the purpose of private study or non-commercial research.
- User may use extracts from the document in line with the concept of 'fair dealing' under the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988 (?)
- Users may not further distribute the material nor use it for the purposes of commercial gain.

Where a licence is displayed above, please note the terms and conditions of the licence govern your use of this document.

When citing, please reference the published version.

**Take down policy**

While the University of Birmingham exercises care and attention in making items available there are rare occasions when an item has been uploaded in error or has been deemed to be commercially or otherwise sensitive.

If you believe that this is the case for this document, please contact [UBIRA@lists.bham.ac.uk](mailto:UBIRA@lists.bham.ac.uk) providing details and we will remove access to the work immediately and investigate.

## **Title: Citizenship and Education in an Age of Extremisms**

Dr Reza Gholami ([r.gholami@bham.ac.uk](mailto:r.gholami@bham.ac.uk))

*Department of Education and Social Justice, University of Birmingham*

*Edgbaston, Birmingham, United Kingdom*

Published in Peterson, A., Stahl, G. & Soong, H. (Eds.) *The Palgrave Handbook of Citizenship and Education*. Palgrave Macmillan.

### **Abstract**

This chapter aims to show the ways in which contemporary liberal democracies find themselves in an “age of extremism”, an age defined by the increasing dominance of extreme ideas and practices across the political spectrum, including in the mainstream. Nation-States partially bear responsibility for this situation through their responses to extremist movements, and because of these responses, the very pillars of liberal democracy, such as human rights and social justice, are today under threat. Crucially, in this age of extremism, both citizenship and education have been formally drawn into counter-extremism policy across the Western world. This shift in policy has important implications for, and raises vital questions about, citizenship and education as ideas, principles and practices. The chapter will explore these issues and questions. It will use a range of academic and non-academic sources, but its examples are mainly drawn from the UK context and its primary analytical thrust is sociological.

### **Key words**

*Citizenship; education; extremism; terrorism; policy; liberal democracy*

### **The age of extremism**

In his seminal book *The Age of Extremes* (1994), the late, prominent historian Eric Hobsbawm traces what he calls the ‘short twentieth century’, the period between 1914 and 1991. This period is unique in that it witnessed two World Wars (leading to the state sanctioned killing of an unprecedented number of people), the near collapse and subsequent restructuring of capitalism, the beginning of the post-colonial world and the fall of communism. The century was also marked by great advances in science and civil rights. Ultimately, however, Hobsbawm delivers a damning verdict on capitalism, state socialism and nationalism in the twentieth century. His conclusion is that neither the past nor the present (as he found it in the 1990s) provide a useful roadmap for the future of humanity. In fact, his predictions for the twenty-first century are rather grim, involving continued global violence and political and economic instability.

In the years immediately following Hobsbawm’s publication – from the mid-1990s until the early 2000s – the historian’s predictions might have looked to be inaccurate. During that time, a great deal of academic research and policy initiatives emerged that painted a much more optimistic picture of human living. In the social sciences, authors such as Arjun Appadurai, Ulrich Beck, James Clifford, Stuart Hall, Aihwa Ong and Saskia Sassen, to name a few, wrote of a world of hybridity, fluid national boundaries, ‘flexible’ citizenship, cosmopolitanism and diasporic connections; a world that offered opportunities for the marginalized to meaningfully challenge the structures that had historically

oppressed them. These advances were mirrored in education policy by a commitment to a multiculturalist and inclusive education as well as a desire to increase pupils' political literacy and global outlook in a rapidly globalising world. These principles came to underpin the school subject of Citizenship in England, which became statutory in 2002 following the publication of the Crick Report in 1998.

However, with the benefit of hindsight, the world as we encounter it in the summer of 2018 seems a great deal closer to Hobsbawm's grim predictions. Since the terrorist attacks against the United States on 11 September 2001, the world has consistently witnessed major political and economic catastrophes: the devastating financial crash of 2008; the Syrian war and refugee crisis, which in part led to the rise of ISIS; the threat of nuclear Armageddon resulting from the stand-off between the US and North Korea; the rapid growth of right-wing extremism across the Western world; systematic persecution and ethnic cleansing (e.g. of Myanmar's Rohingya Muslims), and so on. Moreover, in socialist democratic countries like the UK, government policy has generally turned against the welfare state with severe cuts to the funding of fundamental public services such as health and social care, housing and, of course, education. There is evidence that austerity politics has hit the poorest members of society, as well as ethnic minorities and women, the hardest (See Portes 2018). In education, it has arguably reduced quality and increased the potential for corruption (Sodha 2018; FT 2017)

What does all of this have to do with an "age of extremisms"? Whereas Hobsbawm's short twentieth century saw epic battles between major global ideologies, those ideologies had firm historical and ideological moorings. Therefore, within those ideological frameworks, the behaviour of proponents and opponents alike was to a large degree predictable, and they operated with reference to a perceived solid centre. Today, however, any sense of predictability seems to have left social, political and economic affairs. Social and political life feels like a game in which "anything goes" and those with the most wealth and power can say or do whatever will influence public affairs to their own benefit. In the time of post-truth (now officially an entry in the Oxford English Dictionary) and fake news, politicians seem to lie with impunity and governments use cyber technology to interfere in the democratic processes of other countries. Moreover, facts and expertise seem to matter less to many voters than emotions, perceptions and personal cults. For example, the Leave.EU campaign that helped to secure the UK's vote to leave the European Union in 2016 explicitly denigrated economic and political experts and asked people not to listen to them, while the 'Remain' side predicted unprecedented economic disasters that were seen by some Leave supporters as fake news. And much of current US policy seems to be dictated by Donald Trump's whimsical Twitter outbursts with no sense of coherence or forethought whatsoever.

Such political capriciousness, however, is not just characteristic of a few inflated personalities such as Trump. In July 2018, the UK's Home Secretary, Sajid Javid, stated without any forewarning that the UK government would not oppose the death penalty for two British men due to face prosecution in the US on suspicion of having carried out terrorist offences for ISIS. This move, which was severely criticized by a range of stakeholders, is in direct contradiction to the UK government's long-standing opposition to capital punishment and its policy of seeking assurances that British citizens prosecuted abroad would not be put to death. The government's argument was that it is better to ensure the prosecution of these men in the US than to risk failing to bring them to justice in the UK. However, legal experts argued that the UK justice system is more than robust enough for the task (see Foa 2018). Presumably, the government believed that in this case the crimes are so heinous – and they are indeed most heinous – that they warrant a U-turn on the UK's political and ethical stance. But the important question, surely, is whether, to what extent and *how* a democratically-elected

government should change its position on such matters. At the time of writing, the government has temporarily suspended its decision due to heavy pressure from civil society, though it defends its position and the case is ongoing.

The above case underscores the whimsical, unpredictable and emotionally-charged nature of contemporary politics, even in matters of utmost importance to a liberal democratic society. However, it also draws attention to another important feature of the age of extremisms, namely the way in which liberal democracies are choosing to respond to extremist movements and the implications of such responses. The Home Secretary's aforementioned decision followed an earlier statement by Rory Stewart, Minister of State for the Ministry of Justice, in which he appeared to sanction the killing of British citizens who had gone to Syria to join ISIS. In an interview, he said: "I'm afraid we have to be serious about the fact these people are a serious danger to us, and unfortunately, the only way of dealing with them will be, in almost every case, to kill them." (BBC 2017) This is emblematic of much of contemporary Western politics (Trump's "Muslim ban" can be cited as another example): in their response to extremist movements and ideologies, liberal democracies founded on the principles of justice and human rights are taking increasingly extreme positions themselves, backtracking on their own values in a sort of 'fight-fire-with-fire' politics. The driving force behind such a politics is the fact that in the context of terrorism, economic hardship and refugee crises, politicians are playing on the emotional outrage of their electorates. In turn, they may be leading their countries down a dangerous path. Donald Trump's election campaign is a good example of this: his unashamed ridiculing of women and disabled people alongside his venomous attacks on Muslims and Mexicans have gone a long way to embolden extreme far-right voices in the US and generally create an acrimonious public discourse (see for example Vowels 2017).

A dictionary definition of extremism is "belief in and support for ideas that are very far from what most people consider correct or reasonable", which is also adopted by UNESCO (UNESCO 2017). By this definition, it is possible to say that the kinds of statements made by Donald Trump and Rory Stewart, and indeed many other politicians around the world, are extreme because they contradict what most people consider acceptable speech and behaviour. That is, presumably most people, especially in a democratic country, do not agree with the denigration of women, disabled people, or religious and ethnic minorities; nor would they go as far as to promote the state murder of youths who have joined an extremist movement. Panjwani et al. (2018) talk about an age of *extremisms* (in the plural) in this sense. Although in popular debates extremism has come almost exclusively to refer to the activities of Islamist movements, and in some cases the Far-Right, they argue that it is today equally important to pay attention to "extremisms of the mainstream" – Trump, Stewart and others. As the coming sections will demonstrate, the age of extremisms has immensely important implications for citizenship and education, in terms of policy and practice, because both have become formally drawn into the counter-terrorism agenda. The next section will examine questions of citizenship, followed by a more specific focus on counter-terrorism policy. The chapter will then explore what is at stake in educating citizens in today's liberal democracies.

### **Citizenship in the age of extremisms**

What does it mean to be a citizen, especially a citizen of a liberal democracy, in the sort of world described above? The most obvious answer is that extremisms of all sorts will have an impact on being a citizen. For Panjwani et al. (2018), people today live in an age of extremisms because even though most citizens do not hold extreme beliefs, they nonetheless live surrounded by extreme ideas, even in the mainstream, and have come to anticipate them in every aspect of their lives. This includes key areas of policy, which this chapter will return to below. The dangerous flip-side of this, of course, is that gradually extreme ideas, policies and practices will come to dominate the public

sphere and seem normal, resulting in a shift of an entire society towards more extreme positions. There are already signs of such a shift. In the past few years, for example, ultra-nationalist and far-right demonstrations in many European countries have attracted very large crowds from across social classes, with one such march in Poland in 2017 drawing up to 60,000 people (see Taylor 2017). Similarly, recent German polls show that the right-wing, anti-immigrant AFD party has the support of some fourteen percent of the German electorate, which equates to the sobering figure of around 8.7 million people (The Local 2018).

In such a political environment, citizenship becomes very palpably split along racial, ethnic and religious lines and comes to mean very different things to different people. At its core, “citizenship” denotes membership of a political community (i.e. a status) that confers upon an individual certain rights and duties and determines the level of participation in the affairs of that community. However, there are also important tensions in the idea and practice of citizenship, namely in the balance between emphasising a homogeneous polity alongside the recognition of social diversity (see Joppke 2007; Balibar 2015). Joppke highlights that in addition to status and rights, identity is also a key dimension of citizenship – that is, the way in which individuals perceive themselves, behave and are expected (by the state) to behave as members of the political community. His argument is that in the era of globalization and multiculturalism, state membership no longer imputes a specific/unitary identity, which is to say that citizenship has become available to diverse individuals without ethnic, racial, sexual or religious provisos (ibid: 38). The upshot of this, for Joppke, is a weakening of the long-existing links between nation-states and their sense of ethnic homogeneity.

However, as demonstrated earlier, today there are concerted efforts across the political spectrum in many Western countries to revitalise the links between citizenship, national identity and ethnic/racial/cultural homogeneity. In the age of extremisms, being a citizen is increasingly defined as belonging and being loyal to a particular understanding of the nation-state, one that is racialized, linked to ideas of religious heritage, and plays on the notion of shared values and culture. As mentioned, this conception of citizenship creates a rift in the way diverse people, especially religious and ethnic minorities, experience their citizenship. In turn, it affects how those people behave and practice their citizenship. A useful way to conceptualize these dynamics is to draw upon Banks’ notion of “failed citizenship”, which he argues comes to exist when:

individuals or groups who are born within a nation or migrate to it and live within it for an extended period of time do not internalize the values and ethos of the nation-state, feel structurally excluded within it, and have highly ambivalent feeling toward it. Individuals who experience failed citizenship focus primarily on their own needs for political efficacy, group identity, and structural inclusion rather than the overarching and shared goals of the nation-state. Their allegiance and commitment to the nation-state is eclectic and complex (2017: 366).

Banks is right to focus on the discord that materializes when an individual’s or group’s values and priorities are divergent from those that dominate the national agenda. However, he seems to place the onus too heavily on the “failed citizens” to internalize the nation-state’s dominant values, potentially holding them disproportionately responsible for the “failure”. This is further seen in Banks’ choice of language that failed citizens *feel* (rather than are) structurally excluded. Perhaps this is not surprising when considering that Banks is defining failed citizenship in relation to a patriotic citizenship that is ultimately held together by/in a nation-state and pledges allegiance to it foremost (ibid: 369). What Banks does not sufficiently address, however, is that regardless of rhetorics and policies of equality and “shared goals”, nation-states are sites of unequal power relations, social hierarchies and governance through hegemony. As the next section will demonstrate, in some cases

citizens from minority backgrounds are excluded and demonized in the national mainstream despite their best efforts to integrate. This is significant in the context of this chapter because key policies affecting citizenship and education are often shaped in relation to ethnic and religious minorities and tend to problematize and disadvantage them.

### **Policy, representation and exclusion**

In 2017, a report by the UK's All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on social integration, which is chaired by Labour MP Chuka Umunna, recognized that immigrants in the UK are often demonized. It further stated that the demonization, which has been a growing problem after the Brexit vote, is a significant barrier to integration (APPG 2017). However, the problem of integration is faced not only by recent immigrants but also by British citizens whose families have in some cases been settled in Britain for three generations or more. For example, a recent study of Iranians in the UK found that despite very high levels educational, professional and economic success, language proficiency and cultural proximity to the mainstream, Iranians are nonetheless negatively represented in dominant discourses about integration (see Gholami and Sreberny 2018). According to this study, the main reason for Iranians' demonization and exclusion was that they were perceived in the mainstream as Muslims, even though the majority of the study's participants, and reportedly the majority of UK Iranians (Sreberny and Gholami 2016), identified as secular. This research lends a great deal of credence to the argument that one's legal status and rights as a citizen, and even a high degree of integration, are not sufficient to ensure acceptance by a majority community. Rather, the bestowal of such an acceptance remains the privilege of the majority and tends to be strongly connected with racial, ethnic and religious positionalities and perceptions.

It is clear, then, that in terms of practice citizenship is constituted through legal, social and cultural 'assets' (or capital) to which a country's citizens have varying levels of access. If at the time of the French Revolution – generally accepted as the birth of the modern citizen (see Brubaker 1989) – national citizenship was imagined as the great equalizer, that promise certainly has not been borne out throughout its history. Generally, minority ethnic, racial and religious people seem to have to 'work harder' to be *and remain* citizens. This raises the important issue of the potential loss of citizenship, which is also a top-down process over which minorities exert little control. In July of 2018, for instance, the Indian government rescinded the citizenship of some four million Bengalis in Assam whom it declared "illegal". These people could, as a result, find themselves completely outside the protection of the law, face internment, separation from family members and deportation. Another example is the 2018 "Windrush" scandal in the UK during which people from the Caribbean, former British colonies, who migrated to the UK between 1948 and 1970 and settled there in the belief that they were British, suddenly found themselves as "illegals" and faced deportation. Some were deported and others experienced loss of employment, housing and benefits payments. Particularly disturbing was the fact that the children of those migrants, who had been born and raised in Britain and identified as British, were asked by the UK Home Office to "prove" their Britishness or they themselves could face deportation.

These cases underline the complex relationship between citizenship as lived experience and citizenship defined purely legally. State policy, concerned only with the latter, operates as if the two can be neatly separated. However, when the state casts doubt over a person's legal status as a citizen – as in the case of the Windrush scandal in the UK – it also wreaks havoc on even the most intimate parts of that person's life (see for example, Quin 2018; Khan 2018). Of course, the boundary between lived and legal citizenship is blurry and complex for all members of a society. For example, the 2013 British Social Attitudes Survey on national identity found that most people define Britishness by a range of civic *and* ethnic factors. Thus, although 95% said that speaking English (a

civic factor) was a key factor in being British, 77% mentioned having lived in Britain for most of one's life; 74% highlighted being born in Britain; and 51% noted having British ancestry as major factors in defining Britishness. It is also noteworthy that 24% of respondents listed Christianity as a determining factor (NatCen 2014). The issue, however, is that the interrelationship between the civic and the ethnic is rarely, if ever, questioned in the case of majority populations, who of course also tend to make up most of the government. This, then, throws into sharp relief the centrality of power in matters of citizenship policy and whether power favours the majority group or is equally distributed. If the former, minorities will always be in danger of treatment as second-class citizens and of losing their citizenship altogether, which can have grave, even fatal, consequences.

In his influential book *Homo Sacer* (1998), Agamben likens the loss of citizenship (one's political life) to a person's reduction to "bare life" (an unpolitical, purely functional/biological life). Crucially, this reduction places the individual outside the law, a space Agamben calls "the state of exception" where individuals may be "lawfully" killed by the state. The treatment of Jews in Nazi Germany offers a brutally vivid example of the state of exception, where millions of people, stripped of their citizenship and thus all their rights, were at the total mercy of the state (ibid: 114). In most cases, they were systematically abused, tortured and eventually murdered without anyone (in Germany at the time) being legally responsible. However, such horrific events cannot be dismissed as a "thing of the past": for Agamben, the state of exception is an integral part of how modern politics works. In fact, even in liberal democracies today it seems that people do not so much have the right to have rights, as Hannah Arendt famously put it, as they are *allowed* to have rights. Albeit not a direct comparison to Nazi concentration camps, Guantanamo Bay prison serves as a useful contemporary example because the underlying logic for its existence is the state of exception. People suspected of terrorism are incarcerated there indefinitely and are subject to torture (officially called 'enhanced interrogation' and otherwise illegal) by the US government. Although the European Union (EU) does not have an equivalent to Guantanamo, European citizens have been imprisoned at the US facility.

In the age of extremisms, the revocation of citizenship has come to play a major role in political life in Western democracies, being used by politicians, and called for by ordinary citizens, as a legitimate defence against perceived security threats. To be sure, citizenship – or revocation thereof – now forms an integral part counter-terrorism policy across many Western countries. Esbrook (2016: 1276) describes this use of citizenship as extreme and notes that after the second World War Western countries generally shunned the practice exactly because it was a tool of the Nazis. However, things have changed markedly since 9/11. Whereas the UK government, for example, rescinded zero citizenships between 1973 and 2003, from 2003 to 2012 it rescinded the citizenship of twenty-seven people, followed by another twenty revocations in 2013 alone (ibid: 1282). The legislative safeguard against citizenship deprivation has historically been the clause that revocation cannot take place where a person is rendered stateless as a result. However, as Mantu (2018: 34) explains, Western states (e.g. Austria, Denmark, France, the Netherlands, the UK) have in recent years amended their laws to enable them to revoke citizenship even when this results in statelessness, provided that the individual concerned obtained citizenship through naturalization. Thus, here, too, one's minority status is significant, as these laws have applied virtually exclusively to foreign-born, or naturalized, citizens (Esbrook 2016: 1285). Ultimately, Esbrook warns that using citizenship as a counter-terrorism tool is profoundly dangerous because it threatens to upend the hard-fought achievements of post-WW2 liberal democracies. Esbrook's concern is echoed by Mantu (2018: 39) who argues that citizenship deprivation poses a significant challenge to the human right to nationality and to a slew of international legal measures ratified by democratic countries designed to protect that right.

However, current policy logic in many Western nations suggests that governments are unlikely to redress the decline in protecting citizen rights so far as revocation is concerned. In fact, the logic of that policy is now shaping other policies, creating an environment in which suspicion and securitization shape a great deal of public life. For example, the borders of the nation-state are being tightened and suspicion of the Other is being (re)enforced through public institutions such as schools. Public employees, including teachers, are being required to act as security agents, and citizen-on-citizen surveillance is increasingly commonplace. Arguably, this is precisely how “Prevent”, a key strand of the UK’s flagship CONTEST counter-extremism policy operates. Prevent assumes that without state intervention young people are vulnerable to radicalization, and thus requires teachers and other public employees to “spot signs of radicalisation” (HM Government 2015) and refer suspected individuals to the government’s Channel programme, which provides support for those “at risk” of being drawn into terrorism. In 2016-17, 7631 people were referred to Channel, with two-thirds of the referrals being for concerns about “Islamist” extremism. These figures have sparked criticism that the policy disproportionately targets people of Muslim backgrounds and is therefore Islamophobic (see Novelli 2017). Interestingly, 86% of the referrals were rejected by Channel, and of the remaining cases, 96% left the Channel programme without the need for any further action. This belies the fact that spotting the signs of radicalisation is a straightforward process rather than being a process which inevitably relies on racial, religious and behavioural stereotypes and assumptions.

Clearly, the issues targeted by the Prevent policy – youth radicalization and the prevention of terrorism – must be addressed. However, questions must be posed about whether or not the policy is best suited for its purpose to safeguard people and communities from terrorism, including whether its negative side-effects are a price worth paying (see Open Society 2016). In addition to the issue of Islamophobia, teachers and other educators, as we will see, have criticised the Prevent policy for making their jobs difficult and for hindering young people’s ability to engage in discussions about controversial topics. Furthermore, the effectiveness of the Channel programme is in doubt. For instance, after an attempted terrorist attack on London’s underground rail network by Ahmad Hassan in September 2017, it became clear that the perpetrator was known to the authorities and had in fact received Channel support (Guardian 2018). Finally, Prevent defines extremism as “*vocal or active opposition to fundamental British values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, and mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs*” (HMG 2015, emphasis added). However, as Hand (2014) argues, although the focus on the values (which incidentally can be found in the constitutions of many countries around the world) is welcomed, attempting to link them to British national identity is problematic as it can cause exclusion and resentment (cf. House of Lords 2017).

On the whole, it is possible to argue that policies such as Prevent play on a fluid version of Agamben’s state of exception, i.e. several states of exception with varying degrees of brutality. By defining anyone who even vocally challenges a state-selected list of values as a potential extremist, and by requiring public professionals to use racial, religious and behavioural markers to spot potential terrorists, Prevent opens up the possibility for citizens to be placed in a temporary *and partial* state of exception. Being referred to Channel arguably suspends an individual’s normal life by identifying them, possibly in front of their peers and community, as a potential terrorist. This, in turn, exposes that person to, and justifies, treatments and representations not normally experienced by British citizens. By the same token, the person also enters into a new relationship with the state. Although the Channel stage is described as ‘support’ and cannot be compared to extreme measures like Guantanamo, a referred individual is potentially on a trajectory that could send them up the policy chain to Guantanamo-like practices and citizenship revocation. In this way, *states of exception*



seem to be working through the entire “repertoire” of counter-terrorism policies, functioning exactly as a means to curtail individual agency *at the same time as* they implicate the concept of citizenship, which, at least in theory, is about guaranteeing individual agency and freedom.

### **Educating citizens in an “age of extremisms”**

In their 2003 paper, Osler and Starkey built on Held’s notion of “overlapping communities of fate” to suggest that citizenship education must be seriously concerned with educating *cosmopolitan* citizens who are “confident in their own identities and will work to achieve peace, human rights and democracy within the local community and at a global level” (2003: 246). For Osler and Starkey, education for cosmopolitan citizenship is predicated upon an understanding that young citizens, though formally seen as citizens-in-waiting, are in fact highly political and live lives that span across local, national, regional and global arenas. The authors are critical of national curricula that fail to recognize, and prepare young people for, those complexities. Fifteen years later, and no closer to Osler’s and Starkey’s vision, the educational agenda in many Western democracies is today dominated by an inward-looking, ethno-nationalist logic increasingly formalized through policy. In the UK, education is being reshaped by the Prevent duty with its statutory requirement to promote “fundamental British values” (FBVs), which fosters a radically different vision of citizenship.

One of the striking features of the Prevent policy, as alluded to above, is that it identifies the education sector as a key site for counter-extremism. Incidentally, schools and colleges were responsible for the largest number of referrals to Channel (33%) in 2016/17. Furthermore, as Panjwani et al. (2018: 5) show, key concepts and definitions central for and to Prevent have been honed through education policies, including the teaching of FBVs. Drawing the education sector into counter-extremism policy so formally and explicitly is unprecedented; and it has had wide-reaching implications for how some young British people are perceived and perceive themselves, as well as for citizenship education more generally (cf. House of Lords 2017).

The UK’s Association for Citizenship Teaching (ACT 2015) has argued that the citizenship classroom is the right place for pupils to discuss the sort of “controversial issues” raised by the Prevent policy. This view builds on the government’s own advice to schools in the wake of the policy highlighting the importance of citizenship education and discussing controversial topics (DfE 2015). ACT’s report thus sets out quite detailed ideas for how citizenship teachers can incorporate the Prevent duty and FBVs into their lessons. Importantly, ACT draws attention to the problem of Islamophobia, which can be exacerbated by Prevent. ACT also suggests that Prevent itself be discussed as a controversial issue. These are useful ideas in so far as they acknowledge the civic and socio-political dimensions of extremism and that policy processes are complex and need critical dialogue. However, ACT also recognizes that Prevent places considerable limitations on citizenship classrooms. As the report states:

A key consideration is the way in which the tension is resolved between facilitating the discussion of controversial issues (which implies there are a variety of valid viewpoints) and the need to challenge some views or even report them to senior colleagues (which implies some views are forbidden) (ACT 2015: 2).

Thus, under Prevent, some views will always be “too controversial” and beyond the realm of engagement; they will trigger, rather, a process that marks the end of teaching/learning/debating/exploring and divides the classroom into “good” and “bad” citizens. In other words, although subtly, FBVs-style citizenship works increasingly normatively and is shot through with moral imperatives *determined by the state in the context of extremism and terrorism*. To be sure, liberal democracies are increasingly becoming contexts in which crucial questions of

values, social relations and political engagement are approached primarily in relation to extremism and terrorism. In such contexts, citizenship education risks becoming a training course by which young people learn to merely internalize, and not question, the state's imperatives, accept extremism/terrorism as normal and act in relation to them, accept the logic of everyday suspicion and surveillance, and identify people with divergent views as enemies.

It should be noted that the British government maintains that there is nothing problematic or disruptive about the addition of the Prevent duty to education; that the former is a natural extension of the latter, because ultimately it is about safeguarding young people (see DfE 2015; see also HM Government 2018). However, evidence from teachers points to many challenges in the classroom resulting from the difficulty of implementing the Prevent duty into daily teaching practice. As Quartermaine (2018: 32) observes:

Both politics and religion are considered [by Prevent] as definable components of terrorism, but the promotion of political ideas must be avoided (restricted by the Education Act 1996:230) and respect for freedom of religion or belief must be maintained. A skilled teacher may have the necessary tools to undertake such a complex task, but even then, the resultant restricted discussion may not have the desired effect of preventing certain individuals from engaging in violent activities.

In this vein, recent research on education professionals by Busher et al. (2017) shows that among their respondents, a third of education staff without a lead safeguarding role could not describe themselves as even “fairly confident” in implementing the duty. Confidence levels were lowest among younger and less experienced teachers. Staff also mentioned that the duty makes it harder to provide an inclusive educational environment and were particularly worried about the stigmatizing effect it has on Muslim children. Overall, the effectiveness of the policy in picking up individuals with a genuine potential for violence was questioned. What is more, there is evidence that the policy can be counter-productive by creating in some youths a resentment towards mainstream society, potentially inspiring them to join extremist movements (see Open Society 2016).

In light of these difficulties, politicians have taken it upon themselves to develop curricula and educational materials. In 2017, the UK government started to write a curriculum for teaching FBVs to address the anxieties of the teaching profession (Whittaker 2017). The new curriculum is meant to be delivered through existing subjects such as Citizenship, History and Religious Studies. In this way, FBVs is set to become a key component of the entire national curriculum, which could work to justify the whole FBVs agenda. In History, for instance, the “chronological teaching” of British history is supposed to “foster integration”, according to Lord Agnew, the Academies Minister (ibid.). The focus will be to teach pupils about the evolution of parliamentary democracy and religious tolerance in Britain. These themes are of utmost importance, but there is a danger that such selective teaching presents a distorted and overly triumphalist picture of British history. This sort of celebratory approach has been part of the government's educational agenda since Conservative politician Michael Gove's tenure as Education Secretary (2010-2014). Teachers, however, have been complaining about a “white-washed” history curriculum that is apologetic for the racist brutality of the British Empire at the same time as downplaying the experiences of the peoples it exploited (see Lais 2017). In the context of extremism/terrorism and FBVs, such a curriculum risks hiding from view the role that Western states played in bringing about the current state of affairs, for example by creating, funding and educating violent Islamist movements in Afghanistan after the Cold War (see Novelli 2017). In terms of citizenship education, moreover, the curriculum will not enable young people to adequately engage with the complex dynamics and nuances of contemporary citizenship, such as those raised above regarding the fluidity of states of exception.

The issue of Prevent and FBVs in education sketched briefly here, casts light on what is increasingly a defining characteristic of education in the age of extremism: competency, legitimacy and expertise, as well as wider educational goals of nurturing young minds and instilling in them values of global justice, peace and equity, seem today to matter less than the enforcement of non-educational policies through public education *and* the instilling of narrowly-defined values by educational means, as educators now perform the role of intelligence and border force agents and politicians are involved in designing curricula and managing educational institutions.

## **Conclusion**

It should be borne in mind that the issues raised in this chapter are unfolding in a wider educational context in which arts, humanities and some social studies subjects – subjects that encourage a critical and creative relationship with the world – are being devalued. The devaluation is often systematic and structural taking the form of under-funding or accusations of lack of academic rigour. This is a trend that can be witnessed in many parts of the world (see Nussbaum 2009). In the UK, and in England more specifically, citizenship education has not been unaffected by this trend despite being singled out by the government for the promotion of its counter-extremism agenda. As Education Secretary, Michael Gove was vehemently critical of citizenship education and attempted unsuccessfully to make it a non-statutory subject. However, Gove's wider reforms, including introducing the English Baccalaureate to promote "traditional" academic excellence, have had a negative impact on subjects such as citizenship. According to the latest official figures, between 2014 and 2018 GCSE entries for Citizenship Studies have dropped by 53.3% (The Telegraph 2018). Similarly, one of the least popular A-Level subjects in 2017 was Critical Thinking, which only attracted 1,241 students out of a cohort of 720,000 (Nixon 2018).

Interestingly, this sort of systematic devaluation may itself be one of root causes of radicalization and terrorism. Sociologists Gambetta and Hertog (2016) have shown that the vast majority of Islamist suicide bombers have had science backgrounds, especially in engineering. Their conclusion is that these are clever young people who are unable to question authority. Panjwani, et al. (2018), too, have suggested that it is vital, now more than ever, for society to renew its commitment to the values of liberal education, which emphasizes the holistic nurturing of human beings, critical thinking and a balance between the arts and sciences. In stark contrast to this, as this chapter has shown, the age of extremism is one where both citizenship and education have become tools of counter-terrorism policy in the highly volatile political and economic environment of contemporary liberal democracies. But in so doing, Western countries are no closer to eradicating the threat of radicalization and terrorist attacks by Islamist or far-right movements. Instead, they have increasingly normalized extreme discourses, practices and policies throughout their own societies, marginalizing their ethnic and religious minority citizens and risking the erosion of the very foundations upon which their democracies have been erected.

## References:

- ACT (2015) "The Prevent Duty and Controversial Issues: Creating a Curriculum Response through Citizenship" <http://www.teachingcitizenship.org.uk/resource/prevent-duty-and-controversial-issues-creating-curriculum-response-through-citizenship> (accessed 24/04/2018)
- APPG (2017) "Integration Not Demonisation" <http://d3n8a8pro7vhmx.cloudfront.net/themes/570513f1b504f500db000001/attachments/original/1503672973/TC0016 AAPG Integration not Demonisation Report 1-Page view.pdf?1503672973> (accessed 24/04/2018)
- Balibar, E. (2015) *Citizenship*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Banks, J. A. (2017) "Failed Citizenship and Transformative Civic Education" *Educational Researcher*, 46:7, 366-377 DOI: 10.3102/0013189X17726741
- BBC (2017) "British IS fighters 'must be killed', minister says" <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-41717394> (accessed 02/08/2018)
- Brubaker, W. R. (1989) "The French Revolution and the Invention of Citizenship" *French Politics and Society*, 7:3, 30-49
- Busher, J., Choudhury, T., Thomas, P. & Harris, G. (2017) "What the Prevent duty means for schools and colleges in England: An analysis of educationalists' experiences" <http://azizfoundation.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/What-the-Prevent-Duty-means-for-schools-and-colleges-in-England.pdf> (accessed 11/08/2018)
- DfE (2015) *The Prevent Duty: Departmental Advice for Schools and Childcare Providers*. [www.gov.uk/government/publications](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications) (accessed 31/03/2018)
- Esbrook, L. (2016) "Citizenship Unmoored: Expatriation as a Counter-Terrorism Tool" *University of Pennsylvania Journal of International Law*, 37: 4, 1273-1329
- Foa, M. (2018) "Sajid Javid has undermined the UK's decades-long opposition to the death penalty and Guantánamo Bay" <https://reprieve.org.uk/update/sajid-javid-has-undermined-the-uks-decades-long-opposition-to-the-death-penalty-and-guantanamo-bay/> (accessed 23 July 2018)
- FT (2017) "Austerity reaches England's school gates" <https://www.ft.com/content/49eaaaa2-1937-11e7-a53d-df09f373be87> (accessed 13/08/2018)
- Gambetta, D. & Hertog, S. (2016) *Engineers of Jihad: The Curious Connection between Violent Extremism and Education*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Gholami, R. & Sreberny, A. (2018) "Integration, Class and Secularism: The Marginalization of Shia Identities in the UK Iranian Diaspora," *Journal of Contemporary Islam*, published online: DOI: 10.1007/s11562-018-0429-7
- Guardian (2018) "Parsons Green tube bomber was referred to Prevent programme" <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2018/mar/16/parsons-green-tube-bomber-convicted-of-attempted-murder> (accessed 10/08/2018)
- Hand, M. (2014) "We should not be conflating liberal democratic values with British national identity" <http://blogs.lse.ac.uk/politicsandpolicy/encouraging-liberal-democratic-values-not-conflating-with-british-national-identity/> (accessed 29/04/2018)
- Hobsbawm, E. (1994) *The Age of Extremes*. Abacus Books

- House of Lords (2017) "The Ties that Bind: Citizenship and Civic Engagement in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century" <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld201719/ldselect/ldcitizen/118/118.pdf> (accessed 23/08/2018)
- HM Government (2018) "Government response to the Lords Select Committee on Citizenship and Civic Engagement" [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/720554/CCS207\\_CCS0618952710001\\_Government\\_Response\\_to\\_House\\_of\\_Lords\\_Select\\_Committee\\_on\\_Citizenship\\_and\\_Civic\\_Engagement.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/720554/CCS207_CCS0618952710001_Government_Response_to_House_of_Lords_Select_Committee_on_Citizenship_and_Civic_Engagement.pdf) (accessed 23/08/2018)
- HM Government (2015) *Revised Prevent Duty Guidance for England and Wales*.
- Joppke, C. (2007) "Transformation of Citizenship: Status, Rights, Identity", *Citizenship Studies*, 11:1, 37-48, DOI: 10.1080/13621020601099831
- Khan, S. (2018) "Windrush isn't an anomaly – it is the product of deliberate and consistent behaviour, and it has scary implications for Brexit," <https://www.independent.co.uk/voices/windrush-uk-immigration-theresa-may-home-office-tory-policy-brexit-a8311926.html> (accessed 23/09/2018)
- Lais, H. (2017) "As a History Teacher, I'm Horrified by the New Curriculum" <https://www.independent.co.uk/voices/black-history-month-colonialism-history-teacher-whitewashing-selective-past-a8025741.html> (accessed 11/08/2018)
- Mantu, S. (2018) "'Terrorist' citizens and the human right to nationality," *Journal of Contemporary European Studies*, 26:1, 28-41, DOI: 10.1080/14782804.2017.1397503
- NatCen (2014) "British Social Attitudes, 31: National Identity" <http://www.bsa.natcen.ac.uk/latest-report/british-social-attitudes-31/national-identity/defining-british-identity.aspx> (accessed 06/08/2018)
- Nixon, M. (2018) "A-level results day 2017 explained in four charts" <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/education/a-level-results-day-2017-new-exams-explained-grades-boys-vs-girls-popular-subjects-regional-national-a7899851.html> (accessed 11/08/2018)
- Novelli, M. (2017) "Education and countering violent extremism: Western logics from south to north?" *Compare: A Journal of Comparative and International Education*, 47: 6, 1-17, DOI: 10.1080/03057925.2017.1341301
- Nussbaum, M. (2009) "Education for Profit, Education for Freedom" *Liberal Education* 95 (3): 6-13
- Open Society (2016) "Eroding trust: The UK's prevent counter-extremism strategy in health and education." [https://www.opensocietyfoundations.org/sites/default/files/erodingtrust-20161017\\_0.pdf](https://www.opensocietyfoundations.org/sites/default/files/erodingtrust-20161017_0.pdf) (accessed 27/02/2018)
- Osler, A. & Starkey, H. (2003) "Learning for Cosmopolitan Citizenship: theoretical debates and young people's experiences" *Educational Review*, Vol. 55: 3, 243-254
- Panjwani, F., Revell, L. Gholami, R. & Diboll, M. (2018) "Introduction" in Panjwani, F., Revell, L., Gholami, R. & Diboll, M. (Eds.) *Education and Extremisms: Re-Thinking Liberal Pedagogies in the Contemporary World*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Portes, J. (2018) "Austerity really has hit poor people hardest – the figures prove it", <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2018/mar/14/austerity-poor-disability-george-osborne-tories> (accessed 13/08/2018)
- Quartermaine, A. (2018) "Education, Freedom of Belief and Countering Terrorism: The Minefield between UK Policy and School Implementation" in Panjwani, F., Revell, L., Gholami, R. & Diboll, M.

(Eds.) *Education and Extremisms: Re-Thinking Liberal Pedagogies in the Contemporary World*. London and New York: Routledge.

Quinn, B. (2018) "Home Office 'failed to foresee policy's terrible Windrush effects'" <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2018/apr/20/home-office-failed-foresee-policys-terrible-windrush-effects> (accessed 23/09/2018)

Sodha, S. (2018) "The Great Academy Schools Scandal" <https://www.theguardian.com/education/2018/jul/22/academy-schools-scandal-failing-trusts> (accessed 13/08/2018)

Sreberny, A. & Gholami, R. (2016) *Iranian Communities in Britain: A Research Report*. London Middle East Institute. <https://www.soas.ac.uk/lmei-cis/events/file113142.pdf> (accessed 12/08/2018)

Taylor, M. (2017) "'White Europe': 60,000 nationalists march on Poland's Independence Day" <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/nov/12/white-europe-60000-nationalists-march-on-polands-independence-day> (accessed 25/05/2018)

The Local (2018) "Far-right AfD now the second most popular party in Germany: poll" <https://www.thelocal.de/20180219/poll-afd-now-the-second-most-popular-party> (accessed: 03/08/2018)

The Telegraph (2018) "Decline of 'Mickey Mouse' GCSEs revealed as entries for Media Studies and Home Economics plummet," <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/education/2018/08/01/decline-mickey-mouse-gcses-revealed-entries-media-studies-home/> (accessed 11/08/2018)

UNESCO (2017) *Preventing Violent Extremism through Education: A Guide for Policy Makers*. Paris, France, UNESCO

Vowels, N. (2017) "Trump presidency won't increase white supremacists but will embolden them to be more daring" <http://www.sussex.ac.uk/broadcast/read/42191> (accessed 23/08/2018)

Whittaker, F. (2017) "Government 'developing fundamental British values curriculum'" <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/government-developing-fundamental-british-values-curriculum/> (accessed 11/08/2018)