

Theme: Religion, third sector, policy and public management

Editorial

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Leading at the government–third sector interface presents challenges of principle, law, governance, finance and innovation. By its own admission, the UK government has been behind the curve in developing evidence regarding the charitable and wider third sector to help public leaders in this task*. Along with many civic actors, policy-makers then may legitimately have assumed that the ‘modernization’ of society would ensure that never again could religious factors complicate public management. After all, the idea of advancing ‘secularization’ underwrote most of the social sciences as taught in Europe until recently (Davie, 2007; Spalek and Imtoul, 2008).

Contemporary events, political rhetoric and social reality, however, have shattered such preconceptions. Aside from the ‘radicalization’ of some communities by a mixture of local poverty, enthusiastic religious discourses and extraordinary international events, there have been political efforts by segments of New Labour and many Conservative front-benchers to affirm faith communities as social contributions and as a basis for public sector reform and civic renewal (Hague, 2000; Ahmed, 2003; Cameron, 2007; Centre for Social Justice, 2007). Meanwhile, the world has never been more religious nor more varied in the forms which that religiosity—and equally diverse numbers of secularisms—now take (Berger, 1999; Levey and Modood, 2009; Modood, 2008).

Even in seemingly ‘modern’ Britain, mainstream Christian denominations are experiencing significant internationalization of their congregations due to global immigration. In some regions they encounter

both increased membership and immiseration among their co-religionists (Davis *et al.*, 2007; IPPR, 2009). Moreover, religious ‘belief’ data by electoral ward, even before EU accession country arrivals, suggests around 80% of UK citizens believe in a God—with an astonishing number of wards reporting *Christian* conviction at above 85% (Davis *et al.*, 2008).

Nevertheless, the sociological evidence reveals that especially in Britain religious organizations and institutions, their members, allies and long-distance supporters (not to mention their critics) comprise a curious mixture of not only ‘believing’ but also ‘belonging’ individuals and communities. In 2006, the government’s citizenship survey reported religious observance as a stronger indicator of increased likelihood to practice civic habits, such as volunteering and giving, than religious—or secular—‘beliefs’ alone (Home Office, 2006). Meanwhile, some religious communities are convinced that they exist ‘for the nation’ or ‘for the poorest’. This compels them to welfare service and advocacy for all citizens, not just their ‘members’. The appropriate analytical balance then between religious ‘belonging’, ‘believing’, ‘membership’ and who speaks for the civic common good across the UK’s highly religiously divergent regions is complex territory (Davie *et al.*, 2003). Add to this the internationalization of social policy, migration flows and religious networks, and the national picture becomes more contentious still (Crouch, 2005; Wuthnow, 2009).

These challenges have not made for easy public leadership: the Charity Commission and the National Health Service, for example, have been in the difficult position of having to try to define religious ‘belief’, while the Lord Chancellor’s Department, and others, have a human rights agenda to negotiate (Parliament, 2007). Other departments of state relate to ‘faith-based voluntary organizations’, ‘religious NGOs’, ‘church’ and ‘faith leaderships’. Unlike the USA (for example at Harvard’s Hauser Center), they have been unable to pursue dialogue in an environment where a major school of government (or equivalent) has been consistently working on an evidence base for the religious third sector, nor funded to devise a top management executive programme for those in government (Bane *et al.*, 2007). No

*See both the Cabinet Office’s call for a consultant to advise on, and the subsequent tender documents, for the OTS/ESRC Third Sector Research Centre:

www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/media/cabinetoffice/third_sector/assets/research_centre_annex_a.pdf

wonder, then, that parts of Whitehall have chased the dream of a single 'faith umbrella body' to simplify matters (interview with Faithworks in 2008).

For the leaders of faith communities, the journey from mass-produced government towards a more challenging, but potentially increasingly responsive, idea of governance has been no less demanding. What government may see as seemingly simple public advances by a leader of faith may be achieved at huge personal cost, with policy 'success' for government occurring at the very moment at which faith community support and credibility is shredded for that person, precisely because of that advance. New government initiatives, meanwhile, may cause the raising up of a generation of activists whose extra commitment to civic engagement with government risks undermining the capacity of their own religious community (Farnell, 2007). Simultaneously, fresh government funding streams give birth to 'representatives', who by-pass traditional community hierarchies, challenge those who had claimed a monopoly on the task or represent nothing more than a phase of institutional entrepreneurship. Lastly, new legislation changing the civil law accountability of religious charities in the field of employment, public benefit and equalities—to name but three—may come as a profound shock to some religious trustees formed in traditions which see their institutions as embodiments of unique, and even superior, ethical attributes*. Some religious leaders would like it simpler too.

The scope of this edition

For some, 'religion' and 'faith' bring to mind particular public management concerns, especially the disputed questions of faith-based schooling, and healthcare—its ethics and allocation. Such debates could indeed benefit from a deeper and more discursive exploration, not least by putting the UK policy options in their international context (Finn, 2010). Nevertheless, they are the subject of much

*See requests made by the Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales and the Catholic Scottish Bishops' Conference for 'exemption' to the civil law on employment and equalities legislation. A source of conflict here is the tension between new 'civil' law and longstanding 'canon' law (which, although binding on the bishops, has the civil status of the 'rules of a club'):

www.catholicchurch.org.uk/ccb/catholic_church/media_centre2/press_releases/press_releases_2009/bishops_respond_to_proposed_eu_equal_treatment_directive

public debate at a time when the bulk of state–religion–third sector conversations are so scattered across departments of state as to make them almost unnoticed (Davis *et al.*, 2008).

More importantly, there are limits to what a single edition of a journal can achieve, not least when the reach for evidence is itself contested. At the heart of any meeting between religious communities and the modern state is an encounter of epistemologies—theories of knowledge, the nature of truth and the sources and ultimate purpose of human flourishing. While Le Grand has noted how conceptions of justice might influence the management design of public services, even his exhortation to go beyond 'what works' does not provide an adequate ground to converse with many disputed interpretations of what constitutes 'history' or 'reality' (Le Grand, 2003). For example, it is hard to discuss 'evaluation' when 'value comes from God'; or agree to findings of research involving members of some faith communities that reject parts of its teaching that relates to the position of, say, women or gay people, if this marks them out as apostates (or a sample of 'dissenting' community members prejudicially chosen by 'secular' sociologists) (Reese, 1992; Greeley, 2001). Likewise with the vital debate as to what 'helpful' religious leadership might look like in a modern society (Dinham, 2009; O'Neill, 2009).

This themed edition of *Public Money & Management* takes religious ideas seriously but is primarily focused on the practical and public leadership challenges that arise from the civic role of religious organizations, charities, institutions and their encounter with the state at the local and wider levels. While noting efforts in some quarters to increase 'religious literacy', this publication aims primarily to locate debates about religion, third sector policy and public management within a wider task: namely the search for a robust evidence base for the UK third sector in its European context. Helped by grants from two religious charities, it is a product of activities emerging from an interdisciplinary institute at Oxford and from a dialogue with practitioners and colleagues in and around the new Third Sector Research Centre at Southampton. It is not a work of religious, theological or secularist advocacy.

Gareth Morgan, in his new development article (see p. 343), draws out the recent changes in charity law across the three British

jurisdictions noting how they have enabled researchers and policy-makers to develop more extensive data on the size, scope and impact of the voluntary sector. In England, however, very significant religious revenues will still fall under the radar of statutory scrutiny. On the one hand, this is because of the decentralized division of religious charitable entities into thousands of 'exempted' congregations with turnovers of under £100,000; and, on the other, because of inadequate regulatory resources at the Charity Commission. By contrast, in his main article, Morgan argues that larger religious charities, some with turnovers of nearly £200 million, need not fear the new public benefit reporting criteria integral to the new laws. Resolving the balances of accountability for these small and large religious bodies, for Morgan, is both an issue of ethics and prudential management.

In shifting managerial circumstances new education and leadership is key, not least to ensure that those charged with new duties are fit for purpose. The article by Rob Paton, Haider Ali and Lee Taylor on p. 363 critically assesses the origins, methods and content of a government initiated training programme for faith leaders. Its observations on the timing, mismatches in perceptions and market needs provide lasting insights both for those dealing with religious organizations and with the wider third sector.

Approaching governance from a different direction, Rachael Chapman and Vivien Lowndes (p. 371) focus on the knotty problem of local religious participation in diverse communities. They draw out the consequences—and challenges—of new fora in the attempt to harness civic voices. What is at stake is the very meaning of the word 'representative' and the nature of future research. Combined with Austen Ivereigh's description (see p. 351) of controversial models of faith-based community organizing to secure liberalization of immigration laws, their nuanced assessment of the form and potential for religious involvement in pioneering forms of local participation is remarkable.

Davis (p. 379) looks at the Europeanization of faith-based advocacy relocating the 'local' in the governance debate to the 'national' level. He draws on new case studies of some of the world's largest voluntary organizations putting the UK focus on the role of 'congregations' in wider context. Assessing the interplay between state

structure and the form of religious anti-poverty advocacy, he suggests that the design of government institutions, together with the leadership actions of civil servants, are more likely a key to success of religious civic action than either they—or religious NGOs—would care to admit.

Particularly striking are the arguments made, in varying ways, by Dr Muhammad Bari (p. 340) and Ambassador Francis Campbell (p. 347), that in the policy and leadership process that which is genuinely 'religious' or 'faith-based' needs to be carefully teased out from factors which are driven by misplaced political fears, national culture, class and/or race. Campbell points to the institutional capacity of religion to help international governments deliver the Millennium Development Goals. In some global regions, churches and mosques, he says, are the only organizations that have survived state failure and market collapse: in Africa alone they deliver up to one third of all healthcare. And yet while naming faith communities as part of 'the solution', he is also strong on suggesting some of the problems they can present to policy-makers. Consequently, he decries the tendency to see religions as 'always good' or 'always bad'. Dr Bari makes a similar observation in his controversial lament that the government's Prevent/Contest strategy has confused faith, race and social cohesion with national security and safety. Combining them, he says, creates policy distortions and enhances social incohesion.

This edition of PMM may not help resolve the feelings of discomfort that the discussion of religious principles and organizations in the policy-making realm engenders for many, nor affirm the joy felt by others. It is, though, one small step in addressing the unavoidable task of rooting future policy actions in contemporary evidence rather than unempirical confusion. ■

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Debate: Cohesion and shared values

Muhammad Abdul Bari

Muslims in Britain comprise approximately two million people, but their demographic profile is skewed to the young: 46% are less than 25 years old and a recent report observed that 'within...10 years, Muslims will account for one quarter of the growth in the working age population in the UK' (Bunglawala, 2008). Britain's ethnic minorities experience high levels of poverty and deprivation. This is acute for Muslims: one third of the ethnic population is Muslim, though Muslims themselves are of diverse ethnic backgrounds. Over one third of Muslims live in the top 10% of deprived local authority areas; more than half live in the most deprived 20%. Muslim households are most likely to lack central heating while unemployment rates are higher than other sections of the population (ODPM, 2006; ONS, 2006).

Given their youth, British Muslims are a strategic asset to the nation but this promise will not be fulfilled without vision and creative—dare I say it, even radical—thinking to strengthen trust. We must discard the mindset of 'policies to respond to threats'. Our experience, however, is that the Prevent/Contest agenda is conflating intelligence-gathering and anti-terrorism with community services delivery. The Muslim Council of Britain is also concerned that the debate so far on 'shared values' smacks of social engineering.

Prevent and Contest

From the Muslim community perspective, the Prevent/Contest programmes are providing the prism through which to see all public programmes and so impeding even spiritual

chaplaincy in hospitals, and adding student 'monitoring' responsibilities to university authority duties. In one local authority, according to a councillor:

they said...that if we were willing to...monitor the Muslim community, and use the resources of the local council to do that, they would release...money to us. The local council should be there to promote education, caring for elderly people, making sure they are in a safe place, and not become a wing of the security services
(Cllr Kris Hopkins interviewed by Darsha Soni—Channel 4, 10 September 2008).

It is not as if we lacked warning of the consequences of this over-reach of the security agenda. As early as 2006, journalist Madeleine Bunting wrote:

It is crucial to delink terrorism from the integration and diversity agenda. They have nothing to do with each other...So go back to basics and reiterate that integration is about equality of opportunity, breaking down...poverty, and harmonious social relations. These goals may—or may not, depending on international affairs—reduce the appeal of terrorism in the long run, but any serious government should be interested in them in their own right, not simply as a means to the end of defeating terrorism.

Community civil society bodies in receipt of Prevent monies are themselves reporting the crisis. For example, the respected An-Nisa Society in north west London recently has been receiving Prevent funds for a project on self-development work with Muslim boys in the London Borough of Brent. Its first-hand interaction with young Muslim boys led it to conclude that:

...the government needs to [realize] that it is not possible to deliver 'security led' initiatives through Muslim community groups as (a) it damages trust and credibility in frontline grassroots work and (b) does not address the wider issues that have created the problems in the first place. Security needs to be addressed separately by experts in this field (An-Nisa, 2008).

Many Muslim organizations are simply turning down Prevent funds. The Muslim Council of Britain was recently contacted by a group of Northampton Muslims who said:

...we are fortunate that different communities co-exist peacefully in Northampton due to the

tireless work of many individuals and agencies. The awarding of this money assumes that 'there is a problem in the town' when it doesn't exist. Muslims...are part and parcel of everything that goes on here. They are concerned about...issues that affect the wider community [such as] education, health, housing, youth provision...mainstream issues that need to be addressed by statutory agencies.

It is no wonder the *Economist* observed earlier this year: 'the failure of current policies aimed at fostering moderate Islam can hardly be overstated...the very word "prevent" has become discredited in the strongholds of British Islam, which include East London, Birmingham and a string of northern industrial towns' (*Economist*, 2009). To spell it out even more clearly and bluntly, it seems that for many agencies and groups, access to funding becomes possible if they take on a Prevent agenda; the other side of the coin is that overwhelming section of the Muslim community which is law-abiding, will not identify with the Prevent agenda that brands them as a problem or

The UK Prevent/Contest programme

'Contest' is the government's counter-terrorism strategy for international terrorism. It was established in 2003 and revised in March 2009. 'Prevent' is a strand of 'Contest', launched in 2006, with the objective of stopping people becoming terrorists or supporting violent extremism. The delivery of Contest is measured through PSA 26.

'Preventing Violent Extremism' (PVE) is a programme run by the Department of Communities and Local Government (CLG) that provides financial support at the local level to build resilient communities. Funds are disbursed through the Pathfinder Fund established in October 2006. Regional Government Offices have received over £18 million from this fund since 2007. There is also £45 million distributed through the CLG's Area Based Grant for the 2008–2011 period. Government has also provided local authorities with a self-assessment measure—NI 35—to prioritize and report on PVE work. Some local authorities regard it as an inappropriate benchmarking tool.

More details are available from:
<http://security.homeoffice.gov.uk>
<http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/communities/doc/1098036.doc>
<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200809/cmhansrd/cm090616/text/90616w001.htm>
<http://www.nlgn.org.uk/public/wp-content/uploads/stronger-together.pdf>
http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/d/pbr_csr07_psa26.pdf

suspect community.

Shared values

We are also concerned with moves that offer Muslims instruction on how to understand their religion, or to tell them there is a 'moderate' Islam that they have failed to appreciate fully. The government needs to understand that there will remain support within the Muslim community for their co-religionists fighting injustice; the sense of belonging to an *ummah*—a global community of believers—is one on which Muslims cannot compromise.

Tariq Modood has observed that 'the idea that there has to be a schedule of "non-negotiable" value statements to which every citizen is expected to sign up is not in the spirit of an open, plural citizenship' (2007). There is, however, a shared heritage of Judeo-Christian-Islamic values that we can build on:

- Hospitality and good neighbourliness.
- Respect for the privacy of the individual.
- Family life and marriage.
- Community spirit.
- A willingness to treat others in the same way we would like to be treated ourselves.

Gordon Brown often exhorts moral values—a strong sense of duty and fair play—as a basis for a cohesive society. We would support any move to discuss shared values in a spirit of dialogue and inclusivity.

A lesson from the financial crisis is that 'business as usual' will not do in the future.

Policy analysts in civil society are taking hope from references in the Treasury's white paper on *Reforming Financial Markets* (Treasury, 2009, section 9.42) to the need to 'serve a wider section of society'. There could be a 'once in a generation' opportunity to reactivate the social justice agenda. This is a project to capture our imagination—even the man on the Whitechapel bendy bus knows of Sure Start! Let us turn the page on the era of cohesion policies tainted by Prevent. ■

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