

An Unquiet World: A response

Response from the Conservative Muslim Forum (CMF) to the July 2007 report by the National and International Security Policy Group

September 2007

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About the Conservative Muslim Forum (CMF)

1. The Conservative Party's values and policies reflect the values and beliefs of the Muslim community in the United Kingdom. Belief in enterprise, in the sense of community, in the family and in the value of hard work are just some of those shared values. We encourage regular consultations between the Conservative Party and the Conservative Muslim Forum on issues and policies relevant to Britain's Muslim communities. We also seek to assist and advise on Conservative Party policy development.

Introduction to this paper

2. As part of a wide-ranging review of Conservative Party policies, David Cameron appointed Dame Pauline Neville-Jones, former Chairman of the Joint Intelligence Committee and former political director in the Foreign Office, to chair the National and International Security Policy Group. Other members were Lord King of Bridgwater, Lord Waldegrave, Lord Trimble, Sir John Boyd, Sir Stephen Sherbourne, James Gray MP, and Ali Miraj.
3. The remit of the Policy Group was:
'The Policy Group will examine all aspects of the UK's national security, from both a domestic and an international perspective. The Group will investigate the structure of policing in the UK, including reform to bring local policing closer to local populations and to provide a fully effective force or forces to deal with regional, national, and international policing challenges, including international terrorism.

In addition, the Group will analyse the effectiveness of border control, the intelligence services and administrative structures in Whitehall to deal with the threat of terrorist attack. As part of its work on security, the Group will consider issues relating to social cohesion – including questions of community relations, immigration policy and their linkages with the UK's foreign policy.

The Group will examine the UK's geo-political positioning *vis a vis* the EU, NATO, relations with the USA and relations with Commonwealth Countries, as well as with less-developed countries and the emerging giants - taking into account central issues of international relations, including human rights, the spread of democracy and the rule of law, and Islamic fundamentalism.'

4. This paper comprises the Conservative Muslim Forum's response to the final report 'An Unquiet World' produced by the National and International Security Policy Group in July 2007.

5. The first draft of this paper was prepared for the CMF by Mohammed Amin, Tax Partner at PricewaterhouseCoopers, and Wan Saiful Wan Jan, Director of Malaysia Think Tank London. This final version is the outcome of an open consultation with CMF members and registered supporters.
6. In drafting this response, we concentrated only on formulating policy proposals that would benefit British national security. We did not go into the political popularity of our recommendations. That aspect, which is clearly very important, is for the leadership and the shadow cabinet to decide.

Overall approach

7. We broadly welcome the report. All citizens of this country, regardless of race or religion, share the same interest in British national security. However, our background as British Muslims gives us a different perspective on some of the issues which we wish to share more widely.
8. We welcome the Policy Group's acceptance that what we do as a country abroad has domestic impacts¹. The Labour government has been reluctant to accept the linkage between foreign policy and homeland security. The Policy Group's take is refreshing. We also agree that we must approach foreign policy with humility and patience. Any other approach is unlikely to be successful, and may only isolate us from many countries.
9. The Policy Group is right in stating "Our genius historically as a people has been to redefine ourselves without revolution and we must do this again²." Our adaptability as a country is what makes us great. We endorse the Policy Group's proposition that we must be bold enough to look to the future and begin the process of redefining ourselves as a nation, while resolutely defending the values of an open society – democracy, civil liberty, and the rule of law. To that end, we call upon the incoming Conservative administration to re-evaluate all legislation that erodes civil liberties.
10. Redefinition must work both ways. Thus, while the majority community have been willing to change, we call upon fellow Muslims in Britain to both play a constructive role in shaping this identity as well as redefining our own identities. Values not constructive to life in Britain should be abandoned.

Global Power Shift to Asia

11. We concur with the proposition that China and India should join the G8³. However, such a group can only function if it avoids excessive size. Accordingly the membership of the G8 should be re-examined from first principles.
12. The goal should be to include the largest economies in the world into the G-8, e.g. the top 10 largest, even if this means dropping some existing members.

¹ An Unquiet World, page 10

² An Unquiet World, page 5

³ An Unquiet World, page 14

Conflict and Ideological Struggle in the World's Muslim Communities

13. A more fundamental and strategic evaluation of where Britain's long term security interests lie is warranted. In particular, the Policy Group gives insufficient consideration to the following points:

a. Israel

Regardless of whether one finds Israel a congenial country or not, on any objective assessment the type of unqualified support given to Israel by the current Government is not conducive to British national interests as this could damage Britain's relationships with 1.5 billion Muslims worldwide, including those in Britain. Britain's interests would be better served by forceful diplomatic pressure on Israel in order to press her to withdraw from the occupied territories and negotiate seriously for a two state solution.

William Hague was right when he said that it is wrong for Israel to respond to attacks disproportionately as this would only result in the loss of innocent civilian lives⁴. We must therefore be frank and stern whenever Israel over-reacts. For example, were Israel to use cluster bombs again as they did in Lebanon in 2006, a Conservative Administration must respond appropriately.

With regards to the Palestine-Israel conflict, the Conservative Party should continue urging a two-state solution. In all our dealings with Israel, we must always remember the plight of displaced Palestinians.

b. Iran

Irrespective of one's views of theocracy, the current Iranian regime was established by a popular revolution, sustained itself despite the attack by Iraq during the 1980s and has a significant measure of domestic support. Regardless of the foreign policies of the United States, hostility to Iran is not in Britain's national interest. A constructive engagement with Iran offers many possibilities for progress. As Winston Churchill once said, "to jaw jaw is always better than to war war".

Furthermore, Iran has many legitimate security concerns, being surrounded by, what are to them, potentially hostile powers. Instead of joining the United States in demonising Iran, Britain should assist Iran in addressing these legitimate security concerns in a manner that improves our security rather than weakening it.

c. Unrepresentative Arab regimes

Britain must perforce deal with the Arab governments that it finds across the Middle East. However, we should be more vigorous in promoting democracy. While the Policy Group mentions this in various places, it fails to give it sufficient emphasis. The current approach of covertly supporting undemocratic regimes which face non-violent opposition should be abandoned as it merely serves to push such persons towards extremism.

⁴ http://www.conservatives.com/tile.do?def=news.show.article.page&obj_id=131354

14. An incoming Conservative Administration must appreciate that a pro-zionist attitude will not bode well with many. Pro-zionist statements only damage relationships with Muslims nationally and internationally. Thus, statements like the one made by David Cameron on 12th June 2007 can be too easily interpreted as unbalanced and weighted towards only the zionist and Israeli positions.⁵
15. The Policy Group properly distinguished between 'Islamism' and Islam, and suggested that the two terms, although they mean different things, can easily be confused. We urge everyone at the Conservative Party to adopt the Policy Group's commendable approach in consistently distinguishing the two terms. Terrorists are criminals, and linking them with any religion is simply playing to their terms. We accept that some terrorists do abuse Islam for their purposes. However, an incoming Conservative administration must deny their attempt to link criminal acts to any religion. The term "terrorism" must be separated from any religious references.
16. We reiterate that the Conservative Party should not explicitly or implicitly link terrorism with Islam as, similar to other major religions, Islam forbids terrorism. Choice of language is very important in this matter as it affects public perception of the party.
17. Any suspicion that the Conservative Party is under the influence of US-style "neo-conservatives" would significantly damage our attraction to Muslims, and not just in this country. We applaud David Cameron's rejection of neo-conservative policies and his admission that neo-conservatism has failed⁶. We support his move towards a liberal conservative set of policies and we advise party policy-makers to be wary of neo-conservative influence in the party.
18. The creation of the 'Partnership for Open Societies' which seeks gradual change in a co-operative manner is a worthwhile pursuit. The focus should be on creating and strengthening the institutions of free societies such as the rule of law, liberty, and liberal democracy. In doing so, we must respect the wishes of local people once such wishes are expressed via fair and democratic elections. It is paradoxical if on the one hand we campaign for democracy and on the other hand we do not respect local democratic decisions.
19. Britain should also engage with the Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC) and Muslim nations outside of the Middle East. We support the Policy Group's proposal for the appointment of an envoy to build relationships in the Middle East. We suggest that this role be widened to include Muslim nations outside of the Middle East, or another role be created for such purpose.

⁵ David Cameron said "If what you mean by Zionist, someone who believes that the Jews have a right to a homeland in Israel and a right to their country then yes I am a Zionist and I'm proud of the fact that Conservative politicians down the ages have played a huge role in helping to bring this about" and "There is something deep in our Party's DNA that believes in Israel, the right of Israel to exist, the right of Israel to defend itself and that a deal should only happen if it means that Israel is really allowed to have peace within secure borders and real guarantees about its future". Source: www.cfoi.co.uk

⁶ http://www.conservatives.com/tile.do?def=news.story.page&obj_id=131904

Security in Britain

20. Under the heading of 'Security in Britain', the Policy Group conducted detailed work on national cohesion because this is an area central to security questions⁷. To do justice to the work done by the Policy Group, we will provide a more elaborate comment on some of the proposals in this section. We also feel that we need to give this issue considerable attention as much of the Policy Group's proposals affect Muslims. Many of the comments we give in this section are in relation to the proposals outlined in the Policy Group's interim report 'Uniting the Country' which was published in January 2007 and was subsequently incorporated into 'An Unquiet World'.
21. We disagree with the suggestion that "foreign preachers and scholars advocating the rejection of the institutions and values of democracy" should be denied entry into Britain⁸. As advocates of democracy, we oppose those who argue that Islam is incompatible with democracy. However, it is the mark of a mature and liberal democracy that it accepts people's freedom to disagree. If a political party wishes to campaign, constitutionally, for the abolition of democracy in the UK and its replacement by a totalitarian system, why should it not be free to do so? Furthermore, why should foreigners who advocate a peaceful change in that direction be banned from entry to the UK?
22. The recommendation seeks to ban the lawful propagation of dissenting views, which suggests a lack of confidence by the Policy Group in the British electorate. This is unnecessary. We are confident that the British electorate are mature enough to make their own decisions and we must trust their wisdom. As David Cameron said "if you trust people, they will generally do the right thing"⁹.
23. Having said the above, if there is no other alternative and entry has to be denied, then such a decision must be based on solid evidence. Statements made by such people must not be taken out of context. This applies equally for the proscription of groups.
24. The report states "It should be the aim of a Conservative Administration to help bring about the right conditions for *a move from a collective approach led through community organisations to one in which individuals take responsibility for their role in society and participate fully in it*. This is a key aspect of full integration."¹⁰ We concur and are content to adopt this as a working definition of integration.
25. What is the evidence for the statement "the MCB does not have as one of its aims, the integration of members of Muslim communities into the wider society of the UK"¹¹? Its absence from a formal list of the MCB's aims and objectives would not be evidence for the assertion. Additionally, it should be noted that one of the formal aims of the MCB is "to foster better community relations and work for the good of society as a whole," which is what integration is about. The Policy Group did not specify what MCB activities they consider to be incompatible with

⁷ An Unquiet World, page 3

⁸ An Unquiet World, page 134

⁹ David's Cameron speech on 23 November 2005 "Building a pro-social society", <http://www.cameronleadership.co.uk/2005/11/building-a-pro-social-society/>

¹⁰ An Unquiet World, page 135

¹¹ An Unquiet World, page 135

integration. The Conservative Party should recognise that the MCB is well-respected by many Muslims and non-Muslims.

26. In developing a shared British agenda and identity, the Policy Group proposed a revision of the history syllabus in schools. Any revised compulsory history syllabus needs to give full recognition to the massive contribution that Islam has made to the development of Western civilisation. Historically the recognition of this contribution has been suppressed because in the past control of the educational system rested with the Christian churches which saw Islam as a competitor.
27. We concur with the concept of a British national day¹² as a public holiday, to correspond with similar days in countries such as the USA, Singapore and other countries. The British national day needs to be something that all citizens feel connected to rather than acting as an inadvertent source of division, and the selection can be made starting with a clean slate. Our suggestion which would link directly to the foundations of our society in democracy and the rule of law is the anniversary of the signing of Magna Carta.
28. While we may disagree with many of the views of Yusuf al-Qaradawi, it is inaccurate for the Policy Group to question his status as a leading Islamic scholar. For example, the book "A Textbook of Hadith Studies" by Mohammad Hashim Kamali, Dean of the International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilisation at the International Islamic University in Malaysia cites him many times in the index. The book is entirely about the interpretation of hadith (the recorded sayings of the Prophet pbuh) and has nothing to do with contemporary politics. While we may disagree with some of his views, Yusuf al-Qaradawi is considered a leading scholar by many Muslims, including other Muslim scholars.
29. As highlighted by the Policy Group, there is a need to combat extremist voices from different parts of the political spectrum, including the white far right. We support this recommendation and propose that a detailed study is conducted in this area.
30. The Policy Group hits the nail on the head by saying "Improving the quality of schooling in the maintained sector would do more for integration than almost all other measures the Government could take." Schools have important roles to play, not just in teaching children, but also in providing a meeting point for children from different religious and cultural backgrounds.
31. As it stands, the performance of Muslim children is far from satisfactory. Much more attention is needed, and parents have just as much responsibility to ensure their children achieve better results. This is particularly important because the level of education affects employment, crime, economic well-being, and ultimately the likelihood of radicalisation (although we also accept that some radicals are relatively well-off).
32. An incoming Conservative Administration must be careful not to repeat the centralised approach of Labour. We must strive to empower professionals in doing their jobs, including fostering integration. The Conservative Party should focus on demand-side reform – devolving real power to education professionals, less centrally dictated targets, greater parental involvement, more parental choice - not more central planning.

¹² An Unquiet World, page 138

33. Having said that, we appreciate that demand-side reforms of schools may also inadvertently lead to further segregation. If parents have true choice in deciding which school to send their child to, they may choose a school where one particular ethnic group dominates the student population. To give an example, in Malaysia, parents can choose between Islamic, Indian or Chinese schools. This results in some children being segregated from primary school all the way to university, which is not helpful to national cohesion. Thus there is a delicate balance that needs to be struck. We propose that a study is commissioned in this area – how to encourage and respect parental choice without causing further segregation.

Nuclear Weapons and Non-Proliferation

34. The fundamental reason why the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty faces difficulty is that the nuclear weapons states have failed to keep their side of the bargain. Despite the reduction in the absolute number of warheads, in no way could the nuclear weapons states be said to have taken any serious steps to disarm.

35. There is no legal basis for denying Iran civilian nuclear research once the safeguard issues under dispute with the IAEA are resolved. Furthermore, Iran has an absolute legal right to leave the NPT by giving notice, as mentioned in the report. Given Iran's position in the Middle East, facing a nuclear armed Israel, Iran appears to have legitimate reasons for seeking nuclear weapons for defensive purposes. However, an incoming Conservative administration should continue to oppose Iran's nuclear weapon ambitions, and our primary goal should be assisting in the strengthening of Iranian state institutions to avoid any risk of the transfer of nuclear technology to non state actors.

36. Our approach to Iran should be one of negotiation and mutual dialogue, not threats. The development of peaceful civilian nuclear power technology should be supported.

37. Any collusion by Britain in an Israeli or American military strike against Iran would be extremely damaging to Britain's long-term security interests.

Europe's Near Abroad

38. We support the Policy Group's recommendation for Britain to work towards healthy relations with Russia whilst upholding our values¹³. We should also help to promote the values of open society in Russia. At the same time, we need to ensure Russia does not use energy supply to pressurize Britain, or any other countries for that matter.

39. An incoming Conservative should support Turkey's membership of the EU. The Conservative Party should also start developing stronger relationship with Turkey's political leaders, particularly those who share our commitment to freedom and liberty in the AK Party.

¹³ An Unquiet World, page 33

Defence Policy

40. We concur with the importance of close alignment of British defence policy with the United States¹⁴. However, the report almost entirely ignores the European Union security dimension. Britain's security would be considerably enhanced if the European Union had a defence and security role which was consistent with the size of its population and GDP. Britain should provide leadership towards achieving this goal. This will be at least as important to the future security of the UK as our alliance with America.
41. While we appreciate that our relationship America is important, it is imperative that Britain does not become a mere tool of American foreign policy. William Hague correctly observed that: "We need to know how we can manage an alliance with the United States that is not seen as one-sided; that is solid but never slavish. And how, as we face opponents who cannot be defeated by military force alone, we can use the greatest values of our free societies - our openness to fresh ideas and our respect for the rights of others - to inspire our friends and isolate our enemies, which means never besmirching those values by the abuse of prisoners or the abandonment of our own rule of law."¹⁵

Machinery of Government, Resources and Instruments

42. The Policy Group listed British higher education, the BBC World Service, and the British Council as our assets of soft power¹⁶. Another key factor in Britain's soft power is our large immigrant communities. This is a great asset for Britain in reaching out to the rest of the world. More active measures are needed to engage these communities in that role.
43. Britain also has influence in the Commonwealth. The Commonwealth is a unique network of fifty three sovereign states. Its members are all regarded as equals. It does not use force to coerce or threaten another member state – persuasion, peer group pressure and non-confrontational negotiations are its trademarks. Unlike the United Nations or the World Trade Organisation, the Commonwealth provides member countries with a comfortable space to negotiate and to air concerns. If approached correctly, the Commonwealth is another platform that could bring benefits to our country which we have long neglected.

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¹⁴ An Unquiet World, page 40

¹⁵ http://www.conservatives.com/tile.do?def=conference.2006.news.story.page&obj_id=132620&speeches=1

¹⁶ An Unquiet World, page 47