An anti-racist reading of the notion of 'fundamental British values'

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Abstract

The 2020 Black Lives Matter protests were a reminder that structural racism (Sivanandan, 2008) remains prevalent at every level within British society. The movement to decolonise the curriculum has gained momentum amongst educators and students, in recognition that the education system is one of the means by which racism is reproduced. The compulsory promotion of the notion of 'fundamental British values (FBVs)' is a mechanism within this production line. 'FBVs' play a dual role, firstly as a tool to identify the signs of 'radicalisation' and 'extremism' amongst young, predominantly Muslim people. Secondly, it acts as an assimilationist, racist educational policy which promotes the superiority of 'British values' over covertly identified 'Other' values. This paper argues that opposing the promotion of 'FBVs' is an integral part of decolonising the curriculum and anti-racist schooling.

1.   Introduction

On 13th November 2020, whilst aimlessly flicking between TV channels on a cold, rainy Yorkshire evening, I stopped at BBC2 and began to watch a literary review programme 'Between the Covers' (BBC, 2021). I usually pay little attention to TV's literary critics, they are usually middle class and white. However, this looked different: I had to pinch myself. Was this real or not? I felt both shock and enjoyment. What sparked these emotions was that three of the four guests were Black and Asian. The books they were discussing were linked to the experiences of Black and Asian people in post-colonial and post-Brexit Britain. Even the white guest's book choice was 'Twelve Angry Men'. This was not an accident. It was the influence of Black Lives Matter (BLM) in our society playing out on the BBC. The BBC

could not ignore the global anti-racist mood. Of course, this does not mean that the BBC has suddenly become an anti-racist broadcasting agency but this TV viewing was a breath of fresh air. This would not have been possible without the contemporary grassroots BLM protests, the whole spring and summer of 2020 was a period of heightened anti-racist struggle.

Following the murder of George Floyd in Minneapolis by a police officer, mass anti-racist demonstrations spread from the streets of the USA to Britain. The BLM demonstrations originally emerged as a response to the police murder of a young Black man, Michael Brown, in the summer of 2014 in the USA (Taylor, 2016). The BLM protests in 2020 were an international uprising against racism. The removal of the statue of slave trader, Edward Colston, in Bristol by BLM protesters was a reminder to the

British public that the roots of racism on both sides of the Atlantic are in the transatlantic slave trade and colonialism. This global anti-racist struggle has boosted the existing movement to decolonise education (Bhambra et al., 2018) in the UK. Many universities condemned the murder of George Floyd and declared support for the BLM movement. Some universities were already acknowledging their gains from the slave trade, for example Glasgow University decided to pay £20 million in reparation for its yields from slavery and All Souls College, Oxford paid £100,000 to a college in Barbados[1]. The decolonising task is of course more complex than removing statues as the remnants of colonialist views are so entrenched within the education system that they can seem innocuous. The promotion of the notion of 'fundamental British values' (FBVs), which entered the educational sphere in 2012 (Lander, 2016) is an example of this.   I will argue that challenging, and ultimately removing, the promotion of the notion of 'FBVs' from the curriculum is a part of this ongoing anti-racist, decolonising education movement.

2.   A brief history of 'fundamental British values'

The notion of 'FBVs' first appeared in the Conservative and Liberal Democrat Coalition government's revised Prevent strategy in 2011. It stated that 'FBVs' are 'democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect and tolerance of different faiths and beliefs'. The following year, in 2012, the Teachers' Standards included these values and required all teachers 'not to undermine fundamental British values'. In November 2014, the Coalition government produced guidelines on promoting 'FBVs'. In September 2015, the newly elected Conservative government transformed this guidance to a full duty, as defined in Section 26 of the new Counter Terrorism and Security Act 2015. This legislative journey has taken place in the context of

broader social, political and economic developments in Britain and the wider world.

At the surface level, the current notion of 'FBVs' is a project to create a unified national identity in the UK (Gove, 2015; Spielman, 2017) but the notion of 'British values' has been a feature of the British political landscape for a number of years. Although a detailed historiography of the notion of 'British values' is not the focus of this article, it is important to highlight that the formation of this notion has its roots in the history of the British Empire. Hall (2002), Gopal (2019), MacKenzie (1984) and Thompson (2005) emphasise the role of Britain's imperial history in the making of the 'British' identity at home. MacKenzie (1984) observes that the empire created an illusion of imperial 'over-classes' for the domestic 'under-classes' so that they could feel they were part of a bigger, national project (1984: 253-258). This project was conducted by 'the State and great commercial companies, protected by the army and navy, and sanctified by the church' (MacKenzie, 1984, p. 255). Thompson (2005) argues that 'the empire's "impact", far from being forceful and aggressive, was often subtle and unobtrusive' (2005: 241) but it was always there.   Hall (2002) and Gopal (2019) emphasise how 'Britishness' was made in the colonies, as the myth of 'the nation of givers and liberators' was created to propagate the 'superiority' of the 'white British' over the colonised 'Others'.

The notion of 'British values' has been a changing phenomenon. In the late twentieth and beginning of the twenty-first century, it was utilised in political discourse in an ostensibly more 'inclusive' way. For example, after the landslide victory of Tony Blair's New Labour Party in the general election of 1997, he proclaimed that 'fighting poverty and unemployment', 'securing justice and opportunity and being a 'compassionate society' were main tenets of British values (Blair, 1997). In 2000, in his 'Britain speech', Tony Blair announced new 'core British values'. They were: 'fair play, creativity, tolerance

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[1] https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2019/aug/23/glasgow-university-slave-trade-reparations

and an outward-looking approach to the world' (Blair, 2000). In 2004, Gordon Brown, then the Chancellor of the Exchequer, contributed to these 'core British values' arguing that these should include: 'a strong sense of national identity', 'a passion for liberty anchored in a sense of duty and an intrinsic commitment to tolerance and fair play' and 'the idea of duty as the virtue that reinforces neighbourliness and enshrines the idea of a public realm and public service' (Brown, 2004). Within the first seven years of the New Labour government (1997-2004) the notion of 'British values' shifted from a focus on 'fighting poverty and unemployment' to emphasising 'a national identity'.

I would argue that this shift was not an inadvertent move but rather a response to the changing social, economic and political climate. There were deeper causes, which made possible the politicians' public announcements about 'British values'. The 'notion of British values' was propagated by the Labour governments until they lost office in 2010. Since then, the concept of 'core British values' has evolved under successive governments: the 2010-15 Conservative and Liberal Democrat Coalition government, the 2015-2021 Conservative governments.

There were several influential turning points in the evolution of the current notion of 'British values'[2]:

    1. The riots in Burnley, Oldham and Bradford in the summer of 2001.
    2. The 11 September 2001 (9/11) terrorist attacks in New York.
    3. The 7 July 2005 (7/7) terrorist attacks in London.
    4. Young people from Britain travelling to Syria and Iraq to join Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) following the unsuccessful uprising in Syria (2014).
    5. The so-called 'Trojan Horse' affair in Birmingham and Bradford schools (2014).

The riots in the northern towns in the summer of 2001 had multiple causes, including industrial decline,

poverty, and racism (especially anti-Muslim racism) (Finney & Simpson, 2009). Kundnani (2001) argue that they were the direct result of a combination of the implementation of neo-liberal policies by the Thatcher and subsequent Conservative and New Labour governments and the structural racism faced by Black and Minority Ethnic communities. However, Cantle (2001) and Ouseley (2001) postulate that multiculturalism and the 'self-segregation' of Asian communities were the main factors underlying the riots. According to Cantle (2001) and Ouseley (2001) the solution is the abandonment of multiculturalism in favour of 'community cohesion' and the promotion of 'British national identity'. Whilst the riots in northern towns and the terrorist attacks of 9/11 in New York were the catalyst for the discourse on British values (Blair, 2001), the political abandonment of multiculturalism in favour of the notion of 'British values' was initiated by the then Prime Minister, David Cameron (Cameron, 2011).

Following the 9/11 attacks George W. Bush, President of the USA from 2001 to 2009, announced that 'we will defend our way of life', and he declared a 'war on terror' (Bush, 2001). In his speech to Congress, with the British Prime Minister Tony Blair present, he highlighted some of the elements of his notion of 'our way of life': 'a democratically elected government …our freedom of religion, our freedom of speech, our freedom to vote and assemble and disagree with each other … I ask you to uphold the values of America' (Bush, 2001). The notion of 'our way of life' was not new in US politics, George H. W. Bush (Bush senior), President of the USA from 1989 to 1993, had used the same language in 1990 when the USA was planning to attack Iraq during the first Gulf War (Bush, 1990). The British government, under New Labour's Tony Blair, embraced Bush's (junior) notion of 'our way of life' by supporting the 'war on terror' (Blair, 2001). The late Tony Benn, former Labour MP for Chesterfield, noted in his diary on 14 September 2001:

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[2] This is not a definitive list. However, I have used these events as markers to unpack the notion of 'FBVs'.

…I sat in the Gallery and watched Blair make his statement, which was really a sort of *Daily Mail* editorial. I didn't think there was any depth or historical understanding about it. George Galloway said every time you bomb the Arab world, you recruit more suicide bombers, and said Muslim blood doesn't count in the same way that Western blood counts, which is a vivid way of putting it. (Benn, 2007, p.8)

Indeed, one could argue that history proved Galloway right. London woke up to bombs on 7 July 2005, when 'home grown terrorist' attacks shocked the British population. This was a new kind of terrorist attack (Kundnani, 2017) as, until 2005, terrorist attacks in Britain had been largely related to Irish nationalism, carried out by the Irish Republican Army (IRA) or its splinter groups (Kundnani, 2015b, 2017). This time the suicide bombers were identified as Asian British citizens and Muslims.

The 7/7 attacks in London by 'home grown terrorists' were another significant landmark in relation to defining these values. In his speech on multiculturalism (Blair, 2006), following the 7/7 attacks, the Prime Minister, Tony Blair, redefined 'core British values' as: 'the belief in democracy, the rule of law, tolerance, equal treatment for all, respect for this county and its shared heritage'. Some of these concepts were reinforced through government policies such as the introduction of compulsory citizenship education in secondary schools in 2002 (Keating et al., 2010) and the introduction of the teaching of Britishness following the Ajegbo Report of 2007[3]. However, the current conception of 'FBVs' emerged from the definition of extremism in the UK government's main counter terrorism strategy (CONTEST) in 2011, which states that:

Extremism is vocal or active opposition to *fundamental British values, including democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect and tolerance of different faiths and beliefs[4]*. We also include in our definition of extremism calls for the deaths of members of our armed forces, whether in this country or overseas. (HO, 2011, p.107)

According to this definition, the notion of 'FBVs' is pivotal to the identification of extremism and identifying extremists is an important aspect of counter-terrorism. Therefore, contextualisation and the emergence of the notion of 'FBVs' must be understood here in relation to wider counter-terrorism policies and changes in political, socio-economic and historical conditions following the 9/11 and 7/7 attacks.

3.   Identifying 'FBVs': Identifying the 'Other'

The dominant discourse on British values in political, media and academic spheres is one of identifying the 'Other'. For example, former Prime Minister David Cameron's (2010- June 2016) 2015 Christmas and 2016 Easter messages referred to the values the British public hold. Both messages emphasised that Britain is a 'Christian'country and the values that the British hold are derived from Christianity. In his Christmas speech he said, 'it is because of these important religious roots and Christian values that Britain has been such a successful home to people of all faiths and none'[5]. At Easter he repeated again, 'we are a Christian country and we are proud of it'[6]. Based on this former Prime Minister's messages, non-Christians, particularly Muslim citizens, may justifiably ask: Are 'FBVs', as identified within the CONTEST Christian values? In doing so, was Cameron suggesting that these values derive from Christian beliefs and other faiths (in particular, Islam) must learn from Christianity or their fellow 'Christian Britons'? Or was he simply implying that other faiths are not compatible with these values? Perhaps he was refering to a superior

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[3] This report reviewed ethnic, religious and racial diversity throughout the English secondary curriculum and advised the Government to introduce teaching Britishness as part of citizenship education (DfES, 2007).

[4] Italics are mine

[5] See PM's Christmas message
https://www.gov.uk/government/news/christmas-2015-prime-ministers-message ,
[6] See PM's Easter message
https://www.gov.uk/government/news/easter-2016-david-camerons-message.

'occident' and inferior 'orient', where 'orient' is denied space within the discurse of 'FBVs'. Cameron's message was repeated by his successor, Theresa May (July 2016 - 2019) in her 2017 Christmas message. She stressed the 'values we share: Christian values of love, service and compassion[7]'. Once again the hegemonic ideology is promoted as the unifying superior element of society and the 'Other' is identified by their absence (Dabashi, 2011).

A Channel 4 documentary, 'What British Muslims really think[8]', presented by Trevor Phillips[9] reinforced this idea of the 'superiority' of Christian values. Standing outside a church in London, he said ' This is the church where I was Christened, what I learned here guides my attitudes and behaviour'. He referred to his 'Christian values', then proceeded to compare his 'values' with Muslims' values. He refers to Muslims as one homogeneous community: 'down the road at Finsbury Park Mosque attitudes are very different. For the believers in here the Quran provides teaching and guidance for Muslims to follow in all aspects of their lives'. He uses differences in religious beliefs as a form of 'Othering' to establish that 'Muslims' are different and live in a 'parallel world' (Cameron, 2011; Cantle, 2001; Nazir-Ali, 2008; Ouseley, 2001) in the UK.

Linking ill-defined 'British values' (Lander, 2016) to Christian values is an example of 'Othering' and is likely to further marginalise religious minorities in the UK. This is not a new means of 'Othering' and discriminating against minorities in the West; there have been numerous previous examples (Dabashi, 2012; Virdee 2015). Edward Said argued that 'hostility to Islam in the modern Christian West has historically gone hand in hand with, has stemmed from the same source, has been nourished at the same stream as anti-Semitism' (Said, 2003: 99).

The 'Othering' process of Muslim communities exemplified above has not materialised in a vacuum.

Baker et al. (2012) carried out a detailed study investigating the representation of the word 'Muslim' in the British media which identified a propensity of associating Muslims with negative nouns such as 'terrorism' and 'extremism'. The study also highlighted that the media and policy makers treat Muslims as one homogenous entity, frequently using the term 'Muslim World' to describe the range of Muslim communities and countries across the globe. This use of negative word associations in relation to Muslims and Islam is tied in with a process of dehumanasiation of Muslim communities and immigrants in the UK and the rest of the Western World (Bhattacharyya, 2008: 78-82). This process has been accelerated since the Syrian civil war began in 2011, from which the majority of immigrants to the UK and the EU have been Muslim[10].

Since 2012 the notion of 'FBVs' has been part of Teachers' Standards (DfE, 2012) and since 2015 there is a duty to promote 'FBVs' in schools and colleges in England and Wales (HO, 2015). I would argue that the introduction of the promotion of 'FBVs' through the national curriculum is an essential tool for identifying the new 'Other', namely Muslims. The active promotion of the notion of 'FBVs' is therefore a controversial issue (Farrell and Lander, 2019; Habib, 2017) within the educational context. The controversy can be encapsulated within the following two inter-related strands:

1.   The definition of 'FBVs' emerged directly from CONTEST, bringing education within the realm of the counter terrorism strategy (Farrell and Lander, 2019);

2.   Working around the CONTEST definition of 'FBVs' is problematic as it is 'muddled' and 'hollow' (Richardson, 2015); hence the interpretations and application of 'FBVs' both by academics and practitioners are varied and 'muddled'.

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[7] See PM's Christmas message
https://www.gov.uk/government/news/prime-minister-theresa-mays-christmas-message-2017
[8] http://www.channel4.com/programmes/what-british-muslims-really-think

[9] Former chairman of the Equality and Human Rights Commission
[10] https://www.unhcr.org/asylum-in-the-uk.html

Both of the above strands have their own historical, socio-economic and political contexts outside of, and within, the educational sphere (e.g 'Trojan Horse' affair, young people travelling to Syria to join Islamic State in Syria) which have resulted in the 'active promotion' of 'FBVs' within the education system.

4. Counter terrorism, Extremism and 'FBVs'

The definition of 'FBVs' has been transferred directly from the government's definition of extremism. Therefore, extremism is a salient factor in explaining the notion of 'FBVs'. British governments used the term extremism at the beginning of the twentieth century to define the anti-colonialists who wanted full independence for India from British rule (Kundnani, 2014). Following the Second World War, during the Cold War period, the term was used to define communists on the left and anti-democratic extremists on the right. From 1989, with the end of the Cold War, the definition was transferred from right and left 'extremism' to defining political groups working outside of parliamentary politics: Trotskyist groups, anti-Fascist groups, radical environmentalists, animal right activists, Irish nationalists and Islamic political movements (Kundnani, 2017, p.148). The 9/11 attacks in the USA and the 7/7 bombing in the UK transformed the concept of extremism in the UK again. The new definition combined the term extremism with an ideology. According to Sir Norman Bettison, extremism is a kind of infectious illness that spreads from one person to another; subsequently the illness turns the infected person into a terrorist (Bettison, 2009). According to this formulation, in contrast to previous definitions, one does not need to be a member of a particular political group or an organisation or be involved in direct action to be identified as an extremist; holding a particular ideology, albeit non-violent, is enough to be deemed an extremist.

The current narrative has been propagated by British politicians, (Tony Blair, 2005; David Cameron, 2011; Theresa May 2015; Boris Johnson 2019), newspapers (Daily Mail; The Sun; The Times), think-tanks (The Henry Jackson Society; The Quilliam Foundations) and even by a former chairman of the Equality and Human Rights Commission Trevor Philips (2006). In the Gramscian sense, those in power have created a consensus 'common sense' argument about extremism and any counter arguments to the hegemonic narrative are dismissed as irrelevant. Kundnani stated that 'counter-definition had a certain presence but it nevertheless faltered over time in the face of the state's better organised capacity to assert a different narrative' (2017, p. 150).

In 2011 the Conservative government, under the Home Secretary Theresa May, defined the concept of extremism as 'vocal or active opposition to fundamental British values' (HO, 2011, p.107). The new definition of extremism was directly aimed at UK citizens because the perpetrators of the 7/7 bombings were born and brought up in Britain. The term 'home grown terrorist' entered political discourse; the change in objective conditions necessitated a new way of defining the phenomenon. The new definition served to provide 'meaning to disturbing and troubling events and restoring a sense of control over the world' (Kundnani, 2017, p.149). The definition of extremism as opposition to 'FBVs' provided the state apparatus with a justification for identifying citizens with 'undesirable' views. However, 'FBVs' were not utilised as a means of 'restoring control' through education until the so called 'Trojan Horse' affair (Holmwood & O'Toole, 2018).

5. The 'Trojan Horse' affair

The notion of 'FBVs' identified in the revised Prevent strategy in 2011 took a different turn after the alleged Muslim plot to take over the governing bodies of certain Birmingham schools in March 2014 (Richardson, 2015). The events were named the 'Trojan Horse' affair. The Birmingham Mail reported the events as a 'Jihadist plot to take over schools'[11].

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[11] http://www.birminghammail.co.uk/news/midlands-news/trojan-horse-jihadist-plot-take-6782881

The 'Trojan Horse' affair was not limited to one city. Following the investigation in Birmingham, Ofsted suggested that there might be a link between Tahir Alam, former chairman of the Park View Educational Trust (Birmingham), and some school governors in Bradford (Clarke, 2014). However, following police investigations, evidence proved that the whole affair was a hoax (HOCEC, 2015, p. 3). Those accused of involvement in the 'Trojan Horse' affair were cleared of any wrongdoing[12], however the detrimental stigma tainted the schools and the communities.

The schools involved in the 'Trojan horse' affair were part of an academy trust in Birmingham. During the special Ofsted inspection they were mainly criticised over 'safeguarding' and management issues. The Ofsted inspectors also picked up on some conservative religious and cultural practices in these schools such as: segregation of the sexes, posters extolling the virtue of prayer and school visit to Mecca in Saudi Arabia (see HOCEC, 2015). Arthur (2015, p. 322-324) argued that some of those practices reflected the learners' religious background, which raises the question: if learners had been taken on a skiing trip to Switzerland or to visit the Vatican in Rome instead of Mecca, would they have been criticised? The Ofsted inspectors used what Foucault (1977) described as 'the technology of language' to integrate the Prevent strategy, as a new form of control, into the existing 'safeguarding' structure. In doing this Ofsted started to become, in effect, an arm of the UK's counter terrorism strategy. The policing of Prevent and its implementation in education have become part of the remit of Ofsted. This development has sanctioned the role of education in fighting against terrorism.

Although the Ofsted inspections did not discover any elements of extremism or radicalisation in the schools (HOCEC, 2015), the governors were criticised for safeguarding and management issues and for failing to deliver 'British' values. This was notwithstanding the fact that the schools involved in

the 'Trojan Horse' affair had been graded as good or outstanding in their previous inspections with the one exception of Laisterdyke School which had been judged as requiring improvement. Ofsted's judgments from its previous inspections were not questioned and the issue of what had materially changed between inspections was neither explained nor explored (Arthur, 2015).   Holmwood and O'Toole's (2018) detailed study concludes that the whole affair was an attack on multiculturalism and a justification of the implementation of 'muscular liberalism'[13] (Cameron, 2011) in education and wider society.

This hoax affair was significant as it led to important policy changes for schools (Holmwood & O'Toole, 2018; O'Toole et al., 2016). Michael Gove, the then Secretary of State for Education, played an important role in this respect. His department issued guidance on promoting British values in both independent and state-maintained schools. The guidance highlighted that teachers, managers and other staff working in educational institutions all have a duty to 'actively promote' the 'FBVs' as part of the wider curriculum (DfE, 2014b). Lord Nash, the then Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Schools, explained that the changes were introduced to 'tighten up the standards on pupil welfare to improve safeguarding, and the standards on spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development of pupils to strengthen the barriers to extremism' (DfE, 2014c). A head teacher, Richard Cairns of Brighton College, identifies the true focus of the 'FBVs' enterprise:

Gove's stated values are written too precisely with young militant Muslims in mind…the Government's focus is not on Brighton College or schools like mine. Its gaze is on the many thousands of young British Muslims who share the same fundamental values as I do but are much more vulnerable than my pupils are to the poisonous whisperings of a perverted few. (Cairns, 2015).

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[12]
https://www.theguardian.com/education/2017/may/30/trojan-horse-tribunal-five-birmingham-teachers-islam

[13] David Cameron's speech in Munich in 2011, in which he challenges 'the doctrine of state multiculturalism'.

Subsequently Prevent (and 'FBVs') became part of the Counter Terrorism and Security Act 2015, which requires teachers, General Practitioners and other professionals to report people who they suspect are at risk of being drawn into terrorism to Prevent officers. Webber (2015) argues that, in effect, the duty aims to use public sector workers to act on behalf of the security services and monitor citizens, in particular, Muslim citizens.

In 1977 Deleuze stated in conversation with Foucault that, 'a wide range of professionals, teachers, psychiatrists, educators of all kinds, will be called upon to exercise functions that have traditionally belonged to the police' (Foucault, 1977, p. 207). Prevent heralds the realization of the Deleuzean prediction as teachers and other 'servants of the state' exercise this imposition of control over its subjects. In his critique, Kundnani (2015) highlights similarities between Prevent and the McCarthyian 'red witch hunts' of the 1950s in the US which demonised anyone opposed to US foreign policy and holding left wing views. Poole (2018) argued that the 'Trojan Horse' affair has been used by the state apparatus to justify the dominant narrative of extremism and radicalisation. He explains: 'ideology is responsible for extremism and that this led to terrorism, therefore any extreme ideas should be challenged' (Poole, 2018, p. 6). In the case of the UK 'FBVs' are to be used to tackle 'extreme' ideology at every level of compulsory education, including nursery level. It became clear after the Trojan horse affair that:

- the state intended to firmly implement the dominant ideology of 'muscular liberalism' (Cameron, 2011) in order to propagate an anti-multiculturalist, nationalist, anti-Muslim and assimilationist agenda; and

- Ofsted and Prevent would be instruments to 'discipline' and 'control' schools, teachers and students against 'undesirable' views which might conflict with the notion of 'FBVs'.

Education institutions and educators have become active agents in promoting the notion of 'FBVs'. It could be argued that they are now required to actively contribute to the reproduction of the common sense, hegemonic narrative of 'extremism' and 'radicalisation' identified within CONTEST.

6. The muddled definition of 'FBVs'

It has been a difficult task for many educators to operate within the official definition of 'FBVs' because it is muddled (Richardson, 2015) and ill-defined (Lander, 2016). Struchers, (2016) and Vanderbeck and Johnson, (2016) attempt to project the positive aspects of the notion of 'FBVs'. Richardson (2015) argues that the difficulty does not lie in the promotion of 'democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect and tolerance of different faiths and beliefs' themselves but in the adjectives attached to these values: 'fundamental' and 'British'. The etymology of the notion of 'FBVs' is not the concern of this article, however studies carried out amongst teachers and trainee teachers have highlighted the problematic nature of associating 'fundamental' and 'British' with these values (Farrell & Lander 2019; 2016; Habib, 2017; Revell & Bryan, 2016; Panjwani, 2016). Empirical studies have also suggested (Revell & Bryan, 2016; Taylor & Soni, 2017) that the DfE's requirement for teachers not to engage in 'undermining fundamental British values' (DfE, 2012) and to promote them both inside and outside of schools (DfE, 2014a) has created a culture of fear and avoidance of honest discussion of controversial issues (Taylor & Soni, 2017: 245). Even though many educators (Farrell, 2016; Habib, 2017), academics and teaching unions (NUT, UCU) reject these state prescribed values and their promotion, 'FBVs' have become part of teachers' (and other public sector workers in identifying radicalisation) day to day classroom practices in England and Wales (Teachers' Standard 2012; Elton-Chalcraft *et al* 2016; Habib, 2017; Holmwood & O'Toole, 2018) since promoting 'FBVs' became a duty.

The interpretation and utilisation of 'FBVs' by teachers and education institutions has proved problematic in practice. Recent empirical studies conducted with teachers have revealed that educators and schools are not clear about what 'FBVs'

are, how they should be delivered and their relevance (Elton-Chalcraft *et al* 2016; Farrell, 2016; Habib, 2017; Lander, 2016; Maylor, 2016; McCully & Clarke, 2016; Panjwani, 2016). These empirical studies conclude that the notion of 'FBVs' is ambiguous, and has resulted in various interpretations depending on a schools' locality or the pupils' religious and ethnic backgrounds. Its muddled and incoherent nature makes the notion problematic. Kundnani (2017) makes the following point in relation to the definition of extremism which gave rise to 'FBVs':

Thus, the incoherence of the definition was not a barrier to the term's proliferation in policymaking and public discussion but necessary for it. The consistency needed was not in the word's definition but in its political effects. And the consistency of those effects was secured by the consistency of those with the power to shape the word's meanings. (Kundnani, 2017, p.156)

This argument is also relevant to the notion of 'FBVs' itself. The utilisation of the term 'FBVs' has been shaped by people with power within, (education ministers, Ofsted, head teachers and educators) and outside of the education system (Parliament, the Home Office and the media). They have promoted a paradoxical notion of 'FBVs' which simultaneously contains both ambiguity and clarity. It is ambiguous precisely because of its muddled definition. It is clear because it identifies the new 'Other': Muslims. 'FBVs' also provides a potential impetus for people to identify other 'Others' e.g. blacks, ethnic minorities and certain European immigrants (Eastern Europeans, Roma people) in the absence of the new racialised Muslim 'Other' (Dabashi, 2011; Göle, 2017; Sayyid, 2015).

Some argue that the promotion of 'FBVs' presents an opportunity to promote other positive agendas. It can be interpreted and utilised to teach issues such as human rights (Struchers, 2016), Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) rights (Vanderbeck & Johnson, 2016) and cosmopolitanism (Hildebrand, 2016). They claim that the intentions behind the introduction of 'FBVs' are not negative. On the contrary they are beneficial for young people and the communities in which they live. Others have

contested the use of the words 'fundamental' and 'British' within the concept, in favour of 'universal values' or 'human values' (Richardson, 2015; Struthers, 2017). In doing so they are adopting a dual stance: criticism of elements of the notion on the one hand and refurbishing it on the other.

Struthers (2017) promotes the teaching of 'human rights values' and criticises the notion of 'FBVs' for its lack of reference to the broader human rights framework. She rightly notes that the 'FBVs' guidance is arguably a threat to the teaching of human rights values' (Struthers, 2017: 100). Whilst she recognises the discriminatory nature of 'FBVs', she has not been able to provide explicit answers to the questions: 'who has/have been discriminated against?' and 'why have they been discriminated against?' Struthers' solution to the problems 'FBVs' creates for educators is to adopt a different interpretation of 'FBVs'. She suggests that: 'Interpreting 'FBVs' within the broader context of human rights values, such as universality, equality and common humanity, would arguably provide a solution' (Struthers, 2017, p. 103). I will define this type of approach as 'a positive critical interpretation' where the interpreter is in agreement that there should be some teaching of 'values' and that there are some grounds to link these to Britishness.

Richardson (2015) also promotes a 'positive critical interpretation' of 'FBVs'. He argues that the policy of 'FBVs' has caused much damage in schools, colleges and universities therefore 'much critical, corrective, and restorative work' (Richardson, 2015, p. 37) needs to be done. Richardson even proposed an alternative phrasing of 'FBVs' for the Home Office: 'the fundamental values and principles which underline public life in the United Kingdom' (Richardson, 2015: 41). Even though Richardson is openly critical of 'FBVs' (Bolloten & Richardson, 2014), he has not succeeded in extricating himself from the framework of hegemonic thinking. He has thus arrived at a position of working around a policy aligned to state interests rather than representing the interests of the affected people.

I would argue that even 'a positive critical interpretation' of 'FBVs' can have a damaging role in

educational institutions, because the notion of 'FBVs' itself is divisive and serves to promote a subtle discriminatory rhetoric. The nature of 'FBVs' has been veiled behind the 'good cause' of protecting 'vulnerable' young people from the dangers of 'radicalisation'. It can be argued that those who have justified 'FBVs' in line with their own interests and those who have attempted to refurbish/rebrand 'FBVs' have lost (or never had) sight of the underlying state interests behind the promotion of 'FBVs' in schools, namely the advancing of 'muscular liberalism' (Cameron, 2011) and a tool to tackle 'non-violent terrorism' (HO, 2015) and radicalisation (HO, 2011). The notion of 'FBVs' explicitly defines what should and should not be part of the 'imagined[14]' British values. Accepting the notion means accommodation to the hegemonic 'common sense'. This 'common sense' narrative of 'FBVs' is discriminative in its nature (see the United Nations report on UK[15]). In light of its inherent 'Othering', the promotion of the notion can be identified as a racist educational practice. Attempts to reform the notion result in justifying, intentionally or unintentionally, an inherently racist endeavour.

7. Wider interpretations and utilisation of 'FBVs'

The notion of 'FBVs' was introduced as part of an anti-radicalisation agenda within the education system however, following the 'Trojan Horse' affair, the notion has been explicitly used to explain and challenge a broad and flexible spectrum of deeply rooted social problems within British society. Examples include challenging homophobia ('Trojan Horse' affair: see Holmwood & O'Toole, 2018), child

sex abuse (Sarah Champion Labour MP[16] and women's oppression (Spielman and Home Office[17]). Whenever the absence of 'FBVs' has been used to explain a societal problem, a particular group has been the focus of the criticism, namely Muslims. In 2017 the Department of Education announced that it was developing a specific ''FBVs' curriculum, which will assist school staff in 'building pupils' resilience to extremist ideologies'[18]. The head of Ofsted, Amanda Spielman, said that, 'the education system has a vital role in upholding the principles that make us a beacon of liberalism, tolerance and fairness to the rest of the world' (Guardian, 22, September, 2017). She was effectively arguing for a form of social engineering, claiming that schools have 'a vital role in inculcating and upholding them ('FBVs')' (Guardian, 22, September, 2017). Whilst promoting the 'FBVs' of 'tolerance and fairness', Spielman announced that Ofsted inspectors will be questioning pupils wearing a 'hijab' in schools, because it 'could be interpreted as sexualisation' and '…fundamentalist groups influencing school policy'. Spielman argued that:

'In seeking to address these concerns, and in line with our current practice in terms of assessing whether the school promotes equality for their children, inspectors will talk to girls who wear such garments to ascertain why they do so in the school'. (Guardian, 19 November, 2017)

Both leading campaigners against the hijab in schools, Amina Lone from The Social Action and Research Foundation and Spielman have used the same arguments of 'liberal values' and promotion of equality in schools[19]. However, their sensitivity about Muslim girls wearing the hijab does not appear to extend to other religious symbols worn by school children e.g. the Jewish kippah or Sikh turban[20]. The

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[14] I borrowed the term 'imagined' from Benedict Anderson's (2006) seminal book *Imagined Communities*.
[15] https://unacov.uk/un-human-rights-council-criticises-prevent/
[16] https://www.thesun.co.uk/news/4218648/british-pakistani-men-raping-exploiting-white-girls/
[17] https://www.tes.com/news/school-news/breaking-news/schools-be-trained-spot-radicalisation-new-government-commission

[18] https://schoolsweek.co.uk/government-developing-fundamental-british-values-curriculum/
[19]
https://www.theguardian.com/education/2017/nov/19/school-inspectors-to-question-primary-school-girls-who-wear-hijab
[20] There was no legislation protecting against religious discrimination in Britain until the full incorporation of the Human Rights Act of 1998. The Race Relations Act 1976 regarded Jews and Sikhs as ethnic groups whereas

announcement, in November 2017, by a grammar school in Kent of its plans to create 'unsafe space' where learners can discuss the pros and cons of Hitler's Mein Kampf and subjects such as 'Women versus feminism' and 'not all cultures are created equal'[21] did not cause concern for Ofsted.

Spielman's comments on the hijab can be considered an attempt at politicisation and securitisation of Muslim women's choice of dress. The banning of the wearing of the 'niqab' in public in France and some other EU countries (Austria, Belgium, Germany, Bulgaria[22]) or targeting Muslim style swim wear, the 'burkini', on French beaches are other examples of this agenda. Saeed (2016) argues that Muslim women studying at UK universities have been securitised because of their choice of dress code. She identifies the attack on Muslim women's dress code as gendered anti-Muslim racism. Saeed comments that 'the right to practise Islam is often portrayed as antithetical to Britishness' (2016:26). It can be argued that, within the educational context, Ofsted has interpreted visible Muslimness in primary schools from the perspective of neo-colonialist and racist narratives. Spielman's comments support the superior 'Occident' over the inferior 'Orient' argument. She said that, 'we know that even in the UK some children are being brought up in an environment that is actively hostile to some of these values *('FBVs')*' (22 September 2017). She does not explicitly talk about Muslim families, however her constant reference to the 'Trojan Horse' affair indicates what she means by 'some children'. She was referring to 'subaltern' Muslim families.

The introduction of 'FBVs' in the school curriculum is not simply the end result of factors (e.g. security needs) outside of the education system but is also part of the wider political, social, economic and historical conditions of the current epoch. And the current epoch has its roots in Britain's colonial history (social, political and economic aspects included). Alongside its discriminative 'anti-radicalisation'[23] function, the notion of 'FBVs' can be understood as 'colonial nostalgia' (Lander, 2016).

8. Conclusion

At the time of writing this conclusion, Donald Trump, an anti-Muslim, anti-immigrant, pro white-supremacist businessman has lost the Presidential election in the USA. The BLM movement played an important role in this election. It reminded us that anti-racism is alive and kicking. However, anti-Muslim and anti-immigrant racism has not subsided; on the contrary, it has received increased legitimacy within the USA and the European Union states (Law et al., 2018). The changing national and international political and economic landscape has influenced the social relations between white British and Muslim communities in the UK and Europe.

I maintain that these developments were not serendipitous; the normalisation of anti-immigrant and anti-Muslim racism, fused with austerity, resulted in this rise of far-right racist parties. The local, national and European elections have been the democratic voice of 'new racism' in Europe (Fekete, 2017; Kundnani, 2015) and the introduction of 'FBVs' into the education system is an integral component of these political developments.

In the spirit of anti-racist public intellectualism and social justice, I would recommend that educators should actively campaign to:

Muslims, Buddhists and Hindus were not. Tariq Modood (2007) highlighted anti-Muslim discrimination following the Salman Rushdie affair and the Runnymede Trust initiated discussion on Islamophobia in 1997, but Muslims were not legally protected until the introduction of the Equality Act 2010.

[21] https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2017/nov/20/kent-grammar-school-announces-plans-for-unsafe-space-including-mein-kampf

[22] https://www.nytimes.com/2017/10/19/world/europe/quebec-burqa-ban-europe.html

[23] https://www.tes.com/news/school-news/breaking-news/exclusive-school-anti-terror-referrals-surge-amid-climate-fear

- abolish the policy of promoting 'FBVs';

- remove any reference to the notion of 'FBVs' from the Teachers' Standards';

- include anti-racist, anti-colonialist and multicultural teaching in the national curriculum;

- provide extensive training for trainee and experienced teachers to implement anti-racist, anti-colonialist and multicultural teaching.

I would argue that these aims cannot be achieved by isolated, individual actions. As the promotion of the notion of 'FBVs' is a duty (Home Office, 2015), Ofsted is policing its delivery and, in some schools, its promotion has become part of the appraisal structure (Revell and Bryan, 2016), individual actions could place practitioners in a vulnerable position. They could find themselves being isolated and may also place themselves in breach of their contracts. Opposition to the promotion of 'FBVs' must therefore be delivered through organised collective trade union action. This could be built upon existing trade union policies concerning the Prevent strategy. All the major education unions, NUT[24] (2016), UCU (2015) and NUS (2015) have anti-Prevent policies. The scope of these policies should be extended to active opposition to the promotion of 'FBVs' i.e. operationalised. In campaigning, practitioners, academics, students and parents would be progressing beyond opposition to the notion of 'FBVs'. They would be contributing to the creation of a present, and future, anti-racist, multi-cultural society and decolonised curriculum.

9. Disclosure statement

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PRISM is also indexed in the world largest open-access database: DOAJ (the Directory of Open Access Journals). DOAJ is a community-curated online directory that indexes and provides access to high quality, open access, peer-reviewed journals.

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[24] Now National Education Union (NEU) since 1 September 2017

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