

# Cambridge perspectives on “Protecting What Matters”

Report from an Inter-Religious Relations seminar



“Builders of its future . . . We carried our faith, our values, our resilience”—exhibition at Leicester railway station featuring Lensi Photography, cofunded by East Midlands Railway Community Fund and The Arts Council England.

## Introduction

It is not the role of academics to deliver policy. However, the expertise and skills accrued by scholars can be productively applied to probe, interpret, and critique the implications of government policies. Such scrutiny offers an important contribution within any democratic society. It is with the goal of making such a contribution that the 19 May 2026 Inter-Religious Relations seminar set out to study the March 2026 policy paper, *Protecting What Matters* [PWM].

A panel of Cambridge researchers took turns to present reflections, based on an independent reading of the document and drawing on their fields of expertise. The session was chaired by Dr Iona Hine, Programme Manager at the Cambridge Interfaith Programme, which—together with the Faculty

of Divinity—co-facilitates the IRR seminar.<sup>1</sup> The main contributors were Peach Hoyle (a late stage PhD candidate working on the politics of women’s involvement in interfaith spaces), Dr Özge Onay (Teaching Fellow in the Department of Sociology, and lead of a project on ecological Islamophobia and Muslim life in East London), Professor Esra Özyürek (Sultan Qaboos Professor of Abraham Faiths & Shared Values and IRR seminar convenor), and Dr Tobias Müller (based in CRASSH and leader of a research project on democratic futures). The session was hybrid, enabling contributions from a breadth of other scholars and professionals.

All discussion refers to *Protecting What Matters: Towards a More Confident, Cohesive and Resilient United Kingdom*, published online by the UK government Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government on 9 March 2026 (and lightly revised in April).<sup>2</sup> What follows is a blend of summary, paraphrase and direct transcription, seeking to capture the vitality of the discussion. Those speakers who had prepared remarks are identified. For other contributors, we simply indicate whether they are currently University of Cambridge researchers or joined this conversation as guests.

Introducing the session, Dr Hine noted that its publication coincided with the release of a non-statutory definition of “anti-Muslim hostility”, that itself being the result of a year-long process responding to longstanding calls for a definition of Islamophobia (the topic of a [May 2025 IRR seminar, reported here](#)). The new definition is incorporated into *Protecting What Matters*, such that the document stands in part to frame that contribution to public discourse. As the subtitle indicates, PWM speaks to loose concepts of “cohesion” and “resilience”, terms not defined but metaphorised through recurrent reference to “bonds” lending a certain qualitative stickiness. Remarkably, this lengthy document was published while the work of a government-appointed Independent Commission on Community and Cohesion remains ongoing. The paper self-identifies as a “call to action”, indicating a certain urgency as well as hopes for a collective and active response. Its opening sentence (a foreword from Prime Minister Keir Starmer) draws attention to lived interfaith relations.

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<sup>1</sup> The chair’s contributions, speaking between discussants and respondents, are shown in pale blue to differentiate these inputs.

<sup>2</sup> Discussants prepared on the basis of the html version of PWM. This event report references pagination of the subsequent print-ready edition.

## An overview

Peach Hoyle

PWM has two forewords, from Prime Minister Keir Starmer and from the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities, and Local Government. The introduction then sets out what they think they're responding to in this document: economic challenges (the cost of living and the effect of austerity on public services); technological challenges (deindustrialization as a cultural shift, social media use); demographic challenges including immigration ("too much, too quickly"), housing and a perceived failure of integration; plus extremism and a geopolitical backdrop—specifically "the conflict in Israel and Gaza". Communities that lack cohesion, as PWM construes it, are less resilient to extremism. Put bluntly, the measures are intended to stop extremism.

PWM presents as a call to action. If we think about policies as carrots and sticks, incentives and punishments, Chapter 2 is filled with incentives. It sets out funding for different projects, although this is often a description of existing policies and commitments rather than a pledge of fresh funding. The chapter highlights the MHCLG flagship "Pride in Place" policy, neighbourhood boards, a civil society covenant. Sporting events occupy a prominent spot, an intriguing significance for national values at this point in history. The teaching of citizenship in schools is positioned to include the Holocaust as a compulsory topic, while noting the ongoing consultation about adding religious education to the statutory National Curriculum. The chapter closes with an invitation to celebrate faith and belief communities drawing attention to different initiatives and resourcing, including MHCLG support for Inter Faith Week, the Church of England's Near Neighbours scheme, the work of Standing Advisory Councils on Religious Education (the oversight of RE across localities), and a freshly announced Places of Worship Renewal Fund.

If Chapter 2 is full of carrots, Chapter 3 is the stick, the more punitive elements of this call to action. Much of this is directed towards migrants. They talk about immigration restrictions, particularly through a lens of ensuring that immigrants are integrating and predicating people's access to this country on agreement with British values. In common with current media discourse and far right rhetoric, we read about deterring small boats, reducing the use of asylum hotels, and expectations for integration. Building community resilience is closely tied with securitization, more local surveillance networks around extremism, increased coherence, and effective interaction with international security frameworks. The chapter references the Crime and Policing Bill, making

its way through Parliament. It closes out with sections on combatting antisemitism and anti-Muslim hostility.

Chapter 4 focuses on resilient communities, and it is here that extremism assumes prominence; the 2024 definition is to be “embedded” within institutions.<sup>3</sup> Specific actions include giving extra powers to the Charities Commission to suspend trustees and shut down charities not seen to be genuinely tackling extremism; a cohesion charter for schools and universities (in tension with obligations surrounding freedom of speech); and monitoring online spaces, in line with the 2023 Online Safety Act bill.

## Precedents and questions arising

Peach Hoyle

Having indicated the arc of the document, let me set it in the context of earlier policy suites or calls to action on cohesion and “British values” and two scholarly responses.

In 1993, Talal Asad wrote about the British responses to the Rushdie affair, i.e. Muslim protests in response to the publication of Salman Rushdie’s novel *The Satanic Verses*, which some thought was blasphemous.<sup>4</sup> Asad identifies this as the genesis of, or the moment where it becomes very clear that, “British values” and being “British” is going to be used as a way to respond to Muslim political activity in the UK. The deputy home secretary at the time, John Patten, wrote an Open Letter addressed to leading Muslim organisations, suggesting that what was happening was a failure of Muslims to be correctly British. This resonates with what we read in PWM: Patten sets out to claim there’s a preexisting framework of British values which we would expect migrants to adhere to, and what he suggests that adherence would look like is a combination of fluency in English (check), understanding British democracy and processes (check)—as Asad mentions, this seems to be a standard that white people born in Britain are not held to—and the right and obligation to play one’s part in the economy (check). Asad asks why *this* particular moment was the moment to start talking about British values; that could be a good question to ask about this document as well. What is it about what’s happening right now that seems to destabilize British identity? And why do we need this document right now?

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<sup>3</sup> Cf “New definition of extremism”, DLUHC, 14 March 2025, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/new-definition-of-extremism-2024/>.

<sup>4</sup> See chapter 7 in Asad, 1993, *Genealogies of Religion: Discipline and reasons of power in Christianity and Islam*.

The second response that I want to reference as a precursor comes a bit later. A group of people associated with Southall Black Sisters—a Marxist, anti-racist, feminist group including Sukhwant Dhaliwal and Pragna Patel—were very concerned with the idea of cohesion as a framework that came up after the 2001 riots in northern cities including Bradford, and after 9/11, and the 7/7 bombings. In letters, they wrote iteratively about the conceptualisation of minority communities as faith communities, asking (as Marxist feminists):<sup>5</sup> What does it mean to talk about minority communities as faith communities? This terminology is not neutral—it undermines the potential for anti-racist solidarity and for Marxist analysis. Why, as soon as we start talking about resolving these problems of tensions, are we talking about “faith”? What is the impact of that focalisation? And what does it mean to talk about cohesion without addressing economic factors?

PWM mentions poverty and deprivation in one or two places, but it is noticeable that none of the measures proposed really get to the heart of that in terms of welfare provision. The cohesion agenda falls short in that respect too.

Those are my major observations. I also observe how the white working class is treated as other. While this is not a major theme, PWM seems to me to differ from earlier documents in being more concerned with wrestling the authority to speak about British identity from (what is perceived to be a problematic) white working class. That topic might bear further scrutiny.

## On structural absences

Dr Özge Onay (Department of Sociology)

In calling a document “Protecting What Matters”, it seems to me this document is using the words “what matters” but not really naming what that is. As a sociologist of race, racism, and with expertise in Islamophobia, what struck me most about PWM is what it refuses to say: a word that’s entirely absent. That absence tells us more than the 50-odd pages that surround it.

Let’s start with Chapter 3, the cohesion chapter, which I believe forms the substantive part of the paper. The phrase “anti-Muslim hostility” appears constantly. Page after page you see it, but one word which never appears at all: “Islamophobia”.

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<sup>5</sup> See Dhaliwal & Patel (2017) Desecularisation and the ‘faith agenda’ in an era of austerity: their impact on women’s and girls’ rights in the UK. *Gender & Development*, 25.1: 85–102. <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/13552074.2017.1304713>

I believe it's not a linguistic omission. It says more than that. It's a structural erasure at this point. The government can see the problem clearly. Chapter 3 explicitly describes Muslims being treated as a collective group with fixed negative traits as a homogenous group.

How do we know? Because it uses the word "racialization". It records Muslim women avoiding certain areas when walking alone. It notes younger Muslims and Muslim women bear the brunt of hostility. The symptoms are recorded. We can read them, we can see them, but what the document declines to do is to name the condition producing them.

And this as Aaron Winter would put it, is precisely how racism operates in its "liberal colourblind" form.<sup>6</sup> This is not denying the experience itself, because we can see that the document talks about the experience. But it's through the systemic refusal to name the structure actually generating it. The definition adopted in Chapter 3 tells us great deal about what has been chosen and what's been left aside. Anti-Muslim hostility is understood as intentionally engaging in assisting and encouraging criminal acts; acts that are intentionally criminal. That framing narrows the entire problem down to deliberate acts by culpable individuals. Anything structural, anything ambient, anything that doesn't arrive with identifiable perpetrator and a demonstrable intent, falls outside the reach of the document. So it's simply not the State's problem, and the framework really constructs it. This is precisely what Eduardo Bonilla-Silva means by minimisation of racism.

In his book *Racism Without Racists* (2003/2017), Bonilla-Silva argues that post-racial frameworks present real racism as something that exists only in its most explicit, visible, and criminal form. Everything else, the daily frictions, the microaggressions, the jokes, the navigation of certain spaces, or the accumulated weariness, gets reclassified as something other than racism. This is not deliberate, not targeted, not therefore actionable. Aaron Winter makes the same point in relation to counter-extremism. The focus on extreme and visible forms of racism actively distracts from and can even legitimate the structural conditions that generate everyday hostility.

At this point, I'd like to touch on my own research on British Turks. British Muslim Turks illuminate the concern with some precision, as a community that resists easy categorisation. These people are ethnically Turkish, and variously Muslim. Some are Alevi, an unorthodox Anatolian syncretic

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<sup>6</sup> A Winter (2025). Far-right extremism and the sociology of race and racism, in *The sociology of violent extremism: theoretical and sociological approaches*, Oxford University Press, pp 179–204.

tradition. Some of them are secular or nominally affiliated. Many of my respondents didn't wear headscarves, didn't have big fat beards, and they don't have or carry the visible markers that the policy imagines as the primary targets of hostility. And yet a respondent's mother began warning her son: "Please don't tell you're Turkish, and don't tell that you're Muslim." There is nothing, there is no hate incident here, just the accumulated weight of how these people are read, because they're read in a particular way in certain spaces, how they are understood before they even open their mouth. This is precisely the ambient hostility Chapter 3 records, but cannot, under its definition, address. No individual intended it, no criminal act has been committed. The framework simply has no language for it.

Or consider again my research about "passing". Passing is a way to deflect that you're non-white or Muslim. Several of my respondents actively work to claim whiteness, cosmopolitanism, secularism—not as free expressions of their identity, but as a form of defensive navigation. One respondent, Mert, told me he wished he could pass as Italian rather than Turkish, because at least then he wouldn't immediately be read as Muslim.

That is, in Bonilla-Silva's terms, the naturalisation of racism in which the subordinated person internalises the hierarchy and works within it because the costs of not doing so are too high. This is not a story about individual or interpersonal conduct, as the text defines it. This is a story about the entrenched structure, entrenched racism, commonplace racism; but it's not visible to a definition built around intentional criminal conduct. That brings me back to the word that is missing. At present, the document reads as if it can see the damage, but not the dam, and the framework cannot really repair what it cannot name.

Dr Hine: In choosing to define "anti-Muslim hostility" and in appearing on the same day that definition was published, Protecting What Matters is intentionally engaging with the complex field of discrimination against Muslims. Yet one thing we hear in Dr Onay's testimony is that this document falls short. There is nothing to explain the language switch for those unfamiliar with the year-long journey to define "Islamophobia/anti-Muslim hatred", or translate what was in the minds of the policymakers. What does such silence expose?

## What matters?

Professor Esra Özyürek, Faculty of Divinity

Today, I'll make three interconnected points. But to start with, I was struck by the title: Protecting What Matters. It sounds self-evident and reassuring, but analytically it raises questions that it does not answer:

What matters? To whom? And who gets to decide? Who is protecting?  
From whom?

Even after reading it, you don't have an answer to any of these. The document repeatedly invokes cohesion, belonging, pride, and shared values, but it never fully clarifies who gets to define these values, whose fears and insecurities.

To turn to the three interconnected points:

My first concern is about the document's construction of national cohesion. Repeatedly we hear cohesion, belonging, pride, traditional shared values. Britain is imagined as fundamentally tolerant, generous, pluralistic, and fair. Yes, it acknowledges there are social tensions. But they are framed primarily as problems produced by rapid change, migration, extremism, online toxicity, and failures of integration, rather than, as Peach said, by inequality, austerity, political exclusion, or state violence. These are seen as new things. Rhetorically, we get the message:

"What is here [the country, its values] is this perfect thing. But recently these things have happened. They [newcomers, migrants] came. And we don't know why they do not fit."

This structuring creates implicit moral asymmetry. The nation itself is imagined as already ethically coherent, while minorities, newcomers, or dissenting voices become the site where integration, reform, and monitoring is required. *They* are the ones disrupting an existing order. In that sense, dissent itself can begin to appear as evidence of failed cohesion rather than as a normal feature of democratic life.

My second observation is that the language of cohesion repeatedly slides into the language of security and management. Certain words repeatedly appear together: integration, shared values, and extremism, resilience, monitoring, risk assessment. Individually, these terms may sound reasonable, but together they subtly frame social difference itself as a potential security problem. And the concern is not simply about combating violence or hatred, which of course, we don't want, but that ordinary forms

of political disagreement, migration, visible religious difference, or social separation become folded into a broader language of suspicion, surveillance, and resilience. The document often moves from talking about cohesion to talking about monitoring. So dissent is this threatening thing.

My third point is about the relationship between antisemitism and Islamophobia in the document. These forms of hatred are addressed separately and asymmetrically, often as parallel and, more importantly, competing anxieties rather than interconnected threats to democratic coexistence which are created by the same dynamics. The section on the Gaza protests is very revealing. The text nominally protects freedom of expression but quickly pivots towards antisemitic abuse and intimidation. Needless to say, antisemitism and protest is real and serious on occasions. Yet what is absent is equally interesting. The document leaves little room for understanding why many British Muslims and / or Palestinians may experience current political discourse around Gaza as uncomfortable or exclusionary.

From a discourse analysis perspective, the antisemitism section is emotionally vivid, concrete, institutionally embedded, numerically detailed, and framed as an urgent societal crisis. The anti-Muslim hostility section, on the other hand, is also serious, but much more defensive and managerial. There is defining acceptable criticism, emphasising freedom of expression, focusing on implementation mechanisms, and repeatedly clarifying that the definition protects debate.

The difference in tone is analytically important. The document misses an opportunity to articulate antisemitism and Islamophobia as interconnected threats to democratic coexistence. Research consistently shows that forms of hatred are interconnected rather than competing.<sup>7</sup> The actors or processes that threaten marginalised groups are often the same. A strategy that brings fighting against all forms of racialisation would be more effective and refrain from pitting Muslims and Jews against each other.

In summary, taken together, the document imagines cohesion less as an ongoing democratic negotiation across difference, and more as the management of populations, emotions, and tensions considered potentially disruptive. It constructs a morally coherent national “We”, frames dissent and difference through increasingly securitised language,

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<sup>7</sup> For associated research, see [Entangled Otherings: Antisemitism, Islamophobia, and Racism \(at interfaith.cam.ac.uk\)](https://interfaith.cam.ac.uk), a multi-year research network supported by the Cambridge–DAAD Hub for German Studies, and the readings set for the Faculty of Divinity MPhil paper on [Antisemitism and Islamophobia in “Christian Europe” \(via divinity.cam.ac.uk\)](https://divinity.cam.ac.uk) cotaught by Prof Özyürek with Prof Daniel Weiss.

and approaches antisemitism and Islamophobia as parallel and unrelated or competing governance problems rather than interconnected social realities. Ultimately, the document reveals a tension at the heart of contemporary cohesion discourse: the desire to celebrate pluralism while increasingly governing difference through the language of security management and conditional belonging.

The unresolved question throughout remains: what matters to whom, and who gets to decide?

## Protection and state projects

Dr Tobias Müller (CRASSH)

Thanks for the three fantastic interventions that picked up and brought to life many of the thoughts that I had during the reading as well. What I would like to focus on, as invited, is how my own research (and particularly my new article in *Democratic Theory*) might help us make sense to some of what we're reading here and the contradictions we find within *Protecting What Matters*.<sup>8</sup>

When I started my research looking at local community engagement in two super-diverse neighbourhoods in Munich and in London, I found those contradictions to be there. And it made me wonder: Is this just happenstance? Or a kind of intentional maliciousness of actors, as emphasised in the definitions of anti-Muslim hostility and hate? Or is there something structural in what the State does and why it does these kinds of things? That is, we can observe an actor and think “You're part of the Labour Party (or the Tory Party). There's a lot of like racist people in there, and they probably produce racist policy.” Right? But there's something more fundamental.

Trying to understand why these contradictions repeat themselves over and over again, I developed the concept of “state projects”, drawing together a relational understanding of the state from neo-Marxist theory with an understanding of discourse and practices from Michel Foucault, and what the anthropologist James Scott calls seeing the state as “grids of legibility”.

As I explain it, these state projects are imperatives that are mobilised by the State to do certain things and see the world in a certain way. So they mobilise different grids of legibility. And each of those projects—I identified

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<sup>8</sup> T Müller (2026) Democracy and religion in what state? State projects, sanitizing politics, and fracturing the demos. *Democratic Theory* 13.2:197–224.  
doi:10.1017/S2332889426000230

three in the paper—are necessarily part of the modern Western European state; at least that’s the proposition. There is one that’s focused around security, one about identity, and one about diversity; and each invokes different subjectivity. Again, in the Foucaultian way that discourses of practice produce or interpolate certain subjectivities. In the security project, this was very clear. It’s a risky subject. We’ve seen this in this document (PWM) very strongly. There’s always the risk that “certain people”, particularly religious people, particularly Muslims, might just edge towards extremism. And so that’s constantly there. There is a specific legibility to it.

In terms of belonging, this has been mentioned already in regarding cohesion: There is the sense that something is there that’s already fine, and then something gets added on top. There’s always the question: what belongs to this pre-established whole? The subjectivity or the question to the subject is always: Do you belong? Does what you do belong?

Again, more egregious, for instance, the German case, but I saw often there were Ministers of the Interior saying “Muslims belong to Germany, but Islam actually doesn’t”. And then the next Minister of Interior came in and said “No, Islam actually does belong to Germany.” And the next one, “Historically, actually, it doesn’t,” right? So you see this kind of belonging playing out at the highest level. In a slightly more subtle way, I think it seeps in here as well.

The last one, the diversity state project, entails an often nominal commitment to freedom of speech, to the enjoyment of goods, of “live and let live” as the Prime Minister mentions in the beginning (of PWM). My proposition is that this is not by accident: this is part of how the state operates, how it has understood and constituted itself in the last 150 years. And then what comes added to this, of course, is race and racialisation. Schirin Amir-Moazami, Nadia Fadil and others have theorised this.<sup>9</sup> We can see this also in this document.

How can appreciating these three dimensions help us to read this document? What do these reveal about the invocation of the subject and how it’s being instrumentalised? As already mentioned, we see this focus on the two sides of integration, on rights and responsibilities. This invokes the subject of the community as having an obligation to act, to do something. We can ask: Who is called to action here? And again, very

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<sup>9</sup> See S Amir-Moazami (2022) Interrogating Muslims: The liberal-secular matrix of integration; and M Scheer, N Fadil, & BS Johansen, eds (2019) Secular bodies, affects and emotions: European configurations.

often underlying this—there’s been a lot of discourse in the background kind of pitching “moderate Muslims” against “extremist Muslims”; that is not the language used here anymore, but that obviously has been a key part of the British state policy as well—trying to mobilise and instrumentalise certain communities to do a certain kind of work. Thereby dividing the communities themselves, and invoking one part over the other.

The document reiterates not only that these bifurcations exist within the community (creating a situation in which the communities are always at risk), but they’re also, for instance, to quote from the beginning it’s a “multi-ethnic democracy” and we live together across “different cultures and races”.<sup>10</sup> Such statements involve a certain reification, the idea that “obviously, there’s different races and different ethnicities”—and those are, by the way, of course, not the four nations that we have, but of course it’s “the racialised other”, right?

In a way then, religion becomes both a poison and a cure. Meanwhile, we can consider what is absent—for example, the document does not speak about housing or landlords, or land holding corporations, that make the life of many communities very difficult.

The second element as we mentioned already, is the affectual nature. This emphasis on “pride”—to the extent of claiming that “without pride in Britain, there is no better future for our children”.<sup>11</sup> This emotional or affective scaffold gets translated into the most existential part of how our whole country runs.

Patriotism is mentioned several times as a good thing, and we find a certain affective register that’s being asked—uniting those of us who are proud of the UK. That’s the basis on which (and through whom) the political community that gets constructed.

And my last point: there is a political theory underlying this, I think, which at the beginning was called “neoliberalism”. Cameron and so on called it “muscular liberalism”. But the approach here seemed to be through the community as the object of intervention, but also the subject of action. And there is a kind of republican value discourse connected somehow with liberalism, connected somehow with place. But obviously what is not mentioned or only, I would argue as an add-on, is fascism and the far right. They mention the “Extreme Right”, but the fascist mobs one-and-a-

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<sup>10</sup> Foreword from the Secretary of State (page 8) and from the Prime Minister (page 6).

<sup>11</sup> Foreword from the Secretary of State, page 8.

half years ago in the summer, they're called like I think "the disturbances" or something—a very neutral term without naming it at all.<sup>12</sup>

Consider in contrast this over-reliance on religious hatred. Marking particularly Muslim communities as the instigators, the holders of this hate, while leaving the majority of white people, and also the politics of the right far off.

## Continuing the conversation

The chair's remarks through the discussion are shown in shaded format, serving mainly to connect others' responses.

Dr Hine: One thing we have alluded to that resonated for me is: Who's the reader? Who is this document intended to speak to? Because I think that we're invited in, "Join us in feeling this document is yours, that it's speaking to you". Which can make us wonder: who is it trying to anticipate as a reader or counter-reader?

What did others discern as you read *Protecting What Matters*?

### Cambridge respondent 1

When I looked the document, I looked first to find some kind of legal protection, since I am a lawyer. I sought out parameters. I found nothing concrete. So I considered the context. In the definition of anti-Muslim hostility, I read "because of their religion or those who are perceived to be Muslim, including where that perception is based on assumptions about ethnicity, race and appearance". There is nothing to explain these "assumptions", nor anything equivalent in the section about antisemitism. The document claims to protect something, but it does not protect its core sphere. I am reminded of what Bordieu says: "What is essential goes without saying because it comes without saying."

The document also tells me I (the reader) need to be British. Britishness is emphasised. But again, in such kind of documents, first of all, you need to prove that you respect difference. I was reading Gabriel Tarde recently. Tarde says, "Exister c'est différer", to exist is to differ. But writing this document, first of all, I assume that there's no difference—so people cannot differentiate. People should first of all become "British". And then

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<sup>12</sup> Editor's note: The document uses "unrest" with reference to riots in Leicester in 2022 and "asylum hotel protests" in 2024.

inside of the rhetoric, I try to show something else. In English, they call it “window dressing”.

## Cambridge respondent 2

I’m an anthropologist. Mostly I’ve worked on Jewish languages and interreligious encounter. To build on what was just said, I’ve also found it a bit unclear what they thought antisemitism was. At one point, they say “antisemitism and other forms of racism”, but then they talk about “religious hatred”. They point to the IHRA definition of antisemitism, which we can ask further questions about, but they don’t question it at all. And you get the impression, or at least I got the impression reading it, that their solution to it was primarily about this kind of securitisation and managing. But equally that somehow they’re not . . . like Esra said, they’re really not seeing any kind of connection between antisemitism and anti-Muslim hostility. Other than an implication that part of the antisemitism that we’re seeing is due to Muslim migrants. (It’s a little bit implied.) You really get the sense across the document that there’s an inability or reluctance to pin down precisely what it is they’re talking about, including things like antisemitism.

Dr Hine: To clarify for those less familiar with the texture of the document: Antisemitism gets its own section. We get a juxtaposition. Antisemitism gets its block. Then anti-Muslim hostility gets its block.

It struck me even at the simplest level, sometimes when you have to decide how to order something, you go alphabetically. But I decided that while “Islamophobia” comes alphabetically after “antisemitism”, “anti-Muslim hostility doesn’t”. I found myself conjecturing that they were still working with “Islamophobia” when they arranged the document. But maybe it also is the flow and that they want to spend longer tangling with some of the unspoken issues, as it were, arising out of “anti-Muslim hostility”. They are these adjacent blocks, but separate. Although they’re neighbouring each other, there’s something in that.

## Dr Özge Onay

I want to ask: If the state both produces and places anti-Muslim hostility, can it be trusted to define it? If it exempts itself, its own institutions from scrutiny, can we really trust its definition? This is what I’ve been contemplating while coming here.

I was thinking of securitisation of Muslim communities over the past two decades especially, and of the Prevent duty in particular, a component of

the UK's counterterrorism program. For instance, the government funds Muslim youth organisations, and uses them as intellectual conduits. Muslim communities were being paid, were getting state money, on the condition that they identify "vulnerable" individuals within the communities. It was always strange to me that community welfare was converted into security infrastructure.

You might think, "That's so nice that Muslim communities are funded, they can have their own NGOs". On the one hand you get the grant, but on the other hand you get surveillance. Grant and surveillance are even in the same envelope.

This is what I am always questioning when it comes to state institutions. So can we really trust this definition in the document?

Dr Hine: There's a moment in the document (page 6) where in offering a justification of work toward social cohesion, we read it is "not just a good in and of itself" but "a vital front in the resilience of our national security". As if when you want to pull on the strings of the national purse, speaking about security is an immediate and sufficient justification.

### **Guest respondent (online)**

In reading PWM, two things struck me. One is the regression in some ways from the advancements that we had made in terms of managing diversity in society. I feel that in the time that I've been in the UK, over the last 40 years, we were progressing in terms of how we were managing diversity in this country.

We'd gone from "assimilation" to what Roy Jenkins called "two-way integration". We then moved to this idea of cosmopolitanism under scholars like Paul Gilroy and Stuart Hall. And then we moved to versions of multiculturalism, with the input of people like Bhikhu Parekh and Tariq Modood. And then with Ted Cattle, this idea of interculturalism. Then we had the speech by David Cameron (at the 2011 Munich conference), when he talked about the death of multiculturalism and promoted this idea of muscular liberalism. We've not, as a society, as a nation, we've not really had a framework for managing diversity in this country since then. At least, not a framework that government bought into.

I felt whilst I was in government, whilst we did not formally sign up to multiculturalism, implicitly we signed up to multiculturalism throughout the New Labour years. And of course, since that Munich speech, I think as a

country, we've rubbished it from both left and right, but we've not really replaced it with anything.

In the absence of a philosophical framework for managing diversity in this country, all we are left with in practice is this idea of muscular liberalism, presented sometimes in the form of British values and sometimes in other ways. And this (document) seems to me a product of this idea of muscular liberalism in modern society. And it seems to me to be inadequate in managing the issues that we're having now. Although there's been a lot of work since that Munich speech, from people like Tariq Modood and John Denham. (Denham took a leading role in this discussion after the Northern City disturbances, pre-9/11, in looking at what caused those disturbances up north in 2001 and how we might address those. He was a minister at the Home Office at the time.)

They've now moved to something that they're calling "multicultural nationalism", which also brings in the issues of the white working class. But it's not something that we've bought into as a nation. And in the absence of a framework like that, we then see very muddled pieces of work like this. That's the first thing that struck me.

The second thing that struck me was how shockingly ignorant it was of the great amount of good work that the Labour government did last time it was in power, during the New Labour years, particularly with regards to the Human Rights Act and the Equality Act. Colleagues have brought up the asymmetric way that antisemitism is treated here compared to Islamophobia. Had PWM paid a little bit more attention to the work that the last Labour administration did in terms of harmonising, not just between different forms of racism—and I would say antisemitism, Islamophobia, colourism, different forms of racism—not just in terms of different forms of racism, but harmonising how we address bigotry across the board. Whether it's on the basis of homophobia, whether it's on the basis of misogyny, age, disability, gender, whatever it might be.

Essentially, it breaks it down to the three areas that you deal with: So when it is bigotry in terms of assaults on the basis of a characteristic, of violence against person, property, you deal with that through criminal law. If it's antisemitic attacks, assaults on the person, or if it's on a basis of homophobia, etc, you deal with that through criminal law. Then there's a second area of bigotry, which is discrimination, which you deal with through civil law and discrimination legislation. The Public Order Act would cover the first. The Equality Act 2010 would cover the second. Then there's this third area of bigotry, whatever it might be, antisemitism, Islamophobia,

homophobia, misogyny that we might call othering or bias, which you can't really deal with through law, you have to deal with through education, awareness raising and other such tools available to government.

Having done that work in terms of harmonising across the characteristics of equalities, this would have been an opportunity to try and harmonise across the different manifestations of racism that are spiking in our society at the moment, and in particular, Islamophobia and antisemitism.

It hasn't done that. It's chosen instead to treat them in this asymmetric way. That's partially due to this ignorance of the equality framework we have in this country, but also the fact that we don't have a system for managing diversity, a philosophical framework for managing diversity that we buy into as a country.

Dr Hine: One of the things that struck me in reading PWM was how much it was picking up different pieces of work that have been done. In listening to you, I realise there was a selectivity: it's picking up around a decade of documents, important reports and visions. You're indicating a specific gap in the history that merits attention.

### **Guest respondent 2 (online)**

Listening in from New York City, as a professor whose college has students from 110 countries speaking 90 different languages, the central flaw [of PWM] is that it's very much clear about what it's against and doesn't use any of the many examples of what it could be for, or what could be unifying messaging. A potential example that came to mind for me is the coronation of King Charles, where he demonstrated interfaith cooperation, interfaith expression, and liberal theology—when you look at the ceremonies that he used, and the adaptations. There should be models of what to stand *for*.

Another exemplar of good practice comes from the medical sector, where Dr Orla Whitehead at Newcastle upon Tyne is training social prescribers on spiritual health—providing a vocabulary to speak with someone from any background about where health and religion might overlap. And a third example can be seen there at Cambridge, where college chaplains find a way as (most often) Church of England clergy, to create open space for all the different religions there.

My last point will be, unfortunately, from this side of the pond, that what I see in this document is the same refusal to choose a positive different lane, and instead a “me too” approach. That, “Look, we can promote the

surveillance state too. We can arrest people too for speaking in the wrong way.” That’s just not doing it as well as the right wing. You need to articulate what you’re for, what unity looks like, and I think there are plenty of examples very close to home.

Dr Hine: It struck me when one of our speakers mentioned republicanism, that the king is absent from this document. If you ask what’s missing, it is an interesting gap.

And although it’s a bit unfair of me, we meet at a particular political moment in which cabinet ministers have been resigning, and there was a famous comment last week in one of the resignation letters that said “The desire not to have an argument means we rarely make an argument”.<sup>13</sup> There’s something about that which echoes what those online have said, that there’s something missing in not putting a bold case and thinking it out structurally. And that’s why we get this kind of weirdly messy document.

## Cambridge respondent 2

One of the only things they do clearly say we are for and something that we have to all share is language. There’s this big emphasis on everybody here needs to have a shared language, and that’s English—which I guess ignores Britain’s own internal linguistic diversity in the first place. That’s one of the only things they point to as something we have to share.

The attendant implication is if you fail to learn English, that’s your own failure. They talk about resourcing different language learning activities. I guess that’s a bit ongoing, not something new that they’re putting forward. But yeah, that was interesting to me, this assumption that language, different languages are disunifying. And that to come together and be able to meet in close proximity, which is assumed to lead to cohesion magically, somehow, we have to all speak the same language.<sup>14</sup>

Dr Hine: You remind me, there’s a passage that says something along the lines of “If you can’t speak to each other, then we can’t understand you.”<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Jess Phillips, 12 May 2026.

<sup>14</sup> A footnote about the Welsh language appears on page 28 of the print version. That document was not available at the time of this discussion.

<sup>15</sup> The reference is to page 28: “It is impossible for people to engage with others, build relationships, and develop mutual understanding if they lack the words to do so.”

I noted that as ableism. There are people who are perfectly capable of communication who don't have the use of verbal language or a common language. It was an extreme deficit argument, claiming "this is not possible".

At the same time, I have a brother who is a dual citizen, a citizen of a different country for which he had to learn the language, and I see how important that was for him. So I see why it is beneficial to have a common language and why that becomes a part of a process of citizenship acquisition. But it's pushing the point so far that it's othering people.

### **Dr Tobias Müller**

To pick up on and develop points raised by others, human rights are mentioned only once or twice, and in very specific circumstances. The Equality Act, for instance, again the most wide-ranging equality legislation that, as has been pointed out, helps deal with discrimination between groups or by employers and so on, is only mentioned as in the context of "rolling out training across the Civil Service" (on religious hatred).

You have this key landmark legislation that a lot of people see as quite progressive, and that's barely referred to. There's this language of rights and responsibility, but the only right that's really emphasised is the right to freedom of speech, only to circumscribe it again, heavily when it comes particularly to Gaza, and to elevate it particularly when it comes to criticised Muslim communities.

Thinking about what kind of a state this is, and what rights and human rights we're talking about, there a whole area where legal instruments and rights are present internationally that get sidelined, which I think is really interesting, particularly because it's from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government—which is social rights. Social, economic rights, labour rights, the right to housing, to safe paths, to life, healthy and safe environments, care, education. You'd think these are key rights if you want to identify what makes lively communities.

But what you do with them is you celebrate religions, and then you give them the Women's World Cup. Here's the other thing: I looked for the term women in the documents and it only appears five times—to note that women bear the brunt of some discrimination, and then twice for the sporting events. So there's also this gendered element which is obviously key for any thinking about care, thinking about children, thinking about health, thinking about discrimination. There's a remarkable absence of feminist perspectives—we know liberal feminism tends to reproduce

Orientalism and structural racism, harming Muslim communities and other marginalised groups, so perhaps its absence is a good thing. But I find the total absence of feminist perspectives quite shocking.

Reflecting on the US perspective, I am particularly struck by the stakes of this document: It might be the last document of this kind that's not from a kind of proto-fascist or fascist government. In three years' time, with the election results, we might be very much looking into a space where all this kind of niceness, it's nowhere. This was the last offer you could make to a country that voted 40% Reform. So I think the stakes of this document are incredibly high. And it delivers very little.

Dr Hine: When I was reading PWM, I pondered who this document wants to speak to: what is the breadth? Thinking of the Pride in Place initiative, I saw an attempt to acknowledge that sometimes when people are wanting to come forward and be proud of something, they're actually in need. PWM is handling pride, seeking to say it's not wrong to have patriotism as long as it is grounded in an appropriate set of shared values. This document is trying to handle a difficult reality in which people are putting up flags sometimes out of a really deep nastiness, but not always, right? There's a grey area around wanting to claim some kind of attention. I feel like the document is trying to speak to that.

On the rights thing, there was one fascinating right in there, which was the right to buy from a community perspective.

And I thought, "how's that going to work?" This right to buy the spaces that operate, that can provide community, offer community. That was something that until I read the document I wasn't aware of. So it struck me as an intriguing offer to "take ownership" of community centre spaces.

### **Guest respondent 3 (online)**

As a government-funded programme, we are glad to see a commitment of continued support for cohesion work. But there are a series of questions that we struggle with, in working within this space. One of them is that whole question around what it means to be "British" and what are "British values", and who is going to answer that question to help guide the work that we all have to do.

Another thing to be able to share about conversations I've been having with people in local government positions is this question about community safety and the idea of cohesion as community safety being something that they're exploring. This language around pride is very interesting to us as

well. We've been having a lot of conversations about misinformation and rise of the far right. And you look at some of the language that they use in their protests and narrative, things like "Unite the Kingdom". And if you didn't know what it was, you could possibly put a social cohesion spin on it. And it could look like it's trying to say something else. So I think that this and a lot of the other things that we've seen are attempts to have a conversation responding to issues behind far right expression. Something we picked up on mapping Pride in Place areas in particular, where that money is going and what sentiments people in those areas might hold.

What we're seeing is this struggle of how to respond to the frustrations, some of the legitimate concerns that people are having that, that force them into certain types of expression to maintain a sense of control. And all of those as yet are quite unanswered questions that we're trying to grapple with.

And there's also, from what I've seen, a degree of openness of learning from civil society, which I think is hopeful in responding to some of these. I think the channels for that could definitely be a lot clearer and hopefully that can happen at some point.

Dr Hine: One thing I have heard on the lips of ministers is that there's not enough money or capital in government to address this. Therefore, there has to be, whether it's partnership with civil society or whether it's civil society doing it without government, that's got to be part of it.

But there is, say there's a kind of almost forced humility in the document because it knows that government doesn't hold all the solutions, even if it then does a two sort of two steps back to go, "But government's got to be responsible for security," which then is sending a vibe that happens in the document where it goes like that's the bit that is our province.

An article I read at the weekend talked about how foreign aid interrelates to civil society actors in Pakistan, from somebody who had been working in the distribution of aid. The writer had come to suddenly recognise how civil society in the marketplace, a community association having its own elections, was a zillion miles from whatever NGOs and activities they would be funding and yet that marketplace association was the fabric of civil society when contrasted with the organisations that knew how to interact with funders.

That itself grapples with the layering of how government interrelates to different bodies in society and what it cannot do, and in this document particularly, it has that acknowledgement of how some of the things belong to local government. And of course, they're coming from Housing, Communities and Local Government, but there are all kinds of layered interactions in terms of what is the possible and what is the imaginable.

Towards the end of the report, it starts to talk about what they're going to do next, and they talk about introducing a metric, which is a response to specific previous recommendations and outputting annual reports. Having this conversation in a university context, I wondered: what should we study here? If you were talking to somebody who is maybe on the brink of thinking about their next research project, what are the things that kind of would bear out more attention that are being proposed in this document? And if there are indeed going to be annual reporting metrics, what would you say to that? What might we see in the future if this government is able to carry forward, or indeed even if it isn't, that would merit attention as a dynamic? What bears more attention as a scholar out of this document and what it indicates?

### **Professor Esra Özyürek**

Our work has been trying to understand both how the government imagines a nation in its diversity, and then how these groups respond to it. In a nutshell, that is what we do. But this document, I feel like also to all of us, it felt a little bit old. As if it could have been written 20 years ago.

But then Tobias put this interesting thing, that this is “the last offer”. Are we just seeing the narrowing of this area that opened up in the 1990s, its disappearance? These are the things that I am observing. In the 1990s, from Tariq Modood to others, there was this hopeful thing. That doesn't exist, so clearly securitisation will increase. The government will not be giving funding. Maybe there'll be couple of soccer competitions if people are lucky, and couple of interfaith—maybe they'll be funded for their samosas that they make at home. They'll be given money for potatoes and frozen peas. We're seeing maybe the narrowing of that field.

### **Peach Hoyle**

One of the things that I always ask about stuff like this is, like, where is Christianity in this story? I think this document is enormously exonerative of Christianity. Where are the faiths? There's instances, all this kind of we must be doing faith, we must make talk, faiths talk to each other, and this is how we get cohesion.

But actually the faiths addressed are Judaism (a bit), and Islam (a lot), and Hinduism (a tiny bit). But there's very little questioning, I think, here about what role Christianity has to play in extremism, in rising tides of hatred. And this seems enormously disconnected for me from the fact that on Saturday there were people marching through the streets brandishing crosses and saying some of the most appalling things you could ever say about a fellow human being.

And so I have this huge question. Some of us regard the Church of England in a very hopeful way, as being able to offer this kind of commonality or rallying point, with chaplains being this both specific and general or universal examples. I worry about that. I worry about making Christianity this kind of universal rallying point. That's certainly not everybody's experience of chaplains in Cambridge. And also because: What does this mean for British colonialism and its legacies and the role that the Church of England plays in that? So for me, a question that we could be asking, and we often aren't in religious studies, is what's going on with Christianity here? It's universalism is so extreme that it disappears from view in this document for me.

Dr Hine: Going back to Bourdieu as quoted: what's essential goes without saying, but it comes without saying. Christianity is this almost silent norm in this text. The Church of England gets referred to because of its role with the Near Neighbours project, et cetera. But there is this incredible quietness.

I've assumed . . . many of us felt while reading that you can detect layers of this text, of the editing it's gone through. And if you care to, you can use the Way Back Machine on the Internet Archive to compare what got published initially and what now is on the website. It changed a little.

There was a sentence that struck me as having been edited in an incomplete way because it said something about "our shared values that make Britain great".<sup>16</sup> I feel like at some point it said "the values that make Britain great", and then they had to then say, "We're going to just talk about shared values." Very occasionally we might tell you what some of those shared values are. But they forgot to erase the "make Britain great" bit when they put "shared values" in.

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<sup>16</sup> Page 26: "our shared values that make the UK great"

There are weird little moments in the text where you feel how it's gone through a process.

### Guest respondent 3

Picking up on that conversation around the role of the Church of England, it's going to be a very important thing to continue thinking about. It's something we're thinking about particularly with the rise of Christian nationalism and the response from the church. And also speaking to church leaders who feel the conflict within their congregations between people who are saying that it's a good thing that people are talking more about Christianity, and others being like, "Absolutely not like this."

I feel like there's a certain level of responsibility there in formulating a response and being an organisational body who can actually speak to and very clearly counter what's coming out at the moment.

### Guest respondent 2

I'll start with the question you asked before about what an academic would do with this. If you take the document for what it is, it's basically you're going to see how successful they were at stopping things, and that's your metric. As a social scientist, if I want . . . there's definitely work to be done academically, except they've made the frame, "Look at all the things we're going to stop." It really doesn't give you something to build and it doesn't give you a way to model it. It does put you at a point in history.

I'm on the other side of the Atlantic and you know what's here. If you don't battle it head-on, we've shown you what you're leading, what you're coming to. Peter Hegseth is using all the powers of the state to fully express himself as a Christian in a white Christian nationalist frame, and he's using the power of the state to enact it.

So yes, while we know what various establishment religions have done wrong and that somehow they managed to co-opt credit, it is crucial that religion stands up for the things that can be shared, and it is crucial that there be a counter-narrative to Christian nationalism. Try to get ahead of it in the most pragmatic way 'cause it is as bad and worse than what you read in how they're using the power of the state to enact white Christian nationalism.

Dr Hine: I caught a very brief post this morning: Anne Applebaum had been giving a major speech in Austria. Part of what she was talking about was how Austria, subsequent to the Second World War, had set about restructuring itself to avoid recurrences of fascism and such. She went on to say, it's been long enough now, 80 years on, that people have forgotten that was hard work. It didn't just happen that there was an infrastructure that allowed for, that "protected what matters", shall we say.

There's been this kind of kickback against lots of progress, etc. We have forgotten the peace time dividend, and that it doesn't happen by accident that you don't get implicated in lots of wars in your neighbourhood. And I say in your neighbourhood because of course we can't pretend that the West hasn't been at war in many different contexts just not in its own backyard by and large.

There was something there that was worth attending to. I think if I could be a fly on the wall somewhere as a first year, and it'd be very interesting to be alongside whatever group of students get drawn into the "co-design" of "a Cohesion Charter". What a fascinating exercise. And then to offer that back to universities. That is not because there isn't an important conversation to happen.

But again, and this is just, picking up on the things that are out there in this moment, I caught the side bit of a conversation with a UK university where some people had pointed out that it was miswording its statutory responsibilities in relation to Prevent. It was claiming a statutory responsibility to prevent terrorism, when actually the statutory responsibility was to prevent people being drawn into terrorism, and these inflect in different ways when you try to think about it in relation to freedom of speech. So if you thought that what you were supposed to do is prevent terrorism, it might allow less freedom of speech than if you thought that your responsibility was to prevent people being drawn into terrorism. And such a kind of, a way in which has gone over and beyond what it ever was constructed to try to do as this kind of feature in the landscape. So there are all inflections, complexities to how things play out after they've left the desk of a civil servant or a lawmaker, and so on.

Would anybody like to add a footnote to the discussion?

I'm sure whichever civil servants are responsible for putting PWM together, they were not anticipating such a "take apart" conversation here in Cambridge.

## Dr Özge Onay

If we can't blame master, we can't blame the tools. We should be able to really define what racist is. As Stuart Hall says, racism is a floating signifier, shape-shifting all the time. Today we're talking about Islamophobia as a significant, hard topics, and let's say hot topic in Western countries, but it's not quite straightforward, and we can't really define. It's such a contested topic really. Based on my own research, I can say there are insidious forms of Islamophobia which are not really clear, visible and overt. Sometimes it's quite covert. People go through Islamophobia quite different ways.

As I mentioned at the beginning, sometimes we don't look Muslim, but we go through it. We really experience it. An older definition spoke of "Muslim and perceived Muslimness". That's why we say Muslim people are racialised. It's not only to do with how they look, also ethnicity, name, sometimes occupation, give them away, their familial background. But in the Turkish case, if you say, for instance, if you reveal that you're Turkish, you can easily be asked, is your father a taxi driver or a kebab person? This is also, again, insidious. So you can't really differentiate if it is racism, Islamophobia, or something else, if people are just joking. All of these intricacies and nuances should be taken into consideration when we define Islamophobia or different forms of racisms. It's quite contextual. It's not really easy to define and especially in this document, it looks quite hedged and as, one participant said, it is quite sanitised. I also like that phrase—it's a hard call.

### Cambridge respondent 1

We always talked about language issue or the language dimension. The language dimension is striking everywhere, I think. It's very interesting because recently I passed the solicitors exam here. I was in the process of registering myself to the Bar. In the last step, they required me to submit some kind of English language requirement. And I told them, the exam was already 10 hours of English . . . I proved myself at some point. They said, "No, we need some kind of document."

So I got a document from Cambridge which says that I'm a researcher in Cambridge. But they rejected the document again. Then I pushed. What is the rationale behind this kind of document, and why do you need it? They said, "Because, when you qualify as a solicitor, you are going to communicate to vulnerable people, so we need such kind of document". But I said, "Then I don't need to speak some kind of perfect English, because I need to speak some kind of second language. These vulnerable

people come from different backgrounds, and I am sure that they cannot speak English well.”

They didn't say anything else, just “Please send us some kind of IELTS document or something like that.” It's interesting for me, the language.

### **Dr Tobias Müller**

The paper mentioned before is concerned with democracy first and foremost, and I found that interestingly absent as well in PWM. It mentions multi-ethnic democracy, mostly as an abstract invocation. There's very little, apart from the student charter and its cocreation. They're very sanitised. It's not daring anywhere to actually rejuvenate democracy.

You could do participatory budgeting, for example, with those funds that you have for Pride in Place. It's also a very little sum. 150 million to rejuvenate the high streets. (Half a million for schools.) Ridiculously little sums. This is the problem with austerity, how it cuts public services. And at the very beginning they say “Ah, and then there's these closed youth centres and understaffed hospitals” which they never, ever take up again.

But this is actually a problem. They just blame it on the past government rather than rejuvenate, build new youth centres and staff hospitals properly, which probably most communities would really benefit from. I think actually trusting the people in any kind of democratic way and giving them decision-making power over budget seems to be completely absent.

In a way it's also deferring democracy, and then it's also unfortunately—no surprise, I think—that people say, “I'm not going to walk along with this. I want to...”—whatever they fall for in terms of taking back power and can opt for the far right. I think because this kind of language this kind of Thatcherite liberalism is not offering people power, they seek it elsewhere. And I think this is therefore a real democratic problem that isn't adequately addressed.

Dr Hine: On that note, we have reached the end. Thank you all for taking the time to be here. And special thanks to those who prepared something so that we were able to get into the grittiness of these documents.

This summary account was prepared by Dr Iona Hine and forms part of an occasional series. For previous discussion in this domain, see also the online report: [Defining Islamophobia in 2025 \(via www.interfaith.cam.ac.uk\)](http://www.interfaith.cam.ac.uk).

## About the Cambridge Interfaith Programme

The Cambridge Interfaith Programme (CIP) is a research and engagement centre based at the University of Cambridge, dedicated to advancing rigorous scholarship and meaningful dialogue on religion, society, and public life. Bringing together academics, policymakers, practitioners, and faith communities, the Programme explores complex issues such as Islamophobia, antisemitism, religious pluralism, and social cohesion.

Through innovative research projects, collaborative events, and knowledge exchange, CIP seeks to inform public debate and policy with nuanced, evidence-based insights. It provides a distinctive space where critical inquiry meets practical engagement, fostering deeper understanding across differences and contributing to more inclusive and resilient societies today globally.

The associated Research Forum provides a meeting space for University of Cambridge scholars working on any dimension of religion. The Inter-Religious Research seminar is run in partnership between CIP and the Faculty of Divinity and convened by Professor Esra Özyürek, Sultan Qaboos Professor of Abrahamic Faiths and Shared Values and CIP's academic director.

A Knowledge Hub enables organisations and professionals to connect with researchers and other stakeholders, progressing matters of mutual interest and forming topic-driven Communities of Research and Practice.

## Further information

For more information about our Community of Research and Practice on Community, discrimination & inclusion, write to:

[discrimination@interfaith.cam.ac.uk](mailto:discrimination@interfaith.cam.ac.uk)

Information about upcoming events including IRR seminars is published at [www.interfaith.cam.ac.uk/events](http://www.interfaith.cam.ac.uk/events).

To request updates on this topic by email, visit [cikh.civi360.com](http://cikh.civi360.com), where we also maintain a directory of Cambridge researchers with a shared interest in taking religion seriously.