Applying the Study of Religions in the Security Domain: Knowledge, Skills and Collaboration

Since the 1990s, scholars of religion on both sides of the Atlantic have been drawn into engagement with law enforcement agencies and security policymakers and practitioners, particularly for their expertise on new religious movements and Islam. Whilst enabling researchers to contribute to real world challenges, this relationship has had its frustrations and difficulties, as well as its benefits and opportunities. Drawing on examples from the UK, Canada and the US, I set out the relationship between religion and the contemporary security landscape before discussing some of the key issues arising in security research partnerships. I then turn to the question of knowledge exchange and translation in the study of religions, developing the distinction between 'know what' (knowledge about religions and being religiously literate), 'know why' (explaining religions and making the link to security threats) and 'know how' (researcher expertise and skills in engagement with practitioners).

Keywords: study of religions; security policy and practice; collaborative research; knowledge exchange

Introduction

It was the standoff at Waco, Texas in 1993 that brought about a change in the relationship between security agencies and scholars of religion. In March and April of that year, the Branch Davidians were besieged in their compound following an attempted raid by law enforcement officers. As a subsequent US Department of Justice investigation noted, although the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) consulted advisors, they made no use of religion scholars who had studied the movement in question. This was despite having a leading expert on the doorstop, and the offer of mediation by sociologists of religion (Kaplan 2002a; Barkun 2002).

Following events at Waco, the Justice Department began to consult religion scholars, both in the investigation of what took place and in 1996 when the Montana Freemen – a Christian patriot militia – came into conflict with the law (Kaplan 2002a; Wessinger 1999). FBI representatives began to attend meetings of the American Academy of Religion, and scholars were invited to the FBI Academy at Quantico (Kaplan 2002a; Barkun 2002). European as well as American scholars were consulted, including Eileen Barker and Ian Reader.

This developing relationship between American security agencies and scholars of religion was driven by the agenda, needs and timetable of the agencies and was advisory in nature. Reflecting on it in *Millennial Violence* – a collection of US, Canadian and Israeli government reports and scholarly essays – both Kaplan and Barkun commented on potential tensions arising from the different interests and working methods of the two constituencies. Kaplan (2002a, 20) noted his own decision in the 1990s not to engage with the security agencies on the basis that working in the field as a researcher was incompatible with cooperating with the FBI. Barkun (2002, 105; Docherty 1999) highlighted 'the gap between scholars' desire to slowly weigh evidence and reflect, and practitioners' needs for immediate

action', and noted the problems of secrecy versus openness, and 'incompatible role conceptions' (106). The culture of the two groups differed, though such difficulties were not deemed insurmountable. Discretion was a necessity, and both sides needed to protect their own confidential information – in the case of scholars, this meant informants and their data. This case sets the scene and raises questions that will be discussed below.

- What do scholars of religion and the study of religions have to offer those working on security threats?

- What types of knowledge are relevant? How is knowledge reconfigured through collaboration?

- What is the nature of the relationship between academics and security practitioners? What needs to be done to make it work, and what are its opportunities and challenges?

In discussing these, I will draw on recent partnerships between security agencies (policymakers and practitioners) and academic researchers in the UK and Canada, as well as the American case cited above. I begin by setting out the relationship between religion and the contemporary security landscape before discussing some of the key issues arising in security research collaborations. I then turn to the question of knowledge exchange and translation in the study of religions, developing Raghu Garud's (1997) distinction between 'know what', 'know why' and 'know how'. Finally, I stress the need to nurture the relationship between religion scholars and security professionals for productive and sustained collaboration.

Religion and the Contemporary Security Landscape

In the run up to the year 2000, religion began to be seen as a contributing factor in contemporary security threats, with fears growing about groups which rejected the world and

believed in the impending end times. The FBI's *Project Megiddo* and Canadian Security and Intelligence Service's *Doomsday Religious Movements* (Kaplan 2002b) were the product of fears that millennial beliefs would lead to violent action.

Although the public threat from such movements receded with the passing of the millennium, anxiety about the role of religion in security threats more generally did not. The attack by al-Qaeda on the World Trade Center in New York in 2001, and subsequent jihadist terrorism and rhetoric by al-Qaeda, al-Shabaab, Boko Haram and ISIS has kept religious violence in the public eye, in the media (both mainstream and social), in official statements, legal and other policy documents, and through the publicity machines of the groups themselves. Government, other public bodies and the general public have had difficulty distinguishing the various forms of Islamically-inspired extremism (whether Islamist, Salafist or jihadist) from mainstream or so-called 'moderate' or 'good' versions of Islam. And religion's role in both terrorism and radicalisation has been disputed (Bramadat & Dawson 2014; Francis 2016), with many on the policy side attributing it a significant role (as 'ideology'), and some academic researchers discounting it (Neumann 2013). Critical terrorism studies scholars have complained that there has been too great a focus, by security professionals but also in the research literature, on Islamist extremism at the expense of other extremisms, with the consequence that Islam and Muslims more generally have been stigmatised (Githens-Mazer & Lambert 2010; Kundnani 2014).

Religion has remained 'in the frame' with regard to contemporary national and global security threats, although the type of groups involved, and their religious background and beliefs, has changed. The nature of the frames in which religion is situated is also dynamic (Snow & Byrd 2007). Bramadat (2014, 14) discusses the location of religion in relation to both 'radicalisation' and 'securitisation' post-9/11, seeing them as dialectically-related. Secularist readings of religion – whether they downplay the importance of religion, empty it

of its contents and power, see it as a pre-text for violence or give it primacy and visibility as 'ideology' at the expense of other social, political and economic factors – often fail to take seriously what it means to those who personally embrace it: 'We need to imaginatively step beyond our contemporary secular prejudices and recognize the consequences of living a life fundamentally rooted in a faith in providence, in the active role of the supernatural in this world.' (Dawson 2010, 14) Failure to do so means that the worldviews of violent extremists continue to be inexplicable (Bramadat 2014, 17).

A principal driving force then, for scholars of religion in the face of contemporary security threats, is the accurate communication of lived religion, how people and groups – ordinary followers as well as radicals – experience it, what they believe and value, the way they see the world, and how all these things impact on their actions. This is where the expertise of religion scholars primarily lies, whether their specialism is historical or contemporary, a single minority group, a major religion or a new milieu.

But the nature of the security landscape and its threats is no less complex than the potential role of religion within it. In the 1990s, a key focus was the implosion of a number of NRMs, resulting from the stock-piling of weapons (including WMDs), mass suicide, and the capacity of such groups to enter into violent conflict with outsiders. Post-9/11, the threat of religious violence moved to global terrorism, involving small cells and individual actors often linked to a wider network, and acting in the name of a religious movement and sacred cause.

It is not only in the enactment of terror, crime or violence, but in the discourses of security and security threats that religion and religious groups surface. Such discourses are produced, circulated and reiterated by governments, media, academics and other public and civil society organisations. They include ideas about religion as either peaceful or the source or pretext for violence; of 'extreme', 'radical' and 'moderate' religion, and of 'good' and 'bad' religion (Francis & Van Eck Duymaer Van Twist 2015; Githens-Mazer & Lambert

2010). They contribute to problematic conceptions of Muslims as suspect communities, of of the Islamisation of Western societies, the hijab as a sign of the oppression of women and its use as a potential tactic in the armoury of terrorism, and the Qur'an as a source-text for violence (Baker-Beall, Heath-Kelly & Jarvis 2015; Knott, Poole & Taira 2013; Kundnani 2014). Although security professionals are no doubt able to question such discourses, they are nevertheless exposed to the same sources of information as other people. Only a small minority will have studied religion beyond school level. The knowledge gap is likely to be significant, especially if what is to be desired is the level of understanding and awareness suggested by Dawson (2010, 14).

Research Collaboration and Re-centring the Question

Within 'policy-relevant research', making the distinction between security policy and its enactment, and between those responsible for each, is an important first step (Clarke et al 2015). The making of policy and its implementation are understood to be different stages in the policy process. The enactment of policy by practitioners in a variety of types of organisations – grassroots through to government – may be very different to the original intentions of policymakers, with a process of interpretation and translation required (Clarke et al 2015). Although some critics would find collaboration with both problematic, for those interested in the application of their research, the difference matters. On the policy side, Davies (2017) notes that,

> Changing policy or influencing legislation can be difficult, messy and time
> consuming, so you need to ask yourself what you want to actually achieve
> through your engagement; for example is it raising the profile of your research
> or do you want to affect a change in the law.

Influencing security policy involves researchers intervening in policy debates, for example by providing evidence to support or counter the claims on which such policy is determined, or by seeking to inform policy decisions or changes (Horowitz 2015). Knowing whether one's research has had an impact at this level is difficult to establish. Alternatively, those working with practitioners might expect to provide theory-driven but evidence-based findings, as well as skills, resources and tools that can be used in practical security contexts to deepen the knowledge base, and to support risk assessment, investigation and analysis. An awareness of the context and requirements is needed in both cases, as is an ability to translate the research accordingly.

Undertaking policy and practically relevant research in the security domain raises moral and political questions as it is 'often associated with an unhealthy proximity to the state' (Fitzgerald, Ali & Armstrong 2016, 1). Although at its simplest level it is concerned with keeping people secure, government policy and its enactment can never be an ideologically neutral process. In many western countries since 9/11, security policy has had the effect of securitising social institutions, communities and citizens (Bramadat 2014; Francis & Van Eck Duymaer Van Twist 2015). In such a context, researchers have to make informed decisions about whether and how best to collaborate, how to navigate the tension between criticism and practical engagement, and whether it is worth it at all given the difficulty of knowing how one's research may be used.

Furthermore, whilst being designed to protect, counter-terrorism (CT) initiatives associated with the 'war on terror' have contributed to global suffering (Jackson 2016, 121). In light of this, many researchers have been wary of linking their research to government policy and practice, especially where this might involve risks to fieldworkers living or working overseas. In the mid-2000s, critical stances were adopted in the US by the Network of Concerned Anthropologists (NCA 2007; Goldstein 2010) and in the UK by scholars

speaking out against the use of public funding to support CT research (Anthropologi.info 2007; ASA 2007). However, portraying the researcher's choice as either an untarnished critical approach or collusion with the state and its securitisation agenda is seen as too stark and unhelpful a distinction. Toros (2016), a conflict resolution scholar who has worked with NATO, recommends engagement and dialogue over critical distance from state actors, whilst acknowledging the complexities, hurdles and caution needed. Such an approach, she suggests (Toros 2016, 127), should not require researchers to abandon an emancipatory vision and agenda.

More generally, research collaboration can take many forms depending on (a) the nature of the parties involved, (b) the research requirements and questions, and (c) who commissions and funds the research. If research is commissioned and funded directly by external stakeholders, their needs will clearly take precedence, though it will be beholden upon the academics involved to ensure they are able to conduct the research with integrity, according to the principles, standards, ethical norms and professional conduct of their academic institutions and disciplines. If the research is funded by a research council or university, with the expectation that it will involve external collaboration, the relationship and working principles will need to be negotiated. In any case, awareness of the 'two cultures' (Barkun 2002, 105) is vital for a partnership to work, as is an understanding of the differences between their objectives, views of the purpose of the research, and diverse working practices. As the relationship proceeds, trust, the commitment to both the relationship and the research, and the time available all come into play (Davies 2017).

Differences in the worldviews and professional practices of academics and security practitioners are inevitable. Ignoring or fudging them in pursuit of an easy collaboration would no doubt lead to problems further down the line and would detract from the very idea of collaboration, the benefits of which should be additional and mutually-enhancing, whilst

retaining the distinctive contribution of all the participants. Learning from the academic/practitioner interaction following Waco, Docherty (1999) stipulated the need for both parties to be clear about their own roles, responsibilities and objectives, and those of the other. An effective working relationship would benefit, she said (Docherty 1999, 21–22), from the various parties reading in one another's fields, 'cross-training', participating in joint workshops, and working together on a joint research project.

Whilst there is much existing research of potential value to security policymakers and practitioners, there are problems with accessing and applying it. The largely free and unfettered access that academics have to the research literature through university libraries is limited beyond the academy. Furthermore, security professionals have little time to gather existing research evidence, let alone undertake new and original projects, given their policy or operational priorities. These limitations mean that academic researchers have an important role to play in working alongside them and responding to their research requirements. Succeeding in this may require a re-centring of research objectives and questions away from those that speak solely to an academic audience, to those driven by the needs of policy or practice. This is not a move away from theory, innovation or critique. All of these can and should be employed in the context of evidence-based, applied research (Echt 2016).

Some academics are drawn to this kind of research; for others, a more satisfying approach is one that allows them to remain focused first and foremost on their academic objectives, and at a later stage to undertake the practical translation of their research (Davies 2017). Both approaches have a place, but they are quite different. Research that is collaborative and co-produced from the earliest stage of question-setting and design through to analysis and the production of outputs is more likely to have operational value than research designed and undertaken for a largely academic audience in the first instance. Increasingly, those bodies responsible for the public funding and assessment of research have

stressed the value of knowledge exchange and research impact. These drivers have required researchers to consider from the outset the potential economic, social and cultural relevance of their research, and the possibility of engaging it directly with external partners.

The collaborative ambition discussed above is displayed in the work of two research initiatives. The Canadian Research Network on Terrorism, Security and Society (TSAS) was established in 2012 as a collaboration between academic researchers from different disciplines in interaction with policy officials, and focuses particularly on research on terrorism, radicalisation, counter-terrorism and counter-extremism (TSAS 2018). With partnership funding from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council and Public Safety Canada, it is directed by a sociologist of religion and specialist on NRMs. In the UK, the Centre for Research and Evidence on Security Threats (CREST) began in 2015 following a public call to establish a behavioural and social science hub for understanding, mitigating and countering security threats. Commissioned by the Economic and Social Research Council, it is funded by the UK's security and intelligence agencies and participating universities. It aims to be open and independent, whilst being responsive to stakeholders. It addresses key stakeholder questions by reviewing existing studies, undertaking and commissioning new, theoretically-driven research, and by focusing on operational relevance and the provision, where appropriate, of policy and 'best practice' recommendations (CREST 2018a). Scholars of both religion and politics work alongside psychologists, international relations specialists, and those whose research focuses on cyber and protective security.

In what follows I draw on examples from these initiatives – and the case of NRMS and law enforcement discussed earlier – to consider how the study of religions has been applied in the context of security policy and practice. In doing so, I discuss three distinctive types of knowledge which shape the contribution made by religion scholars to the collaborative process.

In a paper on the deployment of engineering knowledge in organisational management, Raghu Garud (1997) distinguished between 'know-what, know-why and know-how'. He discussed these as three components in a knowledge sharing process. Garud (1997) was interested in how firms acquired these knowledge components, where they resided, how quickly they could be acquired (and then decayed), and how easily transferable they were. I borrow these knowledge components and apply them to the learning process that takes place when scholars of religion and practitioners share knowledge and skills in order to address security issues. By 'know-what', I mean descriptive or propositional knowledge, including technical information: knowledge or facts about people, objects, the world and so on. I understand 'know-why' to be explanatory knowledge, or knowledge of the underlying principles of why things are the way they are. Finally, by 'know-how' I mean practical, experiential or skills-based knowledge.

Know What: Knowledge about Religions, and Being Religiously Literate

Raising awareness and providing accurate and evidence-based information and findings about religion have been important goals for scholars seeking to contribute to security policy or practice. This work has been driven by a perceived need to fill a 'cultural knowledge' gap (Goldstein 2010, 129). This is where specialists come to the fore, by offering their expertise, e.g. on NRMs, religious violence, Islamic theology or Christian millenarianism. Relevant specialists have often been those with in-depth knowledge acquired either through a long-standing ethnographic engagement with a religious group, or an informed and close reading of religious texts in original languages (or both). They have been sought out in cases where their group has come onto the radar of security or law enforcement agencies.

The scholar of Japanese religions, Ian Reader, is one such example. Having published his first book on Aum Shinrikyo in 1996, a year after Aum's attack on the Tokyo

underground, Reader was consulted extensively by the FBI and other security agencies, both on millennial and apocalyptic groups, and on religion and violence more generally. Commenting on this in several articles (Reader 2002, 2012), he noted that Aum Shinrikyo had been 'completely off the radar' of the security forces, and that the Tokyo attack had been a watershed moment in their thinking, 'a seismic strategic shift in the world of terrorism' (Reader 2012, 182). Aum was seen as a 'textbook case' of the rapid development of violence (and the first non-state use of biological and chemical weapons) in the context of a millennial 'threat group' (Reader 2002). Research on NRMs has also been a significant area for public engagement in the UK. The sociologist of religion, Eileen Barker, founding the Information Network on Religious Movements (INFORM) in 1988 for the provision of accurate and reliable information to scholars, media representatives, political and religious leaders, families of group members and former members, and the general public (INFORM 2018; Barker 2014). With funding in earlier years from government, INFORM also worked with the police and security services, 'sometimes alerting them to potential dangers but frequently reassuring them that a particular group, although unconventional, is unlikely to be dangerous for either its members or the general public' (Barker 2014).

The need for factual and contextual information on religion has changed since 9/11, but not diminished, with the focus turning to Islam, especially 'jihadism' and 'Islamist extremism' – a corruption of 'Islamisme' as it was originally applied in the context Islamic political activism and revivalism (Hamid 2016). Scholars in the UK who undertook engaged research on Islam included Robert Gleave (2013), in a project on legitimate and illegitimate violence in Islamic thought, and Peter Morey (2018; Morey & Riley-Smith, 2016), who led research on Muslims, trust and cultural dialogue. Both contributed to the UK research council partnership for research on crime, conflict and security (PaCCS), and to a policy briefing on religion, security and global uncertainties (Riley-Smith, 2015). Donald Holbrook (2014,

2017), an international relations specialist, drew on his extensive knowledge of ideas, beliefs and media in al-Qaeda and other extremist movements to support the work of counter-terrorism practitioners and policymakers.

Whilst specialist knowledge is important, so is more general information. This may be of the kind that helps practitioners understand the background and context of the individuals and movements they have to investigate (e.g. differences between Sunnis and Shi'as, religious conversion, or Sikh activism), or that assists them in making informed decisions and distinctions, for example, between the common everyday activities of the majority of practising Muslims and those which might signal a move to violence or constitute a threat to national security (CREST 2018b; Knott 2018; Singh 2017). A key component of the work of CREST (2018a) has been 'knowledge synthesis', bringing together reliable evidence-based research across a range of disciplines in formats that are quickly and easily accessible and that focus on questions of relevance to practitioners. Such materials can then be used in the induction and training of counter-terrorism and other security practitioners, and as background briefings.

A key concept associated with the 'know-what' component has been 'religious literacy' (APPG RE 2016; Dinham & Francis 2015; Harvard Divinity School 2018; Knott & Randolph-Horn 2005; Wolffe 2017a). There is a general awareness that many people lack the knowledge or skills necessary to understand religious diversity, belief and identity, or the place of religion in public life. As the UK's All-Party Parliamentary Group on Religious Education (APPG RE 2016, 4) stated: 'Religious illiteracy can lead to media stories which perpetuate stereotypes, are inaccurate, or foster suspicion, and government policies which damage relations between groups and the wider society... It can lead to hatred and prejudice and the marginalisation of some groups.' Precisely *what* people need to know is a matter of

debate, but some projects have offered a religious literacy agenda or curriculum (e.g. APPG RE 2016; Harvard Divinity School 2018).

Scholars in the UK have drawn attention to the problem of religious illiteracy in the context of security policy and practice. Wolffe (2017a) has suggested that solving the problem is central to improving understanding of religion in both security threats and peace-building initiatives. Failure to grasp the internal complexity within religious traditions, the local landscapes of religious diversity, and the variety of identity positions within a religion like Islam has led to unintended consequences, such as the stigmatisation and alienation of Muslim communities, and the potential fuelling of hatred and conflict (Francis & Van Eck Duymaer Van Twist 2015, 116–117; Harvard Divinity School 2018; Wolffe 2017a; Wolffe & Moorhead 2014, 35).

Those who diagnose religious illiteracy as a problem believe it stems from secularist assumptions, expressed repeatedly in the media and other public discourse, that the West is secular and that religion is a private matter and increasingly irrelevant (Dinham & Francis 2015). The apparent 'rise of religion' in public life (or its renewed visibility) is then cast as a social problem and potential security threat (Knott, Poole & Taira 2013, Ward & Hoelzl 2008; Wolffe & Moorhead 2014, 12–22). This lack of understanding about public religion has led to calls for changes to religious education and professional training. Further, the plea has been for the kind of religious literacy that takes context seriously and recognises the dynamism of the religious and secular landscape (Dinham & Francis 2015, 14–15).

Know Why: Explaining Religions and Making the Link to Security Threats

The potential for applying the study of religions in security settings extends beyond the provision of information and religious literacy. A further step involves the application of explanatory knowledge, of two broad types. The first – explanations of religious phenomena

and processes – addresses why religious individuals and groups act as they do, including violently, why situations occur or persist, and their consequences. The second focuses on explaining the link between such phenomena and processes and the security arena. This requires religion researchers to make a case for the practical relevance of their theoretical and empirical work, and where appropriate to challenge existing assumptions (e.g. about the role played by religious ideology in terrorist motivations and decisions making, or on the impact of security policy on religious communities). It also requires them to be able to articulate *how* the explanations they offer might benefit those developing security policy or working on security operations.

This second kind of explanatory knowledge benefits from close working between religion researchers and security professionals, involving negotiation about the nature and purpose of research, the questions to be asked, cases to be selected, and proposed outputs. It helps if researchers are able to understand how their research will be used – within permissible limits – and if they are given regular feedback to help them identify relevant findings and learning points arising from their work. Researchers may be put off collaborative research if they do not fully understand the partner's requirements or receive feedback, if their findings and recommendations seem to be ignored, or they are unable to publish their research in some form (once declassified and cleared for publication).

The process by which TSAS Director, Lorne Dawson's research on NRMs was taken up by Canadian security policymakers and practitioners shows how explanatory knowledge can have an impact. As early as 1999, Dawson's research was being taken seriously, as the Canadian Security and Intelligence Service's report on *Doomsday Religious Movements* showed (Kaplan 2002b). Then, in the late-2000s, he was commissioned by Defence Research and Development Canada to open a dialogue on the study of NRMs and the radicalization of home-grown terrorists (Dawson 2009, 2010). As well as demonstrating some of the parallels

between the two groups – who joins, how and why – he explained the move to violence with reference to apocalyptic beliefs, charismatic leadership and the potentially dangerous consequences of their combination (Dawson 2009).

With funding from Public Safety Canada's 'Kanishka Project' in 2012, Dawson and others founded TSAS with the aim of bringing together 'researchers and policy analysts with shared interests in the areas of understanding the process of terrorist radicalization; assessing the security responses to it; and situating both in the broader social context with an emphasis on enhancing resilience' (Public Safety Canada 2015). TSAS held regular workshops to engage researchers, security analysts, policy and law enforcement officials, and offered summer academies on terrorism and counter-terrorism for graduate students and junior government officials (TSAS 2018). This close working relationship with the government security sector continues to be recognised and funded by Public Safety Canada.

Dawson has continued to build on his earlier intervention on the relevance of NRMs with further work on the neglected role of charisma (Hofmann & Dawson 2014), and the motivations of foreign fighters to undertake *hijrah* (religiously-motivated travel) to Iraq and Syria (Dawson & Amarasingham 2017), arguing throughout that more attention should be given to existential concerns and religiosity than is currently the case in terrorism studies.

Although, research on NRMs has continued to be important for the provision of accurate information to stakeholders about a range of groups, in the UK explanatory research on religion (the 'know-why' component) has tended to focus on different issues. Religion researchers funded in the PaCCS programme, for example, examined martyrdom and sacrificial death in Britain and Ireland since the outbreak of the First World War (Wolffe 2017b), the reformulation in Islamic thought of notions of belief, governance and their relationship to violence (Gleave 2016), and ideology, belief and commitment in the face of uncertainty and the move to violence (Francis & Knott 2015; Knott & Francis, forthcoming).

Since 9/11, in the UK and beyond, ideology has occupied an important place in public policy on the prevention of radicalisation, extremism and terrorism (UK Government 2011, 2015). Its role has been extensively debated, with some researchers remaining highly critical (e.g. Baker-Beall, Heath-Kelly & Jarvis 2015; Richards 2015) and others arguing that ideology needs to be studied alongside other causal and motivational factors, social processes and learning methodologies (e.g. Leader Maynard 2014; Neumann 2013). With disagreements still raging about the definition and nature of radicalisation and its relationship to violent extremism, CREST researchers have taken a step back to resituate the debate in the broader context of research on the transmission of ideas, beliefs, values and practices (Lee & Knott 2016, 2017, 2018). They have investigated the processes by which these are passed on, in families, between peers, and in religious and political organisations and networks. They have asked where ideological transmission take place, and have considered the evidence for seeing schools, universities, places of worship, prisons and online environments as locations for extremist transmission.

Although religion and politics scholars have been well placed to research ideas, beliefs, values and practices and their transmission, answering such questions involves drawing on a far wider evidence-base, in educational studies, psychology, sociology, anthropology, history, communications studies and other disciplines. There has been value in broadening the general landscape to include a consideration of studies of primary and secondary socialisation, learning theory and cultural transmission within and between groups as they help to highlight those processes on which radical ideologues capitalise in drawing in, forming and educating individuals, and binding them to the cell or network, its teachings and moral cause (CREST 2017). Practitioners – ever alert to the specific contexts on which they are working – have wanted to discuss and probe how researchers' ideas and evidence can help illuminate ongoing threats, for example, the role of mothers in the passing on of

historical grievances, children's susceptibility to indoctrination, how peer-to-peer religious learning happens online, what terrorists have on their bookshelves, the use in religious organisations of texts that justify violence, and the rate of membership drop out or extent of recidivism. In roundtables, workshops and briefings, by drawing on illustrative case studies, and by sharing original and synthetic research in guides and reviews, scholars have sought to demonstrate the relevance and application of theoretical and empirical research on ideology to the questions and cases aired by practitioners and policymakers.

Know-How: Researcher Expertise and Skills in Engagement with Practitioners

Turning to the third knowledge component – know-how – we move from explanatory to practical knowledge and skills. It is easy to assume that this type of knowledge sits entirely with those who have to apply it in real world settings, but academic researchers no less than practitioners have know-how, though it is honed in a different context with different challenges. Rather than discussing this in general, we might ask, what expertise and skills do we as scholars have to bring to the table when we collaborate with people in the security sector? As well as the subject knowledge we have acquired during our careers, we have research skills, including an ability to present a hypothesis or build a theory and identify an appropriate research design and methods. We have knowledge of how to support arguments with evidence, communication skills (though some academics are better than others at translating their work for a non-academic audience), and a network of academic contacts. All of these can be very useful in applied research. As collaborative work may require oral presentations, being able to engage a non-academic audience, and even to teach or train practitioners and policymakers, is important. A further resource that academics are able to contribute – though it has to be carefully distributed and managed – is time: time to review the literature and to undertake new and original research. Policy and practice need the support

of evidence, but those responsible for them lack the time, and sometimes the skills to identify, gather and analyse that evidence. However, although the know-how and resources of academic researchers may be invaluable, they need aligning and adjusting to users' own knowledge, skills and context to be truly effective and relevant.

Examples of the application of academic know-how in the security domain take several forms: the provision of resources, advice and capacity-building. These go beyond providing information, explanation or analysis or improving religious literacy, to tailoring outputs to the specific needs of those policymakers or practitioners involved in the collaborative process. Such resources, therefore, include customised reading lists, glossaries and mind-maps, case studies of good practice, and the production of purpose-built data-sets, tool-kits, techniques or methodologies (see CREST guides and posters for examples: CREST 2018b).

The provision of advice, unless it is encapsulated in the form of a briefing note or report, is harder to evidence in a security context as it may occur in a closed setting, or in an unrecorded exchange or meeting. However, if users need to draw repeatedly on such expertise, for example, in a training context, retaining a material record will be necessary, e.g. in a video or podcast of a masterclass, a summary of a workshop, or in a learning module, complete with lecture, seminar and reading resources.

A further example of tailored advice came to the fore in interactions between sociologists of religion and the FBI in the 1990s. During the incident at Waco, scholars offered their services as mediators, though this was never taken up (Kaplan 2002a; Barkun 2002). By the time of the standoff involving the Montana Freeman in 1996, there was a greater openness to academics, and advice was sought from scholars of religion (Wessinger 1999, 38–41). The advice they gave the FBI has been summarised by Wessinger (1999, 39), but she also noted that, although the agents seemed to have followed most of their advice,

'the negotiators did not acknowledge that they had done so' (41). She could not say whether this was coincidental or the result of an unwillingness to admit the role of academic experts. This led Wessinger (1999, 42) to conclude that,

> If agents want to be able to communicate with believers to avoid violent conflicts in the future, they must first be willing to learn to communicate with religious studies scholars. Conversely, religious studies scholars must be willing to make the effort to understand the FBI worldview in order to communicate with the agents.

Her assessment gets to the heart of the matter – the quality of the relationship between security practitioners and academics – to which I will return in the conclusion.

The final area for the application of academic know-how is in the building of future human capacity, whether it ends up sitting inside the security sector or beyond it in academic security research. CREST (2018a), for example, aims to 'produce the next generation of researchers and educators, deliver formal professional development for stakeholders, and engage SME and industry to support innovation'. The funding and supervision of doctoral students, and support for early career skills and training is central, as is enabling them to spend time with stakeholders, learning about their requirements and working practices through dedicated meetings and internships in government or policy think tanks. TSAS (2018) directs funding towards junior research studentships – for masters and doctoral students – for field research on radicalisation, terrorism, security responses, and the impact of securitisation. It expects successful candidates to produce a working paper and policy briefing note, thus encouraging them to focus on making their research relevant.

Conclusion: Sustaining the Relationship for Mutual Gain

In the last three sections I have considered three different types of knowledge held by

scholars of religion and their application in the security domain, drawing on cases from the UK, Canada and the US. Examples of how academics have applied their factual and explanatory knowledge about religions included (a) the provision of contextual information and the drive for increased religious literacy in the public sector (know-what), and (b) the explanation and analysis of religious phenomena and processes through original research and synthetic reviews, and the dovetailing and translation of findings into user-friendly formats (know-why). With reference to the application of scholarly skills and expertise, examples included (c) the tailoring of tractable resources and advice to meet the needs of users, and the building of future capacity (know-how).

However, the ability of academics and security professionals to collaborate successfully has as much to do with their relationship as it does with the acquisition, utilisation and translation of knowledge. Earlier I touched on the issues of integrity, ethics, discretion, trust, and a mutual awareness and respect for one another's confidences, sensitivities and professional limits. This is the soft underbelly of a research partnership. It is difficult to summarise or evidence as each relationship differs, and those that are unproductive or frustrating are unlikely to become the subject of public reflection. Furthermore, it is not simply a question of addressing these issues in some kind of 'pre-nuptial' partnership agreement, but continuing to work at them from both sides throughout the period of engagement. This takes time, as it requires regular meetings and progress checks (including, where possible, more informal exchanges where relationships can be deepened), a readiness to give and take critical feedback, and an ability to stand one's ground on some occasions but to be flexible on others. On the academic side, it also requires a degree of modesty: from the stakeholder's perspective, responding to a policy need or designing a project to answer a practitioner's research question are more important than the reputation, contribution or previous achievements of the academic researcher. Although intellectual

property rights ought to form part of any agreement, the ownership and use of research outputs and products will rarely be a matter for the researcher alone.

Although these issues may seem to count against involvement in collaborative and applied research, for those who wish to engage with real world challenges or to make an impact on policy or professional practice, they are worth enduring. Although they add to the burden of things a religion researcher must deal with, the central concerns remain those at the heart of the academic enterprise: undertaking original and innovative research with ethical integrity and to a high professional standard, theorising about religion, religious groups and issues, developing appropriate methods, gathering data and evidence, and improving one's communication skills as a researcher, critic, writer, presenter and teacher.

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