

The New York Times' partisan reporting lets Islamic extremists off the hook

A US paper of record's podcast on the Trojan Horse affair is activism disguised as journalism. *From the Telegraph, [here](#) and [here](#).*

Michael Gove has accused activists and the New York Times of trying to rewrite history by denying the Trojan Horse affair was driven by Islamist extremists.

In a joint article with Nick Timothy, the Levelling Up Secretary who is a former Home Office adviser said the claim that the Trojan Horse affair had nothing to do with Islamist extremism was "as dangerous as it is false".



Hamza Syed and Brian Reed, who created the podcast for The New York Times

His comments follow a New York Times podcast earlier this year which claimed to tell the true story of how an alleged plot by hardline Islamists to take over state schools in Birmingham prompted a

national inquiry. The podcast journalists (Hamza Syed and Brian Reed) alleged no such plot existed and that the letter which sparked the first investigation into the affair was a hoax.

As a comprehensive new report by Policy Exchange makes clear, the NYT's argument is a sham, and its "journalism" a travesty unworthy of the name.

We know this because Hamza Syed, one of the "journalists" behind the series, openly admits he knew the conclusions of his investigation before it began. "I never believed Tahir Alam was masterminding the sinister Islamic plot," he says. "I never believed Birmingham City Council. I never believed Peter Clarke. I never believed Michael Gove ... What I believe is, I'm going to change this narrative, inshallah."

These are the words of an activist, not a credible journalist. . . activism trumps journalistic standards throughout the series. The portrayal of an interview with Richy Thompson, of Humanists UK, was exposed as dishonest when Thompson released his own recording of a conversation with Syed and his partner, Brian Reed.

Ofsted found "an organised campaign to target certain schools in Birmingham in order to alter their character and ethos" with a "culture of fear and intimidation". A hate preacher was invited to address students; an al-Qaeda terrorist was praised in assembly. Biology teachers rejected evolution as un-Islamic. Children were warned about "white prostitutes" and told "white teachers do not have your best interests at heart". Loudspeakers were erected to broadcast the call to prayer.

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The podcast presents Michael Gove, in 2014 the education secretary, as an "Islamophobic" pantomime villain. But the NYT fails to explain why this supposed Gove-led Tory plot against Muslims was supported by Ofsted, Peter Clarke and Ian Kershaw, who both produced independent reports, Lib Dem ministers,

Labour-led Birmingham City Council, and a Trojan Horse Review Group established by the council which included Labour politicians, headteachers, the Bishop of Birmingham and a mosque representative.

“The notion that the events in Birmingham had nothing to do with extremism is as dangerous as it is false, since it conceals an ugly truth that too many prefer not to acknowledge,”

This truth was that “we have a problem in Britain with Islamist ideology and its adherents, who seek to impose their intolerant values on Muslim communities, including children, through nonviolent means including the capture of important institutions such as schools,” they (*Messrs Gove and Timothy*) added.

“The fear of being branded Islamophobic has only made it more difficult to speak up about such extremism. There is a well-organised campaign that seeks to undermine our counter extremism work and the Government’s counter-radicalisation strategy, Prevent.”

They said this was important because the Government is due to shortly publish its review of Prevent by William Shawcross, the former chair of the Charity Commission, which is expected to say the **programme has been too focused on right-wing extremism and should now crack down on Islamist extremism.** (*My bold.*)

“Many of the key players in this campaign – who will no doubt repeat their demands for the scrapping of Prevent regardless of how it is fine-tuned – are also involved in undermining the truth about Trojan Horse. The common thread to their campaigning is the allegation of state-driven Islamophobia,”

Policy Exchange’s report claims to provide the most comprehensive account of the Trojan Horse affair, including the forced removal of successful secular headteachers, the

imposition of segregated classrooms, the reduction of “un-Islamic” subjects such as biology, and the promotion to children of extremist views. It calls on the Government to consider an investigation into the impact that fears of being labelled “Islamophobic” or “racist” is having on the reporting by teachers of incidents of extremism or intolerance in schools.

This could scarcely be more important. For the battle between truth and falsehood over Trojan Horse is just one front in a wider battle as activists become more adept at playing the game and using our liberal values and rights-based laws against us. We must remain ever vigilant and, with Trojan Horse as with every other battle, we cannot surrender an inch to extremists.

Fine words but very late in the day and we need action to back them up.