



**INTERNATIONAL  
OBSERVATORY  
HUMAN RIGHTS**

**DECONSTRUCTING  
THE UK'S  
POLICIES ON  
COUNTER-EXTREMISM:  
A CALL FOR CHANGE**

**STRATEGIC BRIEF**

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## ABSTRACT

These papers, developed by the International Observatory of Human Rights (IOHR) alongside our partners at the Active Change Foundation (ACF) and our panel of experts, will outline the state of the current and future threat in the UK and examine how well prepared the UK government would be to respond. Additionally, these papers will look at how current policies can be deconstructed to improve their success in the face of an evolving threat, as well as offering feasible recommendations on how to proceed more effectively with policy. Furthermore, the overarching aim of these papers is to use international expertise to assess what the UK can learn from successful counter-extremism policies around the world. In deconstructing policies of the UK, we also aim to be able to use this deconstruction as a model for other governments who may also be facing an evolution in terms of the threats they face and the capacity of their current policies to deal with them.



## INTRODUCTION

The UK's contemporary record for counter extremism policy has travelled a bumpy road so far. Having reached a crossroads at which several organisations, including the UN (United Nations 2017), have spoken out over human rights concerns within UK policy; events have now reached critical mass.

It is at this turning point that the International Observatory of Human Rights (IOHR) will release a series of policy papers aimed at driving serious and measurable change to UK counter-extremism policies.

To be published in three parts, IOHR's papers will put forward innovative and concrete recommendations for policy change, taking into account the rapid evolution of the diversifying threat of extremism.

This threefold approach allows us to spotlight the recommendations and outcomes as the focus of this paper, it also allows us to achieve outcomes that are feasible. By using high-quality, evidence-informed research through our partnership with experts in the field, these papers aim to shed considerable light onto an area of UK policy that has become a little grey.

## KEY QUESTIONS

1. WHY these papers?
2. WHAT is not working?
3. HOW to improve things?

# 1. WHY these papers?

## 1.1 The threat exists and is growing

Terrorism is not new. But, amplified and accelerated by the reach and tempo of technological change, it is now more global, more multi-dimensional and of a different order of pace and intensity than Hans-Georg and I have seen in our long careers.

(Parker 2018)

The rate of terrorism-related arrests has reached a record high in Europe, and predominantly in the UK, hence marking the clear need for the review of counter-terror policies. In the last year there has been a 27 per cent increase (Home Office 2018) in the number of individuals held in custody on suspicion of terror-related incidents in the UK.

This increase in arrests could be a direct result of more forceful policies and can therefore be used to justify the success of current policies.

However, it is clear that the threat is evolving. As outlined in the speech by Andrew Parker, the Director General of MI5, technology has assisted the development of the reach of ideologies and information-sharing and gathering.

The evolution of the threat is developing in an even more menacing manner due to the use of Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear (CBRN) materials. Traditionally considered a tool of state actors, the attack on 4 March 2018 in Salisbury, which used Novichok poison, brought the threat of CBRN weapons into clear view.

Additionally, 2018 research from the European Parliament shows that non-state actors such as ISIS are realising the potential of CBRN weapons, once again emphasising the need for the government to remain one step ahead of the evolution of threats.

Terrorism in the UK 2017	Number
Arrests for terrorism-related offences	412
Terror attacks in the UK	5
Deaths caused by terror attacks	36
Referrals to the Prevent scheme	6,093
Individuals who received support from Channel programme	332

**Figure 1.1 Terrorism in the UK**



## 1.2 Need for comprehensive reviews of counter-extremism policies that keep pace with the evolving threat

As policies to counter violent extremism go through a 'second wave' (Romaniuk 2015) or what is now looking like a third wave in the case of policies such as Prevent, it is essential that we understand what has been learnt through the revision of these policies, what should be adopted and what should be abandoned in these new waves of policy making.

The mere fact that these revisions have had to take place suggest that there are weaknesses in the government's approach to countering terrorism. It is vital for the government to be able to adapt quickly to environmental and social pressures if it is to implement solid counter-extremism strategies.

So far, an inability to react in an effective way has demonstrated the vulnerability of current policies and leads us to question whether the CONTEST strategy is fit for purpose or purely rhetorical.

## 1.3 Recommendations from the world leaders in the field

Our recommendations for policy change were brought about by research carried out by IOHR and ACF, alongside a conference – International Initiative on the Prevention and Countering of Radicalism and Extremism – that was organised by IOHR and held at King's College London on 30 April 2018.

The conference featured an expert panel of renowned academics, practitioners, policy makers, intelligence and law enforcement officials debating the topic of counter-extremism and deradicalisation.



[WATCH THE CONFERENCE ON IOHR TV](#)

## IOHR EXPERT PANEL

### Hanif Qadir

Chief Executive of the Active Change Foundation (ACF)

### Raffaello Pantucci

Director of International Security Studies at the Royal United Services Institute (RUSI) Chief Executive of the Active Change Foundation (ACF)

### Mohammad Touseef

Counter Terrorism Analyst and Fellow of Centre for Strategy and Contemporary Research (CSCR)

### Simon Cornwall

United Nations Counter Terrorism Advisor to Central Asia

### Paul Birch

Counter Terrorism Internet Referral Unit (CTIRU), Metropolitan Police

### Ian Lardner

Former Chief Superintendent, Metropolitan Police

### Badrus Sholeh

Executive Director of Centre for the Middle East and Global Peace Studies, Syarif Hidayatullah State Islamic University, Jakarta

### Lorenzo Vidino

Director of Program on Extremism at George Washington University's Center for Cyber and Homeland Security

### Mirza Omerhodžić

Project Coordinator, IOM Bosnia and Herzegovina

### Nina Käsehage

Lecturer at the University of Rostock (Mecklenburg-Vorpommern), Department of Religious Sciences and Intercultural Theology

### Joanna Goodey

Head of Freedoms and Justice Department, European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights

### Theo Padnos

Journalist and Author

## 2. WHAT is not working?

### 2.1 Failure to keep up with the evolution of extremism

One issue consistently discussed by experts is the government's inability to keep up with the rapid evolution of extremism and what is to follow in the short- and long-term future. Almost all the policies, both earlier versions and those currently being applied, are largely framed upon outdated and in some cases assumed hypotheses, based upon past events and experiences, that do not reflect the current and evolving realities on the ground and within communities.

As such these policies have and will continue to prove counter-productive and further marginalise the very communities we need to be engaged with.

### 2.2 Failure to avoid marginalisation

UK policy has so far been unable to avoid the marginalisation of individuals, communities and the organisations that they form.

A recent report by Liberty (2018) states that:

***The new strategy (a new iteration of the government's counter terror policy CONTEST announced by the Home Secretary on 4 June 2018) is the result of an internal review and largely rubber stamps the divisive and counter-productive approaches of the past.***

Although marginalisation can occur in many ways, it has been shown to grow through socio-economic dissatisfaction. However, when it develops due to certain government policies, this has been found to be what generates the ideology that sometimes pushes an individual towards



## KEY FACTS



of offenders were Muslim



of total arrested on terrorism related charges were Muslim



of Muslims felt they were discriminated against at work 2-5 times in the past 12 months at work.

\* 47% were listed as unknown religion. According to UK law, when a person is arrested, charged or convicted, there is the option for them to self-report their religious beliefs. (House of Commons 2018)

\*\* Joanna Goodey, Head of Freedoms and Justice Department, European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (IOHR 2018)

***Disengagement, rehabilitation and reintegration is not a short-term programme, in prison and outside prison.***

***Badrus Sholeh, Executive Director of Centre for the Middle East and Global Peace Studies, Syarif Hidayatullah State Islamic University, Jakarta (IOHR 2018)***

With a view to moving any new or revised policies forward, the question of marginalisation and the implementation of policies that avoid it, need to be addressed urgently. Within local community groups organisations are failing, and engagement is often selective.

Government policy has proven to be divisive in nature among religious and minority groups, generating and sustaining sectarian division and marginalisation. As a result, this has been shown at times to push those communities further towards the extremist camp.

### **2.3 Vulnerability of state institutions and failure to implement and maintain solid rehabilitation and reintegration initiatives**

The weaknesses demonstrated in policy to-date call into question the vulnerability of state institutions themselves and demand examination as to whether the policy and its implementation strategy were flawed at the outset.

Consequently, if there is an inherent vulnerability present within government institutions, do they realistically have the capacity to live up to the policies they create? The forthcoming papers will work on examining these potential weaknesses and the extent to which they could inhibit policy makers from effective strategic policies. In essence taking the policy from theory into practice.

Furthermore, the role of police and security services is of paramount importance in the effectuation of policies in society.

When looking at how best to implement new or revised policies it is important to consider how involved the police and security services should be in what is most certainly one of the greatest challenges of our age.





## 2.4 Pressing need to develop a more concrete plan for counter-extremism post-Brexit

### KEY POINTS

- **HOW** extensively will the UK be excluded from EU mechanisms such as, Europol, INTCEN (Intelligence Analysis Centre), European Criminal Records System and the Second Schengen Information System?
- **IF** UK policies are not currently at their strongest, will the UK government buckle under the pressure of not having the EU frameworks to work within?
- **WHAT** impact will this have on access to information to assist in countering terror?
- **ASSUMPTION** of UK's position of strength as the 'intelligence superpower in Europe'. House of Commons debate 'New Partnership with the EU' (House of Commons 2018b).
- **POTENTIAL** for a decline in intelligence sharing partnerships that 'create risks and hazards for all parties given the mobility of transnational criminal and terrorist groups' (Klein 2017).

## 2.5 The Budget

Government concerns naturally lie with budget, and with spending on counter-terrorism policy and policing on the increase, it is of course in best interests to ensure that the budget creates decisive outcomes. A recent example is seen in the increase in terror arrests, that appears to be directly connected to the increase in spending on counter-terror policing.

### KEY POINTS

1. In 2011 the government allocated £46 million on countering extremism. £36 million from the Home Office and £10 million from the Foreign Office (BBC News 2017).
2. This 2011 review of Prevent programme stated that 'Crucially, all new programmes will be evaluated rigorously to ensure effectiveness and value for money.'
3. In 2017 the government pumped a significant £24 million additional into counter-terror policing with the aim of dramatically improving the service.



## 3. HOW to improve things?

### 3.1 Understand the importance of the rapid evolution of threats

#### KEY QUESTIONS

- i) What is the changing nature of extremism?
- ii) Can the rising right-wing extremism be tackled within the current framework?
- iii) How serious is the threat of non-state actor CBRN (Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear) attacks in the UK?
- iv) What role does technology play in extremism and what can updated policies do to stay one step ahead?

### 3.2 Deconstruct current UK policies

Having outlined the current policies as requiring serious review, this research will examine the precise measures that can be taken to ensure a more holistic approach.

#### KEY QUESTIONS

- i) How effective are current relationships between inter-governmental departments (e.g. FCO and the Home Office) in countering extremism?
- ii) What role can the FCO play in reviewing foreign policy and its connection to domestic extremism 'SUSTAINABLE SECURITY' strategies?
- iii) What is the impact of extra-governmental partnerships with organisations and agencies such as the NCA (National crime Agency)?
- iv) Which organisations have contributed to policy inputs previously?
- v) What has been the impact of any lobbying to date?
- vi) How can we move this forward to have greater policy impact?
- vii) What can the UK learn from the international community?
- viii) What can we learn through greater partnership with EU and world states with alternative counter-extremism policies?

### 3.3 Rethink support

Government initiatives such as the Channel programme, aim to give intervention, safeguarding and support in the early stages of an individual becoming radicalised. Channel forms a key part of the Prevent strategy. The process is a multi-agency approach to identify and provide support to individuals who are at risk of being drawn into terrorism.

#### CHANNEL

The programme uses a multi-agency approach to protect vulnerable people by:

- a. identifying individuals at risk;
- b. assessing the nature and extent of that risk and;
- c. developing the most appropriate support plan for the individuals concerned.

***Channel, for quite a lot of people, has been quite divisive. Ian Larnder, Former Chief Superintendent Metropolitan Police (Larnder in IOHR 2018)***

Channel aims to support vulnerable individuals through various agencies and mechanisms, but many insist the process itself is somewhat flawed because an individual has to volunteer to be a participant in the programme. As seen in Figure 1.1, the latest UK Home Office figures show that only 5.45 per cent of Prevent referrals receive Channel support. This suggests that either 94.55 per cent of Prevent referrals are inaccurate, or the support package itself is not properly packaged and sold to the individual in question. This demonstrates another failure of current resources.

## KEY QUESTIONS

- i) What are the current government structures of support available through the Channel programme?
- ii) What is the current rate of recidivism in the UK?
- iii) How is Prevent work being evaluated and who is conducting these evaluations?
- iv) What processes, or checks and balances, are in place to monitor, identify and overcome failures and who is overseeing this process?
- v) Are current policies and delivery models in line with the current trends and evolving threats?
- vi) Are current communications and information procedures in line with the evolving shift in strategies?

There are numerous cases that demonstrate the need for rethinking these processes. IOHR's workshop on 30 April allowed experts to review key cases and consider the processes or lack thereof. These cases only emphasise how urgently this analysis is needed.

### CASE STUDY 1: MRS. A

Mrs A considers that the local authority's unscrupulous behaviour during the handling of her case is the reason Muslims in Britain do not accept the Channel initiative. Mrs A blames the process that nearly destroyed her family structure, achieving the opposite intention of a multi-agency approach.

The following points summarise the key issues at hand:

- The police consider that Mrs A's daughter's exposure to the radicalisation process is high, making several attempts to engage. Mrs A and daughter are not receptive to the Channel approach.
- The partnership approach used the agency of the educational support worker involved with the daughter to speak to the family.
- The educational support worker informs Mrs A that her husband has told the police that Mrs A is a radical and is preaching in mosques. This false information contributes further to a breakdown in the family. Mrs A refuses to communicate with her estranged husband.
- SO15 officers tell the husband of the activities of the educational worker. He seeks support from ACF.
- The council agrees with ACF to apologise to the family. This has never been done.
- Completely distrustful of UK authorities, Mrs A's daughter further isolates herself.
- This results in the daughter attempting to travel to a holiday destination. Border control stops the departure and the Local Authority subsequently achieves an order to have her passport removed.
- Mrs A's daughter refuses Channel assistance and engages with ACF.

This case study and others, as well as the failure rate demonstrated in Figure 1.1, confirm that Channel has not succeeded so far. If support services are to be improved, reconsidering the voluntary participation aspect of Channel is crucial.



### 3.4 Redress counter-narratives

Another significant conclusion of IOHR's workshop discussion was that counter-narratives are less effective when they come from the government. Ideally for them to succeed they should be self-determined and with a clear understanding of the perspectives and values of the individual in question.

## KEY QUESTIONS

- i) HOW can structures of support be developed and approved using stronger community-based/self-determined counter-narratives and initiatives?
- ii) HAS there been a 'knowledge' test by these local groups and do they fully understand the length and breadth of the problem?
- iii) HOW to assess the best approaches to take at an individual, case by case level?

### 3.5 Change the narrative

One of the primary recommendations arising from IOHR's conference was that the narrative around counter-extremism and deradicalisation needs to be redirected. This is one of our core recommendations, and as such a precise definition of the terms and perspectives of this research will need to be laid out clearly from the outset.

These papers will focus not only on religious extremism, but also racist extremism. In the UK this is pertinent as the number of right-wing extremists that have been exposed and convicted has grown exponentially.

## KEY QUESTIONS

WHAT is the current narrative and why is it not working?

<b>TERRORISM</b>	<b>JIHADISM</b>
<b>EXTREMISM</b>	<b>RADICALISATION</b>

Figure 1.2 Examples of key terms for revision

- WHAT are the identities that make up the narrative?
- Gender identities: the role of women
- Racial identities
- Religious identities
- Youth culture identities (gangs, youth tribes)
- The crime-terror nexus
- HOW can we reframe the narrative taking these identities carefully into consideration and without side-lining any sense of other group identity that they may have?
- WHAT is the solution? Creating a universal language by introducing a glossary of new keywords and phrases. Using models such as the updated definition of anti-Semitism in the UK (Foreign and Commonwealth Office 2016) look at how we can legitimately change the language used.

### 3.6 Implement policies with a well-planned strategy

In the introduction the metaphor of 'a bumpy road' illustrates the turbulent or unsettled ground on which the Prevent strategy cannot gain traction. The Counter Terror and Security Act 2015 sets out terms for every state employee to assist in preventing someone from being drawn into radicalisation. This legislation came into place in recognition that the implementation of previous Prevent strategies had poor infrastructure (BBC 2014). Human capital, information capital and organisational capital was, to a certain degree, deficient in supporting the implementation of preventing extremism within institutions. Unlike the serious and organised crime strategies, communities cannot develop any bridging capital or cooperative connections within the Prevent strand of CONTEST.

In its present form, unless the government changes the way it implements CONTEST and elements of Prevent such challenges will continue. It is evident then that not only the strategy itself but its implementation also needs serious reconsideration. The following is our suggested strategy for the successful implementation of policies.

## IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY

To implement a robust strategy that will successfully prevent individuals from being drawn into all forms of extremism, the following need to be considered:

REVIEW operational management processes within institutions and organisations that will work as practitioners.

USE the best practitioner's management processes to enable engagement. INNOVATE – which requires the effective use of bonding and bridging capital between institutions and communities and examining where and how they can be improved.

CONCEIVE a sustainable value process that looks at the creation of value that people recognise and trust.

### 3.7 Understand perspectives

Central to the preventing extremism problem is not government policy, but the principles of the idea of justice (Sen 2009). For example, many citizens of the UK consider the UK involvement in the Iraq war to be unjust, and as such feel they are not supported by the government because their views do not match government policy. Consequences in the form of terror attacks from 7/7 to Manchester, London Bridge and Parsons Green have been shown to emerge from that mistrust.

Equally, on the global stage citizens around the world have felt a sense of injustice. Some communities cannot reconcile signing up to unjust and ethically questionable acts that certain policy endorses. This drives a small group of people to distance themselves from the national ideas of justice and pushes them towards finding greater synergy in a more global view of justice. Subsequently, for some individuals, this can lead to association with proscribed or extreme groups. For organisations and institutions that seek to address the problem, this global view of justice can result in being looked on with suspicion by the very individuals and communities they seek to assist.

*If we lose our emotions in this field, we may lose the contact to the field as well.*

*Nina Käsehage, Lecturer at the University of Rostock (Mecklenburg-Vorpommern), Department of Religious Sciences and Intercultural Theology (IOHR 2018)*

## CONCLUSIONS

The research carried out to create these policy recommendations in this document has posed and answered many important questions. Overall however, its key emphasis is the necessity and pace with which policy makers must adapt policies and their subsequent implementation strategies. This is particularly pertinent when faced with the rapidly varied and evolving face of extremism as seen in the UK today, which policy in its current form is not adequate to eradicate.

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6th Floor, International House, 1 St Katharine's Way,  
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