Preventing Terrorism or Preventing Opposition? Imperialist Wars Reveal Who the Real Extremists are

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Global Research, September 06, 2015

Region: Europe
Theme: Law and Justice, Police State & Civil Rights

For too long, we have been a passively tolerant society, saying to our citizens: as long as you obey the law, we will leave you alone. It's often meant we have stood neutral between different values. And that's helped foster a narrative of extremism and grievance. This Government will conclusively turn the page on this failed approach.' David Cameron speech to National Security Council 13 May 2015

The Cameron government would have us believe that the solution to the terrorist threats facing the British people lie in combating "extremist ideologies" and bringing out more repressive laws such as the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015. This repressive piece of legislation is a recipe for injustice and seeks to criminalise non-violent speech and protest.

According to Liberty it contains:

> …a raft of proposals as unsafe as they are unfair– including passport seizure and retention powers, ripe for discrimination; a regime of exclusion orders, which risks exposing British citizens to torture; statutory 'terrorism prevention' duties for a whole range of public bodies, including universities and schools; new data retention powers, mirroring those rejected as unlawful by the Court of Justice of the EU; and provisions which seek to breathe new life into the widely-discredited TPIMsregime.

Over the last few months David Cameron has made numerous speeches about the central importance of combating extremist ideologies which pose a grave and present danger to the British people. A key pillar of this is the Prevent counter terrorism strategy. which places a legal duty upon schools and universities to combat extremist ideologies.

This pernicious piece of Stalinist sounding legislation is accompanied by the duty that British schools now have to promote "British Values". This piece of legislation became legally binding upon schools and universities this July and instructs them to try and prevent young people being drawn to terrorism by combating extremism which is defined as:

> vocal or active opposition to fundamental British values, including democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect and tolerance of different faiths and beliefs.

No one would oppose attempts to stop young people being drawn towards terrorist groups such as IS. However, this counter terrorism legislation is aimed just as much at trying to stifle dissent and opposition within British society at the reactionary political agenda of the Conservative government.

I recently found out from first-hand experience that the Prevent counter-terrorism strategy has a much wider definition of extremism than the legislation lets on.

On the last day of term at the school where I work we had a staff training session. We were told how the government expects us to teach ''British Values'' to the kids and that this would be [monitored by OFSTED](). This was controversial as what exactly are British Values? But it got a lot worse in the last session of the day.

A police officer from the local counter-terrorism PREVENT unit addressed us about the dangers of extremism facing the kids we teach. He informed us that PREVENT is a key government initiative to help combat the threat of terrorism in the UK.

He started off by talking about the dangers of Islamic terrorism and then the threat from neo-Nazi groups such as the EDL and National Front.

He went on to say that the police regard anti-fracking protesters as extremists and referred to the behaviour of Green MP Caroline Lucas before her arrest as an act of extremism. He finished off by pointing that far left socialist groups are also regarded as extremists who are monitored by the police. In effect he was equating socialist and environmental groups with IS and the neo-fascists of the EDL. I could not believe my ears as I heard this authoritarian speech and wondered if I was back in Germany in January 1933.

We were told that we have to become spies and pass on any concerns we may have over school kids who are espousing ''extremist'' views to the assistant head teacher with responsibility for safeguarding. They will then pass the name of the child on to the local PREVENT liaison committee. The police officer's slogan was, 'If it doesn't sound right pass it on''.

There was no mention of how British military interventions in Muslim countries are a major cause of the terrorist blow back that poses a threat to ordinary people. Apparently, the focus is upon reporting and monitoring extremist beliefs and comments. It reminded me greatly of the Stasi in Stalinist East Germany where huge numbers of ordinary people were spied upon and spied for the police state.

After listening to the police officers' view on extremism for about 15 minutes I interjected and pointed out to him the deeply authoritarian nature of what he was saying. Over the last

three hundred years many ordinary people have gone to prison fighting for basic human rights and had to break unjust laws in the process. In the present political climate such people would be regarded as dangerous extremists by the current government and be subject to police monitoring. I asked a question saying that I had been on strike a year ago and if that made me an extremist who would be monitored by the police? He had no answer to my question or the points that I raised.

The recent collapse in global stock markets represents a turning point in the lives of all people on the planet. We are entering [another global recession](#) which will make the 2008 crisis look like a walk in the park. This will have devastating effects upon billions of people across the planet and will lead to social and political explosions which the ruling classes fear. Hence their attempts to distract people with the 'War on Terror' with its endless military interventions all over the world and the start of Cold War 2.0 with Russia.

The emergence of the IS bogeyman in the last couple of years together with recent terrorists attacks such as in Tunisia that left [30 British citizens dead](#) have led the British media and political elite to go into hysterical over drive about the "extremist threats" posed to UK citizens.

The British Prime Minister repeatedly makes the specious argument that our attentions must be devoted to combating extremist ideologies that give rise to the terrorist threat to Britain and its allies. He dismisses anyone who tries to examine geopolitical issues that helped create the terrorist threat in the first place, such as the illegal US-UK invasion of Iraq, as "[grievance justification](#)".

A cursory examination of the recent bloody history of the Greater Middle East reveals how Western Imperialist powers such as Britain and the US have committed acts of violence on a massive scale that have left millions homeless and over a million people dead. This massive use of state sponsored violence is a leading cause of the terrorist threat to ordinary people.

We could start with the US/NATO invasion of Afghanistan in 2001 which was not authorised by the UN security council and which Marjorie Cohn, a professor of law at California's Thomas Jefferson School of Law has described as ["a patently illegal use of armed force."](#) A [recent study by the Watson Institute For International Studies](#) at Brown University estimates that total direct war deaths in Afghanistan stand at 91,991 people and nearly a hundred thousand injured by this illegal war. The [resurgence of the Taliban](#) poses a grave threat to the Western sponsored government in Kabul. Besides this, is the continuing presence of Al-Qaida and now groups affiliated to IS which provide support to global terrorist activity.

We could then move on to the US-UK illegal invasion of Iraq which various estimates hold responsible for the deaths of between 500,000 and a million Iraqis. This intervention based on lies and falsehoods helped shatter the country's infrastructure leaving behind the toxic legacy of sectarian civil war which rages to this day. The [US-UK intervention in Iraq destabilised the country to such an extent that it is directly responsible for the emergence of the IS bogeyman](#) which the media hysterically claims is a direct threat to our society.

We could then move on to the US/NATO intervention in Libya which has helped create a failed state. As [Seamus Milne](#) has observed the Western intervention in Libya while dressed up in humanitarian terms signally failed to save lives. In fact it helped create a situation where the civil war that followed Gaddafi's overthrow killed up to 50,000 people. Islamic fundamentalist groups have flourished in Libya since the 'humanitarian intervention' of the

Western Imperialist powers. These groups are fuelling the horrendous civil war in Syria and responsible for numerous massacres of civilians. Libya has now become a safe haven for Al-Qaida, Ansar Al-Sharia and IS all of which are targeting Europe.

We could then move on to the civil war in Syria where a myriad of Islamic fundamentalist groups are waging war against the forces of the Assad regime. These groups are financed and armed by the Gulf allies of Britain and America. This is something that Cameron's government will not publicly acknowledge. Yet IS and Al Nusra and the myriad of other Sunni terrorist groups that carry out massacres of civilians from different religious and ethnic groups in Syria are funded by Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and Qatar. The British government turns a blind eye to the large sums of money poured into London real estate by the various Gulf dictatorships while it encourages British arms sales to the same dictators whose hands are covered in the blood of their own people.

Lord Dannatt, the former head of the British army summed it up nicely when he commented:

> It is not acceptable, for example, to welcome large capital injections into prestige projects like The Shard in London while not exerting the strongest pressure on the Qatari Government to crack down on some of their own citizens. Such potential hypocrisy runs the risk of undermining many of the other political and military actions being taken to discredit and destroy the caliphate ambitions of the jihadists.

Meanwhile, the US and its British ally are back in Iraq carrying out air strikes against the very same terrorist groups that are financed and armed by our so-called Gulf allies. The hypocrisy of this is breathtaking. Never mind the fact that the air campaign has been a failure and is provoking opposition from the Shiite militias leading the fight against IS in Iraq.

The insanity of the war against IS is shown most clearly by the US/UK bombing IS while their NATO partner Turkey bombs Kurdish forces who have been the most effective opponents of IS on the ground. We should not forget that Turkey a key NATO ally is openly facilitating IS by allowing its supply lines to run across it border into Northern Syria and operate training/recruitment camps on its territory.

Cameron and the corporate puppets who make up the majority of MPs in the House of Commons ignore the recent history of bloody interventions by the US and Britain into the Middle East which have left millions of people as displaced refugees and left over a million people dead.

In March of this year the the medical-political peace organization Physicians for Social Responsibility, Physicians for Global Survival and International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War issued a joint report *Body Count:Casualty Figures after 10 Years of the 'War on Terror'* which noted how the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan are responsible for the deaths of between 1 and 2 million people in the Greater Middle East. This massive use of violence that is responsible for death on a monumental scale has been ignored by the mainstream media and majority of our lawmakers in Parliament. The report made the salient point that:

> A politically useful option for U.S. **[and UK]** political elites has been to attribute the on-going violence to internecine conflicts of various types, including historical religious animosities, as if the resurgence and brutality of

such conflicts is unrelated to the destabilization caused by decades of outside military intervention. As such, under-reporting of the human toll attributable to ongoing Western interventions, whether deliberate, or through self-censorship, has been key to removing the "fingerprints" of responsibility.

The so called 'War On Terror' in which the UK has played an active role has led to death, destruction and suffering on a massive scale. The numerous military interventions across the Greater Middle East have helped foster and create terrorist groups such as IS. The independent advocacy group CAGE has observed that:

> The British Government has always been reluctant to look to its own violence and policies in the Muslim world for inspiring Muslim violence. As such it cannot be a neutral arbiter in analysing and dealing with conflicts, as it is itself all too often a party to them.

The Prevent counter-terrorism strategy will do nothing to address the root causes of the violence that is tearing apart the Greater Middle East. The military interventions of the imperialist powers have helped create jihadist groups that have murdered British citizens and continue to pose a threat to the public.

All Prevent will do is to alienate many young people. It will fail abysmally at stopping the radicalisation of ordinary people into various movements fighting killer austerity cuts and defending the environment.

The trade unions, environmental groups and human rights groups need to expose and campaign against this repressive state body which will be used to try and suppress opposition to the Cameron government and its big business backers.

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