

UK Parliamentary Committee Releases Report on “Roots of Violent Radicalisation”

The Home Affairs Committee of the British House of Commons released its long awaited report on “The Roots of Violent Radicalisation” earlier today. Based on nine months of hearings, site visits and numerous written submissions, the report provides a comprehensive overview of recent developments and trends.

It highlights, in particular, the increasing role of the internet, the emergence of “lone wolf” terrorists, and the potential threat from far-right extremists. It also assesses the UK government’s revised Prevent strategy.

The full report can be found [here](#).

ICSR’s Contribution

The report quotes extensively from research and testimony given in Parliament by ICSR’s Director, Professor Peter Neumann, and refers to work on far-right militancy by ICSR research fellow Alexander Meleagrou-Hitchens.

(Professor Neumann’s contribution to the report was highlighted in today’s *Times* [subscription required])

Prison Radicalisation

One of the Committee’s main concerns was the potential for prisoners to become radicalised or influenced by extremists. The Committee report quotes at length from a 2010 ICSR report on prison radicalisation, citing its main findings:

- Prisons are “places of vulnerability ... highly unsettling environments in which individuals are more likely than elsewhere to explore new beliefs and associations”;
- “Radicalisation is driven by behaviours and conditions that are typical of the prison environment, especially religious seeking, defiance and the need for protection”; and
- “Over-crowding and under-staffing amplify the conditions that lend themselves to radicalisation”.

The full ICSR report , ‘Prisons and Terrorism: Radicalisation and De-radicalisation in 15 Countries’, can be found [here](#).

Online Radicalisation

The Committee report points out that the internet has become a key driver of radicalisation and terrorist recruitment in the UK. Among the evidence used by the Committee is a 2009 ICSR report on online radicalisation, 'Countering Online Radicalisation: A Strategy for Action', which can be found [here](#).

In addition, the Committee report contains extensive quotes from Professor Neumann's testimony in which he called on governments to apply more pressure on internet providers and websites:

The [best] way for any Government to address this problem is to bring political pressure... to bear on internet providers [and] big internet companies who are hosting extremist videos in places like YouTube, Google, Facebook ... [A]ll the measures that have been taken by YouTube to clean up its act have always been in response to political pressure, both from the United States and the United Kingdom ...

This is not about freedom of speech. All these websites, whether it is YouTube or Facebook, have their own rules. They have acceptable behaviours. They all say, "We are against hate speech", and they [all] are very effective in removing sexual content or copyright content.

Why can they not be equally effective at removing, for example, extremist Islamist or extremist right-wing content? Primarily, I believe it is because it is not in their commercial interest and that is why it is so important that politicians and Governments bring political pressure to bear.

Far-Right Threat

The Committee report also looked at the capacity of militant far-right movements to carry out violent attacks in the UK. In doing so, it cites research carried out by ICSR Research Fellow, Alexander Meleagrou-Hitchens, published in a 2010 report, 'Blood and Honour: Britain's Far-Right Militants'. The report can be found [here](#).

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ICSR, King's College London, 138-142 Strand, London. WC2R 1HH

Phone: +44 (0) 207 848 2065 | Email: mail@icsr.info

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