

UK announces “anti-extremism” plan sanctioning domestic repression and war

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23 July 2015

Conservative Prime Minister David Cameron chose Ninestiles School in Birmingham to outline a five-year plan to address “extremism” earlier this week.

The legislation he intends to implement will target Muslims and encourage anti-Muslim sentiment. More broadly, measures to be enacted against Islamic extremism can also be used against any form of oppositional sentiment within the population. They mark a sharp shift towards nationalism, in part directed against political dissent but also in preparation for stepped up military aggression.

In the name of building “a stronger, more cohesive society,” Cameron defined virtually any oppositional sentiment as impermissible. Britain was depicted as an ideal “multi-faith” democracy where “in one or two generations people can come with nothing and rise as high as their talent allows”—“without a shadow of doubt, a beacon to the world.”

Making clear that he was intent on criminalising free speech, Cameron insisted, “You don’t have to support violence to subscribe to certain intolerant ideas which create a climate in which extremists can flourish.”

These “ideas” included being “hostile to basic liberal values such as democracy, freedom and sexual equality,” promoting “discrimination, sectarianism and segregation,” and any assertion that “Western powers, in concert with Israel, are deliberately humiliating Muslims, because they aim to destroy Islam.”

Cameron denied that there was any material or political basis for the spread of Islamic fundamentalism. It was simply attractive to the young and confused, he asserted, drawing a parallel with—and at the same time equating—“other ideologies, whether fascist or communist.”

“Some argue it’s because of historic injustices and recent wars,” he said, citing the Iraq war, “or because of poverty and hardship. This argument, what I call the

grievance justification, must be challenged.”

In a more than usually stupid tautology, he pontificated, “The root cause of the threat we face is the extremist ideology itself.”

The central answer to such extremism, he insisted, was to tackle “the question of identity... we have to confront a tragic truth that there are people born and raised in this country who don’t really identify with Britain...”

To reinforce a sense of British identity, he declared, without obvious embarrassment, that “our strongest weapon” was “our own liberal values... We are all British. We respect democracy and the rule of law. We believe in freedom of speech, freedom of the press, freedom of worship, equal rights regardless of race, sex, sexuality or faith... These are British values. And are underpinned by distinct British institutions.”

This comes from the head of a government that has either enacted or defended a raft of anti-democratic legislation curtailing essential freedoms, engaged in mass surveillance of the internet and phone communications of every man, woman and child in Britain, and is now intent on using this intelligence to impose a regime based upon the Orwellian concept of “thought crime.”

To underscore his hypocrisy, Cameron’s speech was made the same day Defence Secretary Michael Fallon addressed MPs in an attempt to justify the government covertly agreeing to British pilots taking part in bombing raids in Syria in defiance of two parliamentary votes. (See: UK defence secretary admits flouting parliamentary ban on military involvement in Syrian war)

“[W]e need our internet companies to go further in helping us identify potential terrorists online,” he insisted. “Many of their commercial models are built around monitoring platforms for personal data, packaging it up and selling it on to third parties... But when it comes to doing what’s right in the fight against terrorism, we too often hear that it’s all too difficult. Well I’m sorry—I just

don't buy that."

Cameron went on to press the required buttons to legitimise the targeting of all Muslims.

"In the past, governments have been too quick to dismiss the religious aspect of Islamist extremism," he said. "But simply denying any connection between the religion of Islam and the extremists doesn't work, because these extremists are self-identifying as Muslims."

No longer would "fear of causing offence" stop the state from confronting "the horrors of forced marriage," "female genital mutilation" (FGM), etc. "More prosecutions," he bayed. "No more turning a blind eye on the false basis of cultural sensitivities."

To indicate the scale of this state offensive to impart "British values", Cameron called for "a review of sharia courts," toughened regulations "so schools have to report children who go missing from school rolls mid-year," legislating for "authorities to seize the passports of people they suspect are planning on taking girls abroad for FGM," and "lifetime anonymity for victims of forced marriage."

The whole of society would be marshalled in this campaign of spying on and "civilising" Muslims. "We need everyone—government, local authorities, police, schools, all of us—to enforce our values right across the spectrum."

He complained that universities, because they "are bastions of free speech and incubators of new and challenging ideas... sometimes... fail to see the creeping extremism on their campuses."

These efforts must "tackle both parts of the creed—the non-violent and violent," and would target numerous Imams—described here as "facilitators and cult leaders" to "stop them peddling their hatred," as well as by imposing internet censorship.

To Muslim "community leaders", he offered a cash incentive for being co-opted by and working with the government. "If you're interested in reform; if you want to challenge the extremists in our midst; if you want to build an alternative narrative or if you just want to help protect your kids—we are with you and we will back you—with practical help, with funding, with campaigns, with protection and with political representation," Cameron stated.

"Our Great British resolve faced down Hitler; it defeated Communism; it saw off the IRA's assaults on our way of life," he concluded. "Time and again we have stood up to aggression and tyranny... And we shall do so again."

Cameron's vision of society in fact owes a great deal to Hitlerite fascism—in the use of religious and ethnic scapegoating in the name of upholding "One nation"—or perhaps "Ein Volk, Ein Reich"—values to legitimise an assault on democratic rights and an ongoing drive to war.

Just over a week before his diatribe in Birmingham, Cameron outlined the other prong of his campaign against "extremism", asking the UK's Defence Chiefs to invest more resources on "readily deployable counter-terrorist capabilities" in a defence review scheduled for the autumn.

According to the government's website, Cameron said, "This could include more spy planes, drones and Special Forces," "to protect the UK from evolving threats, be that terrorism, extremism, or an increasingly aggressive Russia and whether that threat is physical or in cyberspace."

On July 13, Cameron visited RAF Waddington, it added, "from where Reaper missions are flown over Iraq and Syria... Tornados and Reapers alone have flown over 1,000 missions and struck over 300 ISIL targets. This afternoon, the Prime Minister welcomed some of the ship's company of the new HMS Queen Elizabeth aircraft carrier to Downing Street. The Prime Minister is keen for the defence review to explore how best to work with partners like the US to ensure these ships, which will be the largest British warships ever built, will be able to project drones, Special Forces and strike capabilities to wherever the terrorist threat is found."

The government is expected to move a motion extending British bombing operations from Iraq into Syria when parliament resumes in September. Of course anyone claiming that such actions help foster Islamic fundamentalist sentiment will no doubt be accused of employing "the grievance justification."



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