

*The Dynamics of British Counter Terrorism Strategy in the Post 9/11 Environment:
An Analysis of Evolution, Prospects and Challenges*

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The European Conference on Arts & Humanities 2024
Official Conference Proceedings

Abstract

The Scourge of terrorism has emerged as a gigantic threat to global peace and humanity since the events of 9/11 which guided the states to adopt new counter terrorism strategies to contain and crush the threats and activities of the perpetrators. The United Kingdom along with its collated partners applied a strict mechanism and measures to destroy the sanctuaries of the dissidents for the sake of lasting global peace. The British government has strongly emphasized on certain soft and hard policies through social, political, economic and military deterrence. How the Britain's Counter Terrorism policy paradigms evolved, applied and faced certain challenges to be enforced? There are domestic and external actors involved facilitating the home-grown terrorism in England. The work focuses on the ratio of success and failure of the current British Counter Terrorism policy along with its drawbacks and flaws reflecting in the Counter Terrorism synergism. Has the credibility of British security agencies been compromised in the context of operational obligation and interactive coordination with Global Counter Terrorism Strategies? The British security agencies and counter terrorism authorities have contributed a lion's share in countering domestic and global terrorism but yet to do a lot of work remains ahead. The study comprises prospects and implications of British counter terrorism policy in the context of comparative approach that how much United Kingdom has contributed and achieved the determined targets while fighting the global war on terror in its domestic and external as an ally of the United States during 2001-2023.

Keywords: Genesis, Deterrence, Zero Tolerance, Coercive Measures, Security Challenges

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Introduction

National security aims to protect socio- political economic and strategic assets of a nation within its governing and territorial jurisdiction of political system. The contemporary world both developing and developed faces a gigantic threat of the perpetrators. Therefore the security paradigms have been shifted from an individual effort of a state to the collective security parameters in the name of global coalition and war on terror. Different states like, Australia, Britain, Canada France, Germany and the United States have learned an immense experience to deal with the terrorist activities through a coherent and smart planning of inspection, interrogation watch and ward system, application of disease, war and crime oriented methods in the post 9/11 environment. The British counter terrorism strategy reflects its national security challenges i.e. sectarianism, religious extremism, focusing on criminal gangs, imported jihad, ethnic and sectarian domestic violence with reference to Irish and Scottish freedom movements. The overwhelming influence of jihadi organizations especially from Pakistan, Bangladesh and the Middle East on the British culture has nurtured the manse of terrorism in the oldest society of the world. The British security agencies and political stakeholders face a serious challenge of terror sponsoring funding to the deviators and dissidents of peace in England. The issues like information warfare, cyber security threat, the critical infrastructure of terrorism, human and drugs trafficking, communal stratification and perception of the clash of civilizations have generated the soil and security issues for the British states and society in the post 9/11 era.

Genesis and Evolutionary Development

The British counter terrorism strategy and approach has been originated decades back due to the presence of certain threats in the domestic environment as well as due to the probable encroachment of the external dissidents and the perpetrators. There were multiple efforts and legislative measures to contain the internal and external terrorist's activities by the British decision making authorities as the political and legal dogmas of counter terrorism strategy back in the interwar period. The responsible stakeholders institutions in Great Britain ever developed a compatible environment with the international community and non-state actors to bring peace & stability through the discouragement of the hardliners, fundamentalists, extremists and the anti-state elements, organizations and their other associates with the promulgation of soft and coercive measures in the post-world war II era. The British legislature approved the Emergency Powers Act 1920 to combat the terrorist's activities and attacks from the pro- Irish Liberation dissidents as a gigantic threat to the integrity, solidarity, peace & stability challenges had to be faced by the British state and society.¹ The British House of Commons again passed the Prevention of Violence Act 1939 to contain the continual threats from the Irish Republican Army (IRA) as the most dangerous non state actor for the key responsible of sponsoring terrorism in the United Kingdom. The British counter terrorism strategy and policy perspective was reviewed and revised to meet the emerging challenges of the time particularly in the wake of the Birmingham terrorists attacks of 1974. Since the Birmingham carnage, the British counter terrorism policy has had been updated and renewed under the transitional process of the responsible authorities, stakeholders and concerned quarters of law enforcement agencies during 1974 to 1990. The anti-terrorism legislation process remained as a continual factor in the British political system as the parliament brought the terrorism act in July 2000 for the elimination of terrorist activities and groups from British society through all peaceful and coercive measures as the permanent determinant of British counter

¹ Allison, R. (2008). *Global terrorism: Ideology and operations*. Delhi: Global Vision Publishing House.

terrorism strategy.² The very Terrorism Act of 2000 strengthened the domestic and external peace in the region due to an addition of various new policy paradigms for the homeland security of Great Britain coupled with the successful counter terrorism approach incorporated by the United States and United Nations to cope with the expected and forthcoming threats of regional and global terrorism.³ The Terrorism Act of 2000 empowered British law enforcement agencies and police to use various soft and hard tactics of watch and ward, investigation, search and detention of the suspected people inside the British society. The freezing of funds accounts and the checking of complete and comprehensive foreign financial assistance of the dissidents and the perpetrators has been added an additional provision of the terrorism British Terrorism act 2000.⁴

Reformative Phase in the Post 9/11 Environment

The British counter terrorism policy perspective and approach towards the domestic and external terrorist activities in the region continued to be updated and progressed according to the manifestation of International standard right after the occurrence of the drastic terrorists attacks of 9/11 on the soil of the United States. The British parliament drafted out another anti-terrorism bill to curb the program and activities of terrorist groups inside the England. Thus, the Anti-Terrorism, Crime and Security Act (ATCSA) was discussed, debated and finally approved from both houses i.e. House of Commons and House of Lords on December 13, 2001. The new anti-terrorism legislation sought to contain both the domestic and external terrorists' culture and aimed to include socio-political, economic, cultural and religious motivated reasons of sponsoring terrorism in England, Europe and the entire World.⁵ The British national security, law enforcement agencies, statesmen, political leadership and media provided full swing support to the parliament for the enactment of new anti-terrorism laws adhered to International law, global peacemaking efforts and coalition forces fighting against the terrorists in different parts of the world particular in Afghanistan, South Asia and Middle East. The anti-Terrorism Crime and Security Act 2001 considered respect and rescue of fundamental human rights in the British society without and discrimination of color, creed, race, religion status and community. The July 2005 London Bombing massacre led the British parliament to bring certain additional provisions in the anti-terrorism law to check out the offences of terrorism in the British society in the perception of internal and external security threats. Consequently the Prevention of Terrorism Act 2005 was approved and promulgated by the British parliament and law enforcement agencies.⁶

² Boer, D. M. (2003). The EU counter terrorism wave: Window of opportunity or profound policy transformation?. In Marianne van Leeuwen (Eds.), *Confronting terrorism: European experiences, threat perceptions and policies* (p. 189). The Hague: Kluwer.

³ Botha, A. (2006). Terrorism in ALGERIA: The role of community in combating terrorism (eds). In Peter Katona, Michel D. Interligator & John P. Sullivan. *Countering terrorism and WMD: creating a global counter terrorism network*. London and New York: Routledge.

⁴ Donohue, L. K. (2008). Britain's counter terrorism policy. In Doron Zimmerman Andreas Wenger. *How states fight terrorism*. New Delhi: Viva Books.

⁵ Stevenson, J. (2004). Counter Terrorism: containment and beyond. Adelphi paper 367. Oxford : Oxford University press.

⁶ Mezer, Jonathan, Githans. (2008). Islamic radicalization among north Africans in Britain: London political studies association

Responsible Authorities & Stakeholders

The British Home Department works as the core responsible authorities of the protection of security to the people of England as the home secretary becomes the chief security officer of the country with the obligation of the assurance of homeland security standards of the United Kingdom. The home secretary decides about the initiation of all the security and military operations in England to uproot the activities and sanctuaries of the terror sponsoring organizations along with their foreign funding associates. The British Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) make all arrangements of dialogues and manifestation of international treaties to crush and counter the scourge of terrorism. Apart from the external diplomatic arrangements of military operations the British home secretary takes responsibility to provide feedback and inputs to British parliament for the up gradation of ant-terrorism legislation and shifting of the Counter Terrorism Policy Paradigms. The British home department generates a close collaboration, compatibility and working relationship with British terrorism protection unit and crime directorate work to prevent domestic and external terrorists activities. The British government has established another precious anti-terrorism forum in the name of the cabinet office briefing room (COBR) as a Center of the crisis management in respect of countering terrorism in United Kingdom. The COBR comprises of a cabinet member, Home minister, and the high rank government officials from different security agencies with senior officials and linked government liaison officer (GLO), and a civil servants who reaches at the scene of the incident with a team including security service officer and a press officer.⁷ The British authorities decided to join the war with NATO forces on October 7th, 2001 in the wake of September 11 terrorist attacks. The London administration took serious measures against any kind of terrorist planning, project or activities on its own soil. The London metropolitan police evacuated important places like 10 Downing Street, airports and civil aviation authority banned all air traffic over Central London. The British government initiated a coherent and comprehensive review of its preparedness and contingency plans against the terrorists. The British intelligence community developed a joint terrorism analysis center and directed further resources for nonproliferation and international terrorism.⁸ Furthermore, the British government launched certain initiatives to curb and control terrorism through other international forums, i.e. United Nations, European Union and NATO. The British authorities adopted measures for countering terrorism, being an important and active participant of global coalition i.e. policy actions grounded in law, training and exercise of military forces, intelligence and surveillance of the doubtful individuals, organizations and aliens, consequence and crisis management, public and parliamentary debates, legislative reviews and public awareness through the enhancement of quality of antiterrorist forces, institutions and mechanism.⁹

British Counter Terrorism Measures

The counter terrorism authorities in the United Kingdom have prepared different counter terrorism measures as an integral part of its policy. These counter terrorism tactics can be discussed as follows:

⁷ Taylor, T. (2003). United Kingdom. In Yonah Alexander (Eds.), *Combatting terrorism: Strategies of ten countries* (pp. 190-91). New Delhi: Manas Publications.

⁸ Griffin R. (2012). *Terrorist's creed: Fanatical violence and human need for meaning*. Palgrave: Macmillan.

⁹ Guelke, A. (2010). *The new age of terrorism and international political system*. London, New York: I.B. Taurus & Co. Ltd.

Deterrence & Constraint to the Terrorists

It is a paramount element of British counter terrorism preparedness, rapid response and vigorous prosecution of perpetrators of terrorism, creating maximum deterrence for the terrorists. Threats of severe consequences to the dissidents, the credential stance of action and winning the confidence of the people are important features of British counter terrorism policy. There are several contingency plans included in British counter terrorism measures responding to any terrorist attack on British before and after the occurrence of the incident. The home department controls and covers the entire situation when incident takes place in any government office, public and prayer place.¹⁰

Training & Single Set of Standard Operating Procedure

The effectiveness of responding to a terrorist attack in the United Kingdom is adhering to a single set of standers operating procedure (SOPs). A similar set of machinery, instruments, skilled persons and apparatus is used in the case of any incident due to coherent learning on the job. The SOPs system is more beneficial for maximum mutual coordination and to minimize the errors. The British home department provides specific training that plays a vital role in the implementation of contingencies, SOP to obtain the required results for fighting against terrorism. Location of the sight of the incident, travel to the sight, and communication with relevant authorities, i.e. police, ambulance, medical staff, fire brigade, water, gas and electricity are the necessary phases of training.¹¹

Equipment & Minimizing the Threat

There are special units established in the British counter terrorism cell which facilitate equipment like devices, electronics instruments and fighting weapons to counter and contest the terrorist before or after the incident. The bomb disposal team, remote control vehicles and robots are other valuable devices used in counterterrorism strategy. The diffusion and control of threats from the terrorist is another policy objective and counter terrorism measure.¹² The military and government installation, Radars and Satellite system makes screening and assessment of the conversation, communication and correspondence of the overseas networks and organizations involved in the promotion of terrorism. The blast resistance building, design of government offices, office layout, metal detector screening and security procedures have been constituted by authorities.¹³

Early Warning Intelligence

The British security service and secret intelligence services have established and expanded their early warning intelligence system throughout the country. This wing deals with intelligence, threats and dangers rumored by the terrorist. The experts of secret services make

¹⁰ Jones G. Seth and Fair Christine. (2010). *Counter insurgency in Pakistan*. Washington D.C.: Rand Corporation.

¹¹ Gupta, D.K. (2005). Exploring Roots of Terrorism. In T. Bjoerjo(eds) *Root Causes of Terrorism, Myths, Reality and ways forward*, 16-32: Canada Routledge.

¹² Niaz, U. (2011). *Wars, insurgencies and terrorist attacks: A psychological perspective from the Muslim world*. London, LDN: Oxford University Press.

¹³ Coolsaet, R. (2010). EU counter terrorism strategy: Value added or chimera. *International Affairs*. 86(4), 857-60.

a clinical analysis and provide pre-incident information to the relevant police authority and other government officials.¹⁴

Detection and Zero Tolerance Approach

The British counter terrorism authorities believe in not making any kind of trust or concessions to all the terror sponsoring groups, organizations and individuals inside the territorial jurisdictions of United Kingdom. Since the terrorists attacks on the soil of United States on September 11, 2001, British government has picked up zero tolerance approach against all the malicious networks and suspected terrorist organizations associated with Al-Qaeda and Taliban in the contemporary international environment. The principle objective of zero tolerance policy refers to narrow down the influence activities of the terror prone groups by imposition of strict detection and deterrence.¹⁵ The deterrence and zero tolerance approach have been borrowed by the British government from the American counter terrorism policy which has titled the movement and activities of the terrorists in the internal and external fronts of Great Britain. Thus the detection and deterrence approach provides to contain the freedom of the working of terrorists cells for the incidents of hostage taking, aircraft hijacking, bomb blasts, seizure of embassies aiming to prevent the commencement of brutal activity of the terrorist organizations.¹⁶

The Punitive and Coercive Measures

The British counter terrorism policy has been refined and rearticulated through the application of coercive and punitive measures against the terror sponsoring individuals and organization. The British parliament has approved certain laws related to eliminate terrorists threats with the execution of a variety of sanctions, punitive action and coercive military operations to uproot the networks and organizations are engaged in sponsoring terrorism in the British society. The financial assistance, illegal funding to the jihadi groups in England has been strictly watched and interrogated to prevent the proliferation of terrorists activities as the prime principal of homeland security.¹⁷ The British security agencies and political authorities have decided to adopt certain physical protective measures to secure the public places, like, railway stations, government offices, shopping malls, airports, public banks and other important places through the use of CCTV cameras, walk through gates detected metal, searching mirrors and other secret electronics devices to discourage and avert the activities and attacks of terrorist organization.¹⁸

Cooperation With International Structure

The United Kingdom gives much importance on putting efforts to combat international terrorism. The British authorities have shared intelligence information and extended cooperation to contain terrorists. It strongly supports and is actively involved in the

¹⁴ Jalalzai M. K. (2010). *Britain's national security challenges: Extremism, cyber terrorism, sectarianism and takfiri jihadism*. London, LDN: Afghan Academy International.

¹⁵ Graham B. (October 23, 2003). Rumsfield questions antiterrorism efforts. *Washington Post*.

¹⁶ Purdy, M. (2008). Canada's counter terrorism policy. In Doron Zimmermann & Andreas Wenger (Eds.), *How states fight terrorism: Policy dynamics in the West*. (p. 115). New Delhi: Viva Books Private Limited.

¹⁷ Ochmanek D. (2003). Military operations against terrorist group abroad: Implications for United States air-force, MR-1738-AF Santa Monica, CA: RAND.

¹⁸ Rosenau, William. (2008). US Counter Terrorism Policy. In Doron Zimmermann and Andreas Wenger (Eds.), *How States Fight Terrorism: Policy Dynamics in the West*. (p. 139). New Delhi: Viva Books Private Limited.

negotiation of international conventions in which different forms and aspects of terrorism were banned and curtailed. The British government ratified all international terrorism conventions resolved and approved under UN Security Council.¹⁹ The United Kingdom views UN as the more suitable international forum to deal with the issues of global terrorism. The London administration participated and appreciated the G-8 countries (the group of Eight Leading democracies: Japan, France, Germany, Italy, Russia, Canada, Britain and the United States), the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), the European Union and other technical institutions like Interpol that may become involved in combating terrorism. The Counter Terrorism Policy Department (CTDP) of the United Kingdom has the leading role on international aspects of fighting terrorism.²⁰ The British home department adopted 'informing the public policy' in the context of terrorism. General awareness of the British people, media coverage, analysis of counter terrorism strategies and tactics, counter terrorism state policies, impacts of terrorism and counter terrorism on British society, formation of legislative and legal code of conduct against the domestic and international acts of terrorism, official and public perception of religious and extremist spheres of terrorism are important features of British anti-terrorism campaign.²¹

The British Security Challenges

The National Security Strategy of Great Britain has been designed to acquire the national interests of the country and to secure the people of England from the daunting challenge of ethnic and sectarian issues in Northern Ireland and Scotland, communal, ethnic and sectarian violence, religious extremism, imported Jihad from different areas of the world yet the continuing law & order deterioration in the United Kingdom has posed a huge threat to national security and interest of Great Britain. The London bombing attacks of 7/7 was the result of a flexible and questionable British security policy reflected the presence of extremist organizations networks, illegal immigration, organized crime cells, ethnic and sectarian violence, residential and religious segregation, communal hater and prejudice in British culture.²² The British national security and intelligence agencies have worked on the improvement of surveillance and private system to combat the organized criminal gangs but yet the danger of cyber terrorism and information warfare exists in the fabrics of British society. The question of national security, drugs, human and terrorists trafficking yet arises in the United Kingdom as a serious threat to national security. The ethnic deprivation has generated reluctance to national integration in the British society and the anti-religious mind set of youth in England has promoted somatic disorder in the culture. The British government has occasionally wanted about the nuclear and dirty bomb attacks due to the actively working Jihadi and extremist organizations in England.²³ The national security structure of United Kingdom has remained under the question of credibility, infrastructure, weaker system of police surveillance and intelligence agencies. A frequent occurrence of racists incidents in schools and colleges of England have reported the conflict and ethnicity which ever invited the number of the sympathizers of associate and extremists groups of Al-Qaeda in England. The watch and dog surveillance system in Great Britain along with the cyber terrorism still

¹⁹ Schmid, A.P. (2011). *The routledge handbook of terrorism research*. New York, NY: Routledge.

²⁰ Tatyana Kelman. (2012). Definition and Dimensions of Counterterrorism. In Frank Shanty (Eds.), *Counterterrorism: From the Cold War to the War on Terror*, Volume one, Combating Modern Terrorism (1968-2011). California: Praeger.

²¹ Lutz, M. J. & Lutz, B. J. (2008). *Global terrorism*. New York, NY: Routledge.

²² Anwar, Muhammad. (1986). *Race and politics minorities and British political system*: London tavistok.

²³ The Guardian, 2009, march 28.

exposes vulnerability of British intelligence and law enforcement agencies.²⁴ A plenty of terrorist groups are reported to use modern information technology in respect to make their targets possible and to keep in contact with their external wings in different areas of the world especially through Afghanistan, Pakistan, Africa and Middle East.²⁵ The world's most dangerous terrorist network Al-Qaeda gains partnership with different terrorist groups working in England are well involve to plot the terror related activities and incidents in the United kingdom. The black market economy and criminal trade has also been promoted in the country involved in different financial irregularities, drugs trafficking and illegal immigration to England. The smuggling of uranium particles from central Asia to Europe via Afghanistan has posed a serious security threats to the British society. The home ground terrorism in United Kingdom reflects a question of credibility and credibility in performance of the British security agencies stakeholders and decision making authorities.²⁶

Conclusion

The menace of terrorism has become a serious concern and a constant danger to human beings throughout the world. The giant of terrorism has emerged as a multifaceted phenomenon that can be understood through the application of different psychological and psycho-social approaches. Although the definition of terrorism has proved controversial and different governments of the states have used different definitions of terrorism in their respective legislative procedures, divergence has made it difficult and complicated to define a legal and acceptable definition of terrorism. The practice of terrorist activities has been observed and exercised throughout the history of mankind. The terrorism phenomenon continued in different regions of the world, i.e. Asia, Africa, Middle East and Europe. The world politics were divided into the bipolar system under the capitalist and communist ideologies. The clash of socio-political ideologies, cultural and geographical conflicts and certain other factors led to manipulate peace and stability in an international environment especially after the occurrence of dreadful terrorist's attacks on the United States immediately after the dawn of 21st century. The adepts of social and behavioral sciences have identified demographic, socio-economic, political and religious factors standing as responsible for regional and international terrorism. The experts of criminology, defense affairs and sociology have evaluated different major types of terrorism i.e. nationalist terrorism, state terrorism, anarchist terrorism, religious terrorism, cyber terrorism, communist terrorism, pure terrorism and global terrorism. Most of the sociologists and researchers of social science have argued that the phenomenon of terrorism leaves direct or indirect implications on the state and society. The occurrence of a terrorist attack intensely affects individuals and institutions, financial markets; it creates psychological disorder, economic repercussions, political instability and imprints negative social impact on different public and private institutions of the society. Consequently the United Kingdom applied a coherent and competent counter terrorism policy with the collaboration of different states and international organizations to contain the evil of terrorism in its domestic jurisdiction and different parts of the World. The strategy of single or collated state against the global terrorism is known counter-terrorism. The British counter terrorism policy attributed with the combination of homogeneity and interaction in international politics. It has been manifested and exercised within the domestic environment of British society to curb different kinds of terrorist activities. The British

²⁴ Alexander, Y. (ed.). (2003). *combating terrorism: Strategies of ten countries*. New Delhi: Manas Publications.

²⁵ Zeyno, Barran. (2006). *Islamic radicalism in central Asia and Cacaos*, Washington: institutes and Silk Road studies.

²⁶ Hartung, W. D. & Berrigan, F. (2007). *Arms and terrorism: Tracing the links*. In Sean S. Costigan and David Gold. (Eds.). *Terrornomics*. (P. 94) England: Ashgate Publishing Limited.

Counter terrorism strategy is an organized practice of its security agencies and political leadership to prevent different possible threats at national and international level by using the Terrorism early Warning intelligence, strict watch and ward system. The British responsible authorities and decision makers have adopted the fool proof policy of freezing the financial funding of the terrorists organizations and various Jihadi groups work inside the United Kingdom and create security concern in contemporary international environment. The British counter terrorism policy includes the legal provisions of a tight security system, effective detention, disruption of financing, better prevention, repression, retaliation, formation of pre-emptive strike, formation of special counter terrorism units and maintenance of a coherent intelligence system. The British government has articulated different techniques of countering terrorism applied by the other states and institutions to curb the objectives and sanctuaries of the dissidents.

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