

Repeated Rhetoric from Cameron's Failed 'Extremism' Policy

David Cameron has made yet another widely previewed speech about combating 'extremism' following a pledge for a full-blown UK offensive against ISIS targets in Syria and Iraq, saying he wants to "destroy the Caliphate in both countries".

His latest proposals include pushing Muslims to speak out against Islamic ideas such as the Caliphate (not simply speaking out against ISIS); measures to 'rein in extremists'; targeting those who criticize or question policies and actions of the state labeling them 'conspiracy theorists'; clamping down on schools to avoid more episodes like the 'Trojan Horse' affair; an aggressive promotion of 'British values' and a 'creed' of shared ideas (including freedom of speech); and a legal definition of extremism including opposition to the rule of law and religious tolerance.

Like his predecessors, Cameron conflates legitimate religious and political views that Muslims hold with the chaos that has been created in Iraq and Syria. His recipe for dealing with 'extremism' is a dog's breakfast – gesture politics, policies that will cause more damage within communities and add to the confusion and chaos across the world, plus a spectacular ideological own goal.

It is gesture politics because he comes across as a showman as opposed to a politician who is genuinely concerned about real issues. So he is showboating by talking about preventing another 'Trojan Horse' in schools (though Graham Stuart, Conservative Chair of the Education Select Committee in the last Parliament, had said that apart from one solitary incident, no evidence of extremism or radicalisation was found by any of the inquiries into any of the schools involved).

It is gesture politics when he talks about bombing ISIS in Syria and Iraq. We hold no brief for ISIS – who are a militia, lack Islamic legitimacy for any Caliphate or Islamic state and for many of their actions. However, Cameron's back-of-an-envelope proposal for carpet bombing regions of Iraq and Syria are as credible as ISIS's Caliphate and Blair's war in Iraq, and will do little to solve the region's problems. While almost all Muslims globally do not recognise ISIS as a Caliphate, Cameron and other Western governments are happy to describe it as such and to justify their onslaught against people in the region while openly defending tyrants that kill people in Egypt and the wider region.

It is a recipe for more destruction across the world because military intervention by western governments – whether in Afghanistan, Iraq or Libya – has destabilised entire regions, blighting millions of lives. Cameron says he wishes to destroy 'the Caliphate' in both countries (which isn't a Caliphate), ignoring Britain's role in destroying the Ottoman Caliphate after World War One, which subsequently destabilised the entire Middle East for decades.

It is a recipe for more division and alienation in communities within the UK because it clamps down on Muslims who express legitimate political views, or who hold normal Islamic views on the Caliphate and Jihad. The Prevent Policy has silenced legitimate and credible views of Imams or scholars who are able to explain concepts like 'Islamic state' or events such as the murders in Tunisia or Woolwich in any kind of meaningful or credible way for fear of being labeled 'extremists'.

It is a spectacular ideological own goal because of the contradictions in the policies – as well as the abandonment of any pretence that he actually believes in the values he professes to be upholding.

You cannot launch a PR campaign to promote "British values" whilst simultaneously using civil, legal and security agencies to forcibly convert people to your 'creed' because you have failed to convince them intellectually.

You cannot argue that you believe in free speech then clamp down on Muslims who say the Iraq war was a driver of grievance; or who have arguments about the legitimacy of the Zionist entity based on legal and historically valid positions; or by labeling those who expose how Prevent has led to spying on Muslims, or a McCarthyite atmosphere, as conspiracy theorists to be targeted; or targeting those who expose the fact that he and his predecessors in government support dictators and tyrants like Sisi and the Saudi regime (a matter that Eliza Manningham Buller mentioned as deeply troubling in her Reith Lectures some years ago); or by silencing criticism by dismissing any notion of a grievance in a manner that is frankly intellectually dishonest.

You cannot argue that you believe in the rule of law then silence those who expose British complicity in rendition and secret jails, troop abuses in Iraq and Afghanistan and the unlawful actions of his own Home Secretary.

You cannot claim you believe in tolerance and then preside over one of the most intolerant periods in English history towards a minority community, stigmatizing the majority of Muslims if they do not tow a government line. Ironically, he demands Muslims denounce the very concept of a Caliphate that presided over harmony between different faith communities for centuries because of its Islamic approach to protecting peoples' beliefs and worships – a lesson for him to learn from.

When Cameron clamps down or ridicules those who criticize and expose him, he only proves that he is not able to tackle their arguments.

His message to Muslims is 'convert to our beliefs and political viewpoints' or die a political and legal death. The most he can do is gag people, preventing them from saying what they think or punishing them for expressing their views.

Our message to the Muslim community is to ignore the man with the big mouth and little mind. When he has finished this round of rhetoric he will start again, and again. The more he bullies, the more he will fail.

The Muslim community has an important role to fulfil. When Cameron talks about the Caliphate, Muslims should look to the Islamic sources and understand what Islam really says about the Caliphate – and realise that both ISIS and Cameron are wrong!

The Muslim world needs a real Caliphate, not a bogus entity that kills people indiscriminately, is facilitating the breakup of Iraq, and has obstructed the campaign against Assad. The world needs a state to argue against the hegemony of global capitalism, that causes so much suffering.

The Muslim community in Britain needs more Islam, not less, to uphold their dignity in this world and the next in the face of the onslaught from politicians like Cameron, to carry a message of Islam in their words and deeds – expressing frank political views to challenge the state sponsored propaganda.

If the Muslim community follows this dignified Islamic path, little men like Cameron will just wither away, and crumble into political dust.

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Hizb ut Tahrir

Britain