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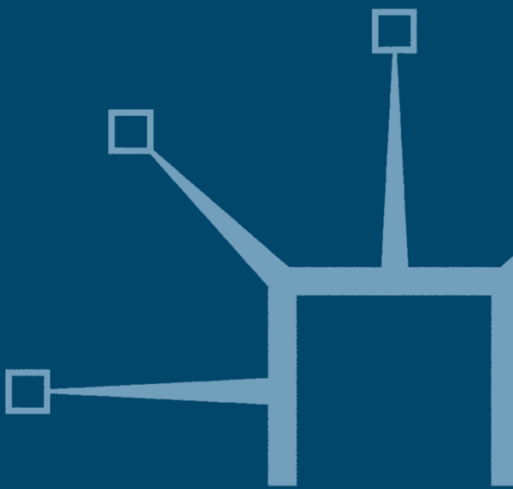
Intelligence, Security and Policing Post-9/11

The UK's Response to the 'War on Terror'

Edited by

Jon Moran and Mark Phythian



Intelligence, Security and Policing Post-9/11

Also by Jon Moran

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THE LABOUR PARTY, WAR AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS, 1945–2006

Intelligence, Security and Policing Post-9/11

The UK's Response to the 'War on Terror'

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University of Wolverhampton, UK

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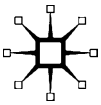

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To Harriet

To Jamie and Hayley

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Abbreviations

AIVD	*Algemene Inlichtingen- en Veiligheidsdienst*
AML	anti-money laundering
ARA	Assets Recovery Agency
ASEAN	Association of South East Asian Nations
ASIO Act	Australian Security Intelligence Organisation Legislation Amendment (Terrorism) Act
ASIS	Australian Secret Intelligence Service
ASTA	Interdepartmental Steering Committee Terrorist Actions
ATCSA	Anti-Terrorism, Crime and Security Act 2001
BIF	Benevolence International Foundation
BVD	Dutch National Security Service (Dutch: *Binnenlandse Veiligheidsdienst*)
BZC	Special Cases Agency
CAB	Criminal Assets Bureau
CCTV	Closed-circuit television
CESID	*Centro Superior de Información de la Defensa*
CIA	*Central Intelligence Agency*
CNCA	*Centro Nacional de Coordinación Antiterrorista*
CNI	*Centro Nacional de Inteligencia*
COTER	Committee on Terrorism
CRI	Central Criminal Investigation Intelligence
CT	counterterrorism
CTF	counterterrorist finance
CTG	Counter Terrorist Group
CEMU	*Comité Ejecutivo para el Mando Unificado*
DIB	*Directie Inlichtingen Buitenland*
DPP	Director of Public Prosecutions
DSD	Defence Signals Directorate
DST	Directorate for Territorial Surveillance (French: *Direction de la Surveillance du Territoire*)
ECHR	European Convention on Human Rights
ECtHR	European Court on Human Rights
FIU	Financial Investigation Unit
GAL	*Grupos Antiterroristas de Liberación*
GCHQ	Government Communications Headquarters

GRAPO	*Grupo de Resistencia Antifascista Primero de Octubre*
GSPC	*Groupe Salafiste pour la Prédication et le Combat*
ICBMs	intercontinental ballistic missiles
ICC	Interception of Communications Commissioner
ICCPR	International Covenant on Civil Political Rights
ICM	Institute for Conflict Management
IPCC	Independent Police Complaints Commission
ISC	Intelligence and Security Committee
ISI	Inter-Services Intelligence
JIC	Joint Intelligence Committee
JTAC	Joint Terrorism Analysis Centre
KLPD	National Police Agency
KSM	Khaled Sheik Mohammed
LBT	National Support Team Counterterrorism
LIFG	Libyan Islamic Fighting Group
LPF	*Lijst Pim Fortuyn*
NCIS	National Criminal Intelligence Service
NCTb	Dutch National Coordinator for Counterterrorism (Dutch: *Nationaal Coördinator Terrorismebestrijding*)
NTFIU	National Terrorist Finance Investigation Unit
PACE	Police and Criminal Evidence Act
PIRA	Provisional Irish Republican Army
PoCA	Proceeds of Crime Act
PSOE	Partido Socialista Obrero Español-
RaRa	*Revolutionaire Anti-Racistische Actie*
SARs	Suspicious Activity Reports
SIAC	Special Immigration Appeals Commission
SOCA	Serious and Organised Crime Agency
SOCPA	Serious Organized Crime and Police Act

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Introduction

Jon Moran and Mark Phythian

This book has been designed to provide analyses of key aspects of the British experience of the 'war on terror', as declared by the US Bush Administration shortly after the 11 September 2001 (9/11) terrorist attacks on the United States. In the wake of 9/11 the United Kingdom stood, to use American terminology, 'front and centre' with the United States in its war to remove the Taliban from power in Afghanistan, a war for which there was broad international support, and in its war to remove Saddam Hussein from power in Iraq, a war for which there was not. Domestically the United Kingdom ramped up its counter-terror legislation and focussed resources on the police and security services. Nevertheless, by 2005 the United Kingdom had experienced suicide bombings in London, which killed fifty-two, while the number of Islamist plots that were being detected and frustrated had mushroomed.

All books aim to be distinctive and this is no exception. Although the 'war on terror' has generated a voluminous literature, there is still much to be dissected. Therefore, a few words are in order to explain what this book *is* and what it *is not*. It does not deal with the US experience given that so much has already been written on the role of the United States in framing and leading the 'war on terror', ranging from the domestic and international politics of the 'war on terror', to its effects on international law, security and intelligence, military affairs, civil liberties and the media. One purpose of this book is to move beyond the US-centric focus of much 'war on terror' writing. Second, this book does not focus exclusively on the vexed issue of civil liberties (which have been examined in detail in a voluminous literature) but integrates them with other issues, particularly at the micro level. Third, the book is multi-disciplinary. The chapters that follow stem from the fields of politics, criminology, law and sociology but each one speaks to the other, stressing the need

to integrate the disciplines when analysing terrorism. One cannot examine intelligence or public order without at the same time examining politics, law and order, liberty and culture.

With this in mind we should set out some positive pointers as to what the book *does* set out to achieve. First, the book provides an examination of the policies, discourse, laws and counter-terrorism *practice* of the United Kingdom's 'war on terror' a term that is itself – and rightly – now out of official favour as a serious description of events in the United Kingdom since 9/11 and 7/7 (7 July 2005). We emphasize practice as one of the aims of the book, that is, to place a tight, even forensic, focus on the *nature and effectiveness* of counter-terrorist strategies. It is this part of the analysis that we wish to integrate with civil liberties, for what has often escaped examination is a detailed examination of the actual record in practice of many of the 'magic bullets' for countering terrorism. As part of this examination the first part of this book focusses on intelligence. A great amount has been written in this area, and it is assuming almost mythic importance, both as a counter-terrorist tool and as a threat to civil liberties. The chapters here examine intelligence critically in terms of its relation to politics, law and accountability and finance and whether it provides an effective platform for counter-terrorism policies.

Moran's introductory chapter begins by laying out some of the major debates that have characterized the UK experience, setting out a number of themes that are developed in subsequent chapters. One of these concerns the nature of state power in the United Kingdom. Moran argues that the idea of a weakened state 'hollowed out' by globalization and a vibrant civil society now seems far less convincing in the face of post-9/11 terrorism legislation and special measures. He also discusses the politics of the 'war on terror', including the remarkable media strategy of the Labour government, the development of special measures to counter terrorism and the effectiveness of these measures. A number of Moran's themes relate to intelligence and are taken up in subsequent chapters. The events of 9/11 were to transform the fortunes of the security and intelligence agencies in the United Kingdom. Having struggled throughout the post-Cold War 1990s to identify a legitimating threat that would protect them from assuming their share of the 'peace dividend', the 'war on terror' bestowed on these agencies a centrality that they had never previously enjoyed. Earlier calls that MI5, for example, be disbanded and its functions reallocated elsewhere now appear to belong to a bygone era. Nevertheless, issues relating to the operation of the security and intelligence agencies have remained controversial in the post-9/11 world, in part because of the manner in which the Blair

government (mis)used intelligence in articulating its case for war in Iraq during 2002–2003, and the extent to which the intelligence underpinning the case was considerably wide of the mark in its assessment of Iraq's weapons programmes, and in part because the spectre of intelligence failure has followed MI5 since the London suicide bombings of 7/7.

However, as Mark Phythian argues, we need to be clear about both what we expect from intelligence and what we mean by 'failure' in this context. Phythian examines the constraints on intelligence and provides a critique of the way in which intelligence has been used by successive governments in the 'war on terror'. There is only so much that intelligence can be expected to deliver given the physical, financial and legislative limits within which the security and intelligence agencies operate. Moreover, it is important that they continue to operate within such clearly defined limits if we are to avoid compromising the very liberties the agencies exist to safeguard. In this context, Phythian argues, intelligence failure is likely to remain an ever-present possibility, and harbouring very high expectations as to what the agencies can deliver is almost bound to lead to periodic disappointment.

Clive Walker analyses the legal aspects of using intelligence, and argues that the dichotomy between evidence and intelligence has become increasingly blurred. Although it was never completely distinct, intelligence has increasingly intruded into the legal world, particularly with regard to terrorism. Walker explores perhaps the most controversial aspect of this intrusion, the use of intelligence as the basis for placing suspected terrorists who cannot be deported or convicted under control orders. As he argues, while 'there appear to be no fundamental objections to the melding of intelligence into the evidence-based legal process' it must be properly defined and subject to rigorous structures of accountability. For Walker this means the involvement of judges, and he rejects the idea that this will 'stain' the judiciary by its involvement in special closed courts relying on intelligence. Instead the judiciary must be involved at all stages, for there is a clear danger in allowing politicians alone to claim special expertise in national security measures.

Peter Sproat deals with the key issue of counter-terrorist finance, based around squeezing terrorist funds out of the financial system, identifying financial transactions by terrorists as a basis for an operation to disrupt or charge them, or simply seizing assets identified as being used by terrorists or their supporters. These initiatives rely on intelligence from private sector institutions (banks, building societies, insurance companies) for their lifeblood. Flagging up terrorist transactions and

seizing assets seems an obvious winner, but in practice a number of problems emerge. As Sproat demonstrates, squeezing money out of the system and identifying suspicious transactions are both difficult in the current technology-based financial system, which either fails to pick up suspicious transactions or provides *too much* (often poor) intelligence about suspicious transactions.

These chapters also introduce important debates concerning the appropriate 'balance' between civil liberties and state power, which the chapters that follow address directly. While this issue has generated a massive amount of debate, the discourse has in general been characterized by well-rehearsed arguments. On the one hand, government supporters or sympathizers argue that changes to police powers and executive authority are necessary and proportionate (while providing only shaky evidence). On the other, defenders of civil liberties argue (at times, somewhat apocalyptically) that the changes propel us towards an authoritarian national security state. Another purpose of this volume is to go beyond this debate to analyse in detail the changes that have occurred and analyse their rationale, operation and accountability. It is often held that the techniques which adhere to human rights principles are the most effective. This may or may not be true – it is a rhetorical technique. If a technique radically contravenes human rights it should not be used whether it works or not, but an important point is to examine the claims of effectiveness around it. In this context, Philip Rumney provides a comprehensive overview of the highly charged debate concerning coercive interrogation. He bases his analysis on a critique of both those who advocate the use of this technique and those who state it should never be countenanced. Rumney argues that the case on both sides is characterized by declamatory and unsupported statements rather than the forensic analysis that it demands, concluding that in some very specific cases coercive interrogation may provide benefits, but that those who advocate it leave too many questions unanswered. Some might consider Rumney's chapter controversial, but its purpose is to throw down a challenge to those who oppose coercive interrogation in any context, one which needs to be taken up as the debate is advanced further if the arguments in opposition are to demonstrably carry the day, as we believe they should.

Beyond this there are a whole range of techniques that rub against or even begin to dissolve civil liberties without 'cracking' them and represent areas in which the capillaries of state power are to be observed intermeshing with civil society's boundaries. Christopher Newman deals with public order and the 'war on terror', and demonstrates how

counter-terrorist powers have seeped out into the policing of mainstream protest. Contrary to many observers, Newman argues that the courts have not been greatly activist in challenging police powers in this area, even though their decisions may give the appearance of this. He also argues that the effects can be seen not only in practical terms but also in the more general manner in which freedom of expression has been 'chilled'. Newman is followed by Ian Leigh, who discusses the implications of the government's responses within the 'war on terror' for freedom of expression. He argues that the government's strategy has been contradictory. At the same time as the government has followed a path of building bridges to the Muslim community, it has also introduced a raft of legislation with regard to extremist speech that risks alienating Muslims as it chills free speech. Far from winning hearts and minds, this may in turn provide a critical space for extremists to engage in radicalization by arguing that the state is oppressing the Muslim community.

Here, the book continually poses the question: are special measures justified? As should be clear, we do not advocate any means-end analysis. Indeed, a focus on a lack of effectiveness strengthens any critique of special measures. However, examining effectiveness at all can be a controversial issue, and was manifested to the editors by a comment that this volume was actually advocating *an increase* in state power in the United Kingdom. As the chapters that follow clearly show, this was a significant misreading but one which can be understood in the context of the strongly held (nay, polarized) positions from which academics, journalists and politicians view the 'war on terror'.

Finally, this book makes a contribution to comparative analysis that moves beyond the US-centric focus of much 'war on terror' writing. We have chosen comparative studies of countries which have adopted a criminalisation rather than a 'war' approach to countering political violence. As with the first two sections in regard to the United Kingdom, the three comparative chapters are particularly adept at relating the 'war on terror' to political, legal and social developments while keeping an eye on the actual effectiveness of the measures. These three chapters show that even within the criminalization strategy, important distinctions remain across nations. Australia was deeply affected by the deaths of 88 of its nationals among the 202 killed in the October 2002 Bali bombings and was subsequently a contributor of troops to the Bush Administration's war in Iraq. As Michaelsen shows, a dynamic evident in the United Kingdom is also in operation here where more and more counterterror legislation is being passed regardless of whether attacks

happen or not. Indeed, in a stark example of the politics of terror he demonstrates that ramped up counterterror legislation has often not resulted from planned or completed terrorist attacks but after failures by the government and security services. This legislation has, moreover, been implemented in the absence of a nationally active judiciary based around a domestic bill of rights and in the absence of a regional supranational human rights convention (the ICCPR does not have the force of the ECHR). The chapter provides a clear analysis of the dynamic that can develop between governments seeking to be tough on terror, the media and the electorate, a dynamic that can reach accelerated speed in the absence of informed and inclusive discussion about the actual nature of the threat.

The Netherlands is an extremely interesting example and one that requires more focus, especially in the English language. Beatrice de Graaf and Bob de Graaff show how in the Netherlands the visceral examples of extremism in the form of the political murders of Pim Fortuyn and Theo van Gogh forced the Dutch polity to re-examine its liberal approach to issues of integration and expression, a culture even the Dutch intelligence services had followed. After 9/11 had been followed by these individual acts of political violence, policies towards groups and acts identified as extremist shifted and came to have more in common with those being pursued in the United Kingdom, and were arguably more stringent in some respects. The Dutch polity continues to re-evaluate its distinctive liberal approach to security and intelligence as well as to social issues.

The final comparative chapter sees Rogelio Alonso stressing how in Spain the government was faced with a double terrorist threat in the form of jihadist terrorism and the continuing threat from armed Basque separatist group ETA in the Basque regions, but the Spanish experience also illuminates a road not followed by the United Kingdom. In Spain the state responded to the twin threats posed by ETA and al-Qaeda without passing rafts of legislation. Indeed, a key to countering the threat posed by ETA lay at the political level, and was to be found in both the impact of Basque devolution and (controversial) restrictions on ETA's political wing, *Batasuna*. At the same time, the Spanish state also concentrated on reorganising security and policing and improving intelligence. With regard to al-Qaeda the need for the security services to adopt a multi-faceted strategy is still evident, but limited by the lack of success in penetrating extremist networks. With regard to al-Qaeda in Europe, the government has realized that reducing radicalism requires building links (and developing an intelligence base) within

Spain's long-standing Muslim communities. Nevertheless, focussing too exclusively on al-Qaeda, Alonso argues may risk underestimating the continuing threat posed by ETA.

Hence, this book addresses key UK responses to the evolving 'war on terror' and provides a valuable comparative focus, highlighting lessons, opportunities, and risks. It is vital that there is an informed debate about these issues, one that feeds into policy-making, given that the 'war on terror' is increasingly seen as a phenomenon generational in duration, during which time the range of potential governmental responses could have serious implications for civil liberties and human rights. This book is intended to make a contribution to such debates and encourage others to follow.

Part I

Security, Intelligence and Counterterrorism

1
Politics, Security, Intelligence and Liberty after 9/11

Jon Moran

Introduction

At the start of David Rees' sharp satirical comic-strip critique of the post 9/11 world, *Get Your War On*, one character declaims:

> Oh my God, this War on Terrorism is gonna rule! I can't wait until the war is over and there's no more terrorism!

The other responds:

> I know! Remember when the U.S. had a drug problem and then we declared a War on Drugs, and now you can't buy drugs anymore? It'll be just like that! (Rees, 2003, p. 2)

Like the best satire, the strip zeroed in on uncomfortable truths. The quote aptly summed up the idea that the 'war on terror' might never end, and also questioned whether success was possible. Rees deals with the United States, and could not have foreseen the way in which the United Kingdom would become embroiled in the 'war on terror' not only on the international front of Afghanistan and Iraq, but also on the domestic front. On 7 July 2005 British Muslim citizens exploded a series of devices on London public transport above and below ground that killed 52 people and injured over 700 others.[1]

Each individual nation state that has been sucked – or has walked purposefully – into the maelstrom of the 'war on terror' has experienced it via its specific political and legal structures and civil society. However, each experience raises general issues of importance, and this chapter highlights a number of these and relates some of these to the

chapters which follow, particularly those concerned with intelligence. The United Kingdom's experience in the 'war on terror' presents both analytical and practical challenges in a number of areas. The first is the way in which post 9/11 events lead us to rethink notions of state power. The second is the need to analyse the course of government policy in concrete political terms rather than in the shadow of the Manichean concept of the 'war on terror'. Each nation state affected by the post 9/11 environment, whether authoritarian or democratic, from Australia to Pakistan to Uzbekistan, has seen an intense period of political manoeuvring in the face of varying levels of threat.

Third, to this idea of the politics of the 'war on terror' can be added, the need to study the mechanics of the 'war on terror' in the United Kingdom. What reorganization has taken place in the security, intelligence and police bureaucracies? What new laws have been passed with regard to countering terrorism? Here the United Kingdom's approach can be set against the varied experiences of nation states in Europe alone.

A fourth question follows from this. Simply, have these policies been effective? Have the 'magic bullets' that have been proposed for tackling terrorism – intelligence, pre-charge detention, financial surveillance – hit home? This type of analysis is sorely required as there has been a great deal of analysis in academic and civil society of the 'war on terror' and its effects on civil liberties but little in terms of a forensic examination of the effectiveness or otherwise of counterterror policies.

Finally, and certainly not least, there is a need to examine practically what systems of accountability are in place with regard to these specialist measures, and the effect that the measures have had on civil liberties and human rights in light of the increase in state power.

State power and the 'war on terror'

The 'war on terror' has raised important questions about the scope and penetration of state power, challenging particularly ideas that it was in terminal decline in the face of its internal contradictions, globalization, the strength or versatility of civil society and the failure of statist economics (Moran, 2005, pp. 335–59). Indeed:

> Whatever is written about hollowed out states and soft power, governments retain the capacity to take decisions in areas such as defence and international relations which ignore the niceties of parliamentary accountability and the political constraints of party

> policy if it feels that such decisions serve the strategic interests of the UK state in international matters. (Doig and Phythian, 2005, p. 370)

Certainly, the field of international relations has witnessed the development of an activist interventionist foreign policy on the part of the US, UK and Australian governments. At the same time, in the fallout from the 'war on terror' Iran emerged as a regional power, while Russia and the People's Republic of China flexed their soft power muscles on the international stage. The idea of the withering national interest proposed by advocates of globalization now looks decidedly fragile. However, it is not just in the area of international relations that 'the state is back.'

The UK state currently imprisons over 80,000 of its citizens, has introduced a national DNA database, is expanding the collection of DNA, is establishing other large databases on its citizenry, has expanded CCTV (Closed Circuit Television) coverage beyond any comparable nation state, is introducing ID cards, has introduced preventive detention theoretically applicable to UK citizens as well as foreign nationals and has given powers to a wide range of central and local public authorities to gain access to the details of the landline and mobile communication calls of citizens. Political scientists, sociologists and (particularly) criminologists have been clearly wrongfooted regarding developments in state power in the post 9/11 world. If criminologists argued for the need to think 'beyond the state', one overview of the field prior to 9/11 showed the dangers of taking this too far and exposed a criminology ill-equipped to focus on the state as the core principle of political organization and security once the 'war on terror' had commenced (Garland and Sparks, 2000). The response to post 9/11 developments has been most effective in the field of international relations and political science (although it should be noted that in these fields globalization was disproportionately influential for a long period) (Ross, 2004; Tilly, 2004; Naylor, 2006; Beland, 2005).

The response might be made that the disastrous invasion of Iraq and the practical exercise of domestic laws and powers in the United Kingdom and the United States show that state power is not always effective. As a counter argument this is insufficient, since this has always been the case with state power. In England and Wales capital punishment was the supreme criminal sanction until 1965. However hanging was hedged in practice with all sorts of restrictions, and the system did not prevent murder rates fluctuating. Nevertheless to argue that this expresses the limits of state power would be disingenuous, particularly to those 7000 people out of 35,000 sentenced to death who

went to the scaffold between 1770 and 1830 (Gattrell, 1996, p. 7). A disjuncture between state power and state capacity (the exercise of that power in practice) has always existed (Cuéllar, 2004), and theorists who posit a crisis of the state and assert its current limitations as proof neglect this (Garland, 2000, ch. 5). Whether effective or not, British citizens are now likely to encounter state power in their day-to-day activities (for this concept, see Mouer and Sugimto, 1986; Tremewan, 1994) much more than was the case in the 1990s: for example, via the mandatory information provision required under the Proceeds of Crime Act 2002 when taking out a mortgage or engaging in other financial transactions; via the CCTV systems which may be linked to the police as part of Automatic Number Plate Recognition; if their DNA is taken after mere arrest; if they are involved with the Child Support Agency; if their child is declared as 'at risk' for some reason; if they are designated as being involved in antisocial behaviour; in terms of the powers the central and local authorities have over new taxing and environmental provisions, and so forth (Furedi, 2002; Penna, 2005; for the United States see Simon, 2007). Further, UK citizens might be awash in carnival and 'play' and the joys of late modern consumption, but while they are, data are being collected on them by private sector companies that the state may later access.

Further, the power of the private sector vis à vis the state, which has been a central focus in the arguments of globalization theorists and other analysts, is certainly evident but the 'Balkanization' seen by some,[2] exaggerates the extent of the retreat of the state. The state and the private sector have always existed in symbiosis; the purpose of any analysis is to trace the changing relationships between them. Even in the golden age of Keynesianism, mainstream and radical critiques talked of business elites driving state policy and the increasing power of the private sector (Wright Mills, 1956; Useem, 1986). Conversely, in the contemporary period, certainly states have become more business friendly, but they have also expanded state regulation, and in the area of crime and security, currently in the United Kingdom (and the United States) the state has obliged the private sector to open itself to scrutiny and access by police and security agencies seeking information on matters from airline bookings to financial transactions, and has obliged the private sector to pay the substantial and ongoing costs of instituting antimoney laundering systems (Harvey, 2005; Sproat, 2007). If more exemplars were needed there is much talk of the role and growth of the private security industry in Iraq (Johnson, Woolf and Whitaker, 2007), but their role has demonstrated their limits in producing public order

and supplanting state authority in the streets of Baghdad, and they have clearly been operating in an environment structured by the state and the US military who took the decision to invade Iraq in the first place.[3]

Politics and the 'war on terror'

Following the shattering 9/11 attacks on the United States that killed nearly 3000 people, the politics of the 'war on terror' have influenced each nation state in specific ways. For those whose citizens have been attacked the experience has been a jolt to the political system and the stress on national security and the need to prevent further attacks is evident. This has not prevented them (and other nations who have not been attacked) from being accused of 'playing politics' with the 'war on terror'.

Some political elites used the 'war on terror' to bolster the position of the existing regime (e.g. for Pakistan, Algeria, Uzbekistan, see BBC, 2005f, 2005g, 2006h, 2007f). Other governments (e.g. in Spain) either found themselves toppled in the wake of terrorist attacks or saw the existing administration come under severe political pressure (e.g. the United States). Other governments (e.g. the United States) saw the existing administration under severe political pressure. The United Kingdom has been no exception. The Labour governments under Tony Blair were regularly accused of 'playing politics' with the 'war on terror', despite their consistent arguments that they wished to maintain a bipartisan consensus, and their political strategy has involved an aggressive media management of all the issues related to countering terrorism (Oborne, 2006).

The idea of the political nature of the 'war on terror' can be highlighted by the fact that in the United Kingdom by 2007 even the government seemed to view the term as no longer acceptable (Burke, 2006; BBC, 2007j). However, whatever term is used, the idea of a long-term conflict continues. Almost the first act by Sir Alan West, appointed by new Prime Minister Gordon Brown as Security Minister in 2007, was to state that the struggle against terrorism would continue for perhaps 15 years (BBC, 2007m).

The intensity of the United Kingdom's place in the post 9/11 environment has arisen from the government's decision to stand side by side with the administration of George Bush in the US military interventions in Afghanistan and Iraq, which fitted in with an already developing interventionist UK foreign policy, as seen in Kosovo and Sierra Leone at the end of the 1990s (Kampfner, 2004). Of clear political

importance is the idea that the war in Iraq had a direct effect of bringing terrorism home to the United Kingdom. There is evidence of the radicalization of young British Muslims taking place before the invasion of Iraq in March 2003 (BBC2; Honigsbaum and Dodd, 2005; Husain, 2007).[4] However following the invasion, UK interests, and finally the United Kingdom itself, became a target for terrorism. In November 2003 the British Consulate and the HSBC bank in Istanbul were bombed, killing three British citizens among the twenty-eight dead. Then in July 2005 the bombings in London took place, the visceral manifestation of a growing radicalism in networks across the United Kingdom. It is clear, despite government denials, that the invasion of Iraq not only led to the United Kingdom becoming a hotbed of international terrorism, it also transformed the United Kingdom from being merely a haven for radical Islamists – 'Londonistan' as French and US analysts termed it – to a target for home-grown Islamist terrorists (albeit often with links abroad via personal family/networks or the Internet) (Kampfner, 2002; Younge, 2005).

As Jason Burke railed,

> I was angry at the British government's stubborn and utterly unjustified pretence that there was no link between the [7/7] attack and their policy in Iraq. Britain had indeed been a target for terrorism before the war in Iraq, as the government claimed, but the UK had become a far more likely target as a result of its close support for the United States and the policy of the Bush administration. (Burke, 2007, pp. 265–6)

Therefore, although the government has attempted to manage the 'war on terror' the management has been affected by the particular imagery and discourse used. The struggle is presented in absolutist terms: terrorists 'hate our way of life', they are influenced by a 'death cult' into which young impressionable men are 'groomed' and so forth. This completely neglects how the dynamics of recruitment changed. As Burke has noted,

> At the beginning of the 1990s, most of the Islamic activists living in London, or 'Londonistan' as it was called by critics of the British government's liberal asylum policy, were highly politicised, educated and relatively moderate. By the end of the decade militants in the west included far more men like Richard Reid, a British petty

> criminal who tried to blow himself up on a transatlantic jet ... These were poor, unemployed, angry people. The number of former convicts or asylum seekers among recently recruited Islamic militants is striking. (Burke, 2004, pp. 283–4)

Since Burke wrote, it is apparent that recruits to jihadism have come from even more varied backgrounds.

Hence, it is possible to identify a considerable degree of cognitive dissonance in government policy, which has had the effect of conditioning and undermining some of its counter-terror strategy.

The government, the media and the 'war on terror'

Much has been written on the government's use of the media in the 'war on terror'. Arguing, as some have, that the government is using panic to maintain political authority is too simplistic.[5] The government genuinely believes that the terrorist threat is multifaceted and serious – because it is. However, the government seems to have succeeded in panicking *itself more than the general population*, who, as polls show, remain less concerned about the terrorist threat than sexual crime or environmental issues or house price falls.[6] Indeed, the government's public relations (PR) strategy under the Blair government seemed to become more apocalyptic as the UK population became *less* panicked. Further, in the age of twenty-four hour news media and a more aggressive manner of covering stories, the government became addicted to 'spinning' the 'war on terror' in much the same way as it did National Health Service reform, education reform or crime or any other issue (Rawnsley, 2001; Oborne, 2006).

As a result, but particularly after the invasion of Iraq, the government's rhetoric adopted a supercharged and absolutist tone, presenting the United Kingdom as part of an apocalyptic global struggle. As Tony Blair argued in July 2005,

> What we are confronting here is an evil ideology. It is not a clash of civilisations. All civilised people, Muslim or other, feel revulsion at it. But it is a global struggle, and it is a battle of ideas, hearts and minds. (Blair, 2005a)

In his short term as Home Secretary John Reid was particularly splenetic, warning of 'the scale of the threat which we face. In responding to it,