

Government Policy Negatively Affecting Counter-Terrorism Efforts

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Counter-terrorism efforts in the UK are failing, as the British Government is losing its battle to win 'hearts and minds', according to a new book published tomorrow.

In *The British War on Terror*, Dr Steve Hewitt connects the government's failure to make headway in its fight against terrorism to its strategy of tying British foreign policy to that of the Bush administration, and in particular to its involvement in the invasion of Iraq.

Dr Hewitt says the failure to win 'hearts and minds' is connected primarily to its stance on Iraq, but that there are other significant factors too: "The approach to counter-terrorism has been heavy-handed. The high profile botched terror raids, such as that in Forest Gate, and the introduction of a number of new laws, as well as stop and search tactics, have all weakened efforts to combat terrorism."

In his examination, a general overview of events in the UK since 9-11, Dr Hewitt criticizes the focus of the government's activity and says its priorities need re-assessing: "Debates around identity cards or the 90-day detention rule distract from discussing measures and issues that might have made a difference with regard to 7/7 and to future 7/7s. Why for example did the start of a substantial expansion in the number of members of MI5 and in the organisation's regional capabilities not occur immediately after 9/11 instead of in early 2004?"

The author cites the focus on religious and cultural practices, such as the wearing of the niqab, as detrimental to the ongoing political efforts against the terrorist threat. "By highlighting the differences in religious and cultural practices the government is fragmenting the very society it is trying to unite."

In *The British War on Terror*, Dr Hewitt examines over a hundred years of counter-terrorism activity in the UK and argues that since that seminal day in September 2001, UK policy has been not only inconsistent, but considerably inadequate. In his book, he calls for an overhaul to the government's methods: "There is a real need now for a smarter approach to countering terrorism, which should begin with a fundamental review of selected policy paths to determine whether they are indeed winning, or losing, 'heart and minds'."

The British War on Terror by Dr Steve Hewitt is published on 15th December 2007.

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Further media information – Dr Steve Hewitt is available for interview. Please contact Anna Mitchell on 07920 593946

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