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Gaza war

British government steps up active support for Israel with strikes on Yemen and threats against Iran

- Since David Cameron assumed the role of Foreign Secretary in November, Britain's stance has sought to stake some degree of mild autonomy from US policy on Gaza, while remaining indefatigably pro-Israel.
- This includes, for example, by [issuing a joint call](#) with German Foreign Affairs minister Annalena Baerbock for a so-called 'sustainable ceasefire' in Gaza - importantly, one that would require Hamas to disarm - and joining with the US and Europe in [imposing sanctions](#) on violent Jewish settlers in the West Bank - importantly, avoiding having to respond to the Israeli government that they draw their legitimacy from.
- In light of Yemen and its AnsarAllah ('Houthi') government-imposed blockade of Israel-linked ships in the Red Sea, however, Britain has fallen quickly back in line with US actions - attacking Yemen and threatening Iran.
- At the end of December, Cameron [threatened to 'take a tough line'](#) on Iran and to "develop a really strong set of deterrent measures" against the country, which it labelled a 'malign' actor for its support of Hamas, Hezbollah and AnsarAllah.
- In early January, Britain joined the US in [launching airstrikes on Yemen](#), both by-passing their respective political institutions, after having earlier joined America's anti-blockade 'Operation Prosperity Guardian' coalition in the Red Sea.

The airstrikes were [supported by Labour leader](#) Keir Starmer.

- It is worth noting that Britain has been ratcheting up threats and tensions against Iran for many years now, even outside of the immediate context of Gaza.

Early last year a non-binding backbench motion in Parliament [called for the proscription of Iran's Revolutionary Guard Corps](#) (IRGC) unit, which the government has yet to act upon, while the government has

regularly labelled Iran as a chief 'malign actor' alongside Russia and China in its communiques.

Meanwhile in 2022 then-Home Secretary Priti Patel had been [considering a proscription on the 'Houthis'](#) in Yemen before she was removed from government, but this seems to have been averted under pressure from the Foreign Office.

- Iran is expected to be a defining cause for both the counter-terror industry and the new anti-hostile state 'national security' architecture in the years to come.

Adviser on political violence and disruption recommends charging protestors for policing costs

- Former Labour MP John Woodcock, currently serving as the government's Independent Adviser on Political Violence and Disruption, submitted his review in late December.

While his work had [initially sought to tackle 'far-left infiltration'](#) of Extinction Rebellion and Black Lives Matter demonstrations, his attention also turned to pro-Palestine demonstrations over the last few months.

- [According to reports](#), his review 'recommended that the Government should consider the viability of recouping some of the policing costs from groups organising persistent protests which are disruptive and involve law-breaking' - directly referencing pro-Palestine demos.
- Coming as the Metropolitan Police force has been steadily ramping up its repression of Palestine protests since October, with the [open support of government](#), the irony is painfully clear: pro-Palestine protestors are expected to pay police for the privilege of being brutalised and smeared by them.
- Woodcock resigned from the Labour Party in 2018, having once served as chair of its Labour Friends of Israel group, criticising then-leader Jeremy Corbyn. He was nominated for a peerage to the House of Lords by Boris Johnson the next year and was appointed as the Independent Adviser on Political Violence and Disruption by Johnson in 2020.

Counter-terrorism

He also formed part of the consortium alongside former Charity Commission chair William Shawcross that [successfully bid to takeover the Zionist newspaper Jewish Chronicle](#) in 2020, when it was facing liquidation.

Prevent referral data revealed as being circulated widely among agencies and government departments

- A report by *The Guardian* [has detailed how Prevent referral](#) data, including sensitive personal information, for ‘thousands of individuals’ are being secretly shared with other state agencies and departments, including local police forces, airports and immigration services - where they could potentially be used for the purposes of Schedule 7 stops.
- The information was drawn from confidential documents secured by a Freedom of Information request by the *Open Rights Group*, which also state that ‘counter-terrorism police may undertake disruptive activity, including investigating and prosecuting ASB – antisocial behaviour – to try to thwart someone’s supposed path to extremism’, indicating that individuals can be subject to Al Capone-style multi-pronged repression as part of ‘counter-extremism’ policing.
- These revelations are particularly concerning given the consistently high ‘false positive’ rate for Prevent referrals, with the [latest statistics showing](#) that 91% of referrals in the year between April 2022-March 2023 were offloaded; ultimately not ending up referred on to the ‘Channel’ stage.
- Prevent and police forces have not been forthcoming regarding their protection and sharing of Prevent referral data, though it had been expected that such data was being shared wider than previously known.

For example, in 2020 it [came to light that Manchester colleges](#), with support of counter-terror forces, were secretly sharing Prevent data with local universities.