

ICSR Update

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ICSR is a unique partnership in which King's College London, the University of Pennsylvania, the Interdisciplinary Center Herzliya, and the Regional Center on Conflict Prevention Amman are equal stakeholders.

Our joint mission is to bring together knowledge and leadership to address the challenge of radicalisation and political violence.

Dear Friend,

I am delighted to present you with the latest edition of *ICSR Update*.

ICSR is nearly two years old now, and there can be no doubt that – in the course of this period– the debate about radicalisation and political violence has changed. For example, people in Europe and North America feel a lot safer from the Al Qaeda threat, but are now confronted with a revival on the far right.

The very idea of radicalisation has been questioned – without anyone, however, putting forward any constructive alternatives. Naturally, I am conscious of the concept's limitations, but I also remain convinced that the term is indispensable for having a systematic discussion about 'what goes on before the bomb goes off'.

In fact, as you will see from this edition of *ICSR Update* (as well as the forthcoming ones), our projects and activities reflect some of these changes in emphasis.

Our core mission, however, remains the same. Radicalisation and political violence are challenges which haven't suddenly gone away. Indeed, the more we can do now to understand and address them correctly, the more effective our future responses will be – whatever shape or form the phenomenon will take.

As always, therefore, please do not hesitate to get in touch if you have any questions or ideas. In the meantime, I hope you and your families will find time to enjoy the festive season!

Dr. Peter Neumann
Director, ICSR

High-Level Workshop on the Future of Global Jihadism

On 1 October, ICSR held a major workshop on the future of the global jihadist movement.

Over recent years, the threat from Al Qaeda and associated groups has become increasingly nebulous, with major disagreements among experts and policymakers about the movement's nature and future direction as the result.

The idea behind the ICSR workshop was to allow some of the world's leading experts to compare notes, so that the movement's transformation can be properly understood and addressed.

Among the participants and contributors were Prof Gilles Kepel; Jason Burke; Dr Guido Steinberg; Prof Farhad Khosrokhavar; Yassin Musharbash; Shiraz Maher; Prof Sir Lawrence Freedman; Dr Brynjar Lia; Dr Eric Kauffman; Sir David Omand; Stephen Tankel; Dr Omar Ashour, Jonathan Paris, and others.

The topics that featured prominently throughout the day included: the future leadership of the global jihadist movement; the internal dynamics and evolution of the global jihad; wild cards and the impact of Western policy; as well as the role of global factors and developments.

Forthcoming Papers

Omar Ashour's 'Votes and Violence: Islamists and the Process of Transformation' will be published in January. It can be downloaded free of charge at www.icsr.info.

FREEradicals is the ICSR blog. It's a forum for debate and fresh ideas on radicalisation and political violence. It features some of the most innovative, young thinkers, discussing radicals and radicalisation. They are looking at how the challenge has been understood, and how it should be addressed.

To join in the debate, go to www.icsr.info/blog.

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ICSR Holds Conference on Prison De-radicalisation Programmes

A one-day conference at King's College London – held on 23 November – brought together more than a dozen experts on prison de-radicalisation programmes and efforts in 15 countries across four continents.

Prisons are increasingly seen as a 'place of vulnerability' in which radicalisation and recruitment are taking place. The development has gone largely unnoticed, but – with growing numbers of violent extremists awaiting trial or serving their sentences – the issue is unlikely to go away.

Some countries have long struggled with the issue. They have developed innovative and apparently successful programmes through which extremist prisoners are de-radicalised and rehabilitated. Other countries – mostly those in Western Europe and North America – are just about to begin to tackle the problem.

An ICSR research project is comparing and evaluating government policies on terrorist and extremist prisoners and the various programmes and initiatives – directed towards Islamist as well as non-Islamist extremists – that have aimed to de-radicalise and rehabilitate them.

The conference drew out a number of salient lessons, debates and issues to be resolved and explored in the upcoming phases of the major study on prison de-radicalisation programmes.

Among the issues to be addressed are the respective roles played by ideology and group dynamics in the process of de-radicalisation, as well as the larger question to what extent universal practices are feasible.

The Saudi programme, for example, relies on vast state largess and focuses largely on reaffirming the Islamic legitimacy of the state. Other countries with more limited resources and secular governance cannot hope to leverage these factors.

Though many questions are yet to be solved, the conference achieved the aim of creating an informal network of experts and practitioners working on the same issue.

As some of the violent conflicts and insurgencies across the world are winding down, the collective knowledge and experience held by this network will undoubtedly be of critical importance in managing processes of conflict transformation more effectively.

Events

3 December: Maajid Nawaz on Extremism in British Prisons

The Director of the Quilliam Foundation presented his organisation's latest report – *Unlocking Al Qaeda: Islamist extremism in British prisons*, warning that failure to tackle prison radicalisation risks creating a fresh wave of hardened extremists, both inside and outside prisons.

Nawaz commented that most extremists initially radicalised in prison take an average of 5-7 years to become fully violent, meaning that prisoners leaving prison today may 'graduate' into terrorism around 2015.

If you were not able to make it to the event then you can listen to it at www.icsr.info.

4 November: Gary Ackerman on Jihadists and WMD

ICSR Associate Fellow Gary Ackerman, Research Director of the START Centre at the University of Maryland, talked about his new book, *Jihadists and WMD* (CRC, 2009).

The edited volume is the most comprehensive evaluation of jihadists' intentions and capabilities in this area and looks at the issue both historically and in relation to future threat environments.

During the talk, Ackerman warned against hyping the threat but emphasised that policymakers needed to continue paying attention to the issue.

The book can be ordered directly from the publishers' website at <http://tinyurl.com/ybtaewy>.