



Workshop Report:

Thoughtcrimes? A Researcher-Practitioner Workshop on the Criminalisation of Extremist Views

14th May 2015

Held at the Bingham Centre for the Rule of Law

Convened by the [Islamic Reformulations](#) Project, funded as part of the [Partnership for Conflict, Crime and Security Research](#), [Economic and Social Research Council](#)

The new government's proposed anti-terrorism legislation brings the relationship between freedom and security into sharp focus. Central to the debate around the new legislation will be whether it is justified to curtail the activities of so-called "non-violent extremists" as a counter-terrorism measure. Can the law justifiably target those who undermine "British values", and restrict their activities? Does this mean we are creating Orwellian thoughtcrimes, where certain types of belief commitment, rather than any illegal actions, are regulated, restricted and even criminalised?

By a timely coincidence, the day after the [government's announcement](#), Professor Robert Gleave of Exeter University, in collaboration with the Bingham Centre for the Rule of Law, convened a workshop to examine these precise questions. Around 20 legal practitioners and academics spent an afternoon exchanging perspectives and sharing findings. Practitioners were able to hear about the latest academic developments in the relationship between law and security; and the academics had the opportunity to test their ideas with those working with these issues everyday in legal practice.

The workshop resulted not in pre-packed solutions, but a set of questions. All of which need urgent attention in the drafting and implementation of any legislation:

- How, if at all, can key terms in the proposed legislation, such as "British values" and "non-violent extremism" be defined in law with certainty and clarity?
- Will the proposed legislation regulate and criminalise the mere holding of certain views, without expressing them or acting on them?
- Given the number of unknown factors in the radicalisation process, how is the risk to public security to be weighed up against the suppression of personal freedoms?
- What issues does the proposed legislation raise for both law enforcement and community relations?

These and other questions will form the basis for a series of seminars looking at Thoughtcrimes, extremism and counter-terrorism.

The programme for the 14th May workshop is available (in pdf) [here](#).

Details on the future Thoughtcrimes seminars are available (in pdf) [here](#).

