



# Debates around Britain's National Security Are Characterized by a Paucity of Effective Leadership and a Surfeit of Political Cowardice

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## ABSTRACT:

Leadership, both political and operational, in policing and security is essential in a highly conflicted world. In Britain, politicians avoid discussion of crime and terrorism challenges they are reluctant to confront and have no idea how to resolve. There is much displacement activity, public discourse is directed away from recurring issues and offender behaviours and towards vacuous debates about online commentary and civility in public life. Britain's disastrous neo-colonial adventure in Afghanistan has taught politicians few lessons and continues to exercise a malign influence on counter-terrorism strategy and attitudes to global security. Instead of a robust review and rapid reform of policing and security responses to crime and terrorism at home, a new pseudo-scientific approach to policing and public security has emerged. This paper roundly condemns and flatly rejects this untested and unwanted reform. The fundamentals of good policing and community security are well-rehearsed and understood. They should be revisited.

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## Introduction

On October 15, 2021, Sir David Amess, a relatively obscure British parliamentarian, was stabbed to death at a meeting with his constituents in Southern England. The murder is still being investigated, so it is important not to make too many assertions about the reason for his death. However, from what is in the public domain so far, it appears Amess was the victim of an Islamist terror attack. His killer, a UK national of Somali descent named as Ali Harbi Ali, remained at the scene after the murder and made no attempt to evade the police or to avoid arrest. (NB: Harbi Ali was found guilty of murder at the Central Criminal Court, London, on April 13, 2022. He was sentenced to a whole life tariff.)

By all accounts, Amess was a popular and highly respected member of parliament (MP), and there has been no shortage of tributes paid to him by his fellow parliamentarians across the party divide. What is somewhat surprising is that so few politicians want to discuss the reason or circumstances of his death. An opposition MP used a thousand-word article in a national newspaper<sup>1</sup> to lament Sir David's passing and to ponder the risks that confront all politicians as they go about their work. No mention, however, of Islamist terrorism or how Britain should confront this dangerous threat. The Speaker of the House of Commons, a highly influential postholder who traditionally has support from all political parties also penned a newspaper article<sup>2</sup> and also managed not to mention Islamist terrorism or terrorism at all.

All this contrasts rather starkly with responses to another MP's murder back in June 2016. In that case, an opposition Labour MP, Jo Cox, was murdered in the street by Thomas Mair, who was quickly identified as a far-right terrorist. On that occasion, there was no hesitancy that Mair's obsession with Nazi memorabilia and white supremacist ideology was seized upon by parliamentarians and journalists alike. Many newspaper column inches were devoted to Mair's hate-filled political obsessions.<sup>3</sup> What got rather less coverage was his history of mental illness and referral to various psychiatric units. A man who spent much of his time obsessively scrubbing his skin with caustic cleaning pads intended for cleaning ovens was clearly a deeply disturbed individual. But for British politicians, it was easier to talk about the threat posed by far-right groups than it was to talk about violent and mentally disturbed individuals abroad in local communities.

The reluctance shown by politicians to talk about any terrorist element in David Amess's murder has been highlighted and indeed ridiculed by a number of prominent British journalists.<sup>4</sup> One, Dan Wootton<sup>5</sup> writing in the ever-popular tabloid *Daily Mail* commented that "Almost everything our politicians have said

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<sup>1</sup> McGovern, *Political Debate has Coarsened*.

<sup>2</sup> Lindsay Hoyle, *More respect and tolerance for each other*.

<sup>3</sup> Ian Cobain, *Jo Cox killed in politically motivated murder*.

<sup>4</sup> Brendan O'Neill, *Free speech didn't kill David Amess*.

<sup>5</sup> Dan Wootton, *Wicked murder of David Amess*.

since the wicked murder of David Amess is utterly irrelevant and deliberate misdirection to stop us reflecting on where the real threat to our democracy lies.” Harsh words but with more than an element of truth to them. Sadly, the deaths of Cox and Amess are not unprecedented events in Britain. In July 1990, a sitting MP, Sir Ian Gow was murdered with a car bomb as was another Conservative MP, Airey Neave back in 1979. Both of those men were killed by Irish republican terror groups, and in the aftermath of each of their deaths, there was no reluctance to talk about those responsible for the murders or the terrorist motivations. So, it is a curious phenomenon this new reluctance to identify and discuss the real and present threat of Islamist violent extremism and terrorism. In a further development of this odd new practice of avoiding the central problem and seeking to direct attention elsewhere the Commission for Countering Extremism, a government-funded research unit set-up in 2018, published a new report in February 2021, titled “*Operating with Impunity*” *Hateful Extremism: the need for a legal framework*.<sup>6</sup> Across 123 pages the report authors, Sara Khan the outgoing Lead Commissioner and Sir Mark Rowley recently retired Assistant Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police and former Head of Counter-Terrorism, examine topics such as the legal gaps exploited by hateful extremists and legal but harmful activity by extremists online. They recommend new legislation tightening up restrictions on the promulgation of extremist ideas and literature, which is under the current framework, completely legal. In the aftermath of David Amess’s murder Sir Mark spoke to a number of news outlets<sup>7</sup> criticising government ministers for not responding to the report’s recommendations.

This too appears as an odd focal point for action on countering Islamist violent extremism and terrorism. Even a cursory examination of recent terrorist attacks in Britain will reveal much more fundamental problems that need to be addressed by government and law enforcement. Problems that do not require a slew of new legislation to solve. For example, on June 20, 2020 in a public park in Reading, Berkshire, an Islamist stabbed and killed three gay men and injured three others. The perpetrator, Khairi Saadallah was a Libyan national given permission to enter Britain as a refugee. On November 29, 2019 Usman Khan stabbed and killed two young graduates and wounded three others whilst, incredibly, attending a conference on offender rehabilitation. Khan had been released from prison as a high-risk terrorist offender having served just half of a 16-year sentence for previous terrorism offences. On May 22, 2017 twenty-three people died in a suicide bomb attack at a pop concert in Manchester. The perpetrator, Salman Abedi was a British-born Libyan whose family had been allowed into Britain as refugees despite his father having fought with a radical Islamist group back in Libya. On June 3, 2017 seven people were stabbed to death and 48 injured by Islamist terrorists in a busy market in Central London. Two of the three perpetrators were Moroccan or Libyan nationals. So, in these four recent cases alone key issues are flagged up which do not revolve around

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<sup>6</sup> Khan & Rowley, *Operating with Impunity*.

<sup>7</sup> Trevor Marshallsea, *Ministers have ignored recommendations*.

activity online. The first point to consider is why dangerous individuals who were clearly a threat to national security, were given refugee status. The second point to consider is why a dangerous convicted terrorist was considered suitable for early release from a lengthy custodial sentence. It is instructive that such questions are simply brushed aside or ignored by both policymakers and news organisations.

The same phenomenon occurs when the clear and well-documented link between terrorist violence and cannabis consumption is raised. A review of past terrorist attacks by Islamist perpetrators clearly reveals three obvious and regularly recurring features. The first is the number of those involved who have a history of cannabis addiction. Included in this category are Richard Reid (known as the shoe bomber), who tried to cause an explosion on a trans-Atlantic flight in 2001, Tamerlan and Dzhokhar Tsarnaev who planted a bomb at the Boston marathon in 2013, Michael Adebolajo and Michael Adebowale who murdered soldier Lee Rigby in a London street in 2013, Said and Cherif Kouachi who launched the murderous attack on the Charlie Hebdo staff in Paris in 2015, Khalid Masood who drove a car along a crowded pavement on London Bridge in 2017, killing four and injuring 50. He later murdered an unarmed police officer near parliament; Salman Abedi who murdered 23 in a suicide attack in Manchester in 2017. The second widely occurring phenomenon in these attacks is the presence or involvement of converts to Islam. This includes Jermaine Lindsay and his wife Samantha Lewthwaite who plotted the 2005 suicide attacks on London's underground network, Richard Reid again, Michael Adebowale and Michael Adebolajo who murdered soldier Lee Rigby, Khalid Masood who killed five in Central London in March 2017, Andrew Ibrahim who was convicted in 2009 of preparing acts of terror, Thomas Evans reported to have been killed fighting with the Somali terror group al-Shabaab in 2015, Richard Dart who pleaded guilty to preparing acts of terror in 2010, Lewis Ludlow an Islamic State supporter who was given a life sentence for preparing acts of terror in 2019 and Dhiren Barot who was convicted of terrorist offences in 2006. The final recurring feature in these plots is the involvement of family members, whereby one member of a family radicalises another. In this category can be found the Tsarnaev brothers, the Kouachi brothers and Lindsay and Lewthwaite.

It is a curious fact that the recurring features of Islamist terror attacks outlined briefly above, attract little attention from policymakers or police leaders responsible for formulating counter-terrorism policy and police responses. There appears to be a clear disconnect between the features and patterns apparent in recent Islamist terror attacks and the priorities identified for action by currently serving ministers and government advisers. The policy paper published in February this year by the Commission for Countering Extremism, referred to above, provides a useful example of this.

In the foreword to the report the Lead Commissioner Sara Khan states that "The ecosystem of hateful extremism has evolved at a rapid pace and has

changed substantially over the last decade.”<sup>8</sup> This is open to debate. Rather it seems that some well researched and understood issues<sup>9</sup> are only now coming to the attention of those who might influence policy. A claim made in the body of the report that “There is a lack of cultural and religious extremism expertise within community policing and the criminal justice system to recognise stirring up of hatred if religious or theological terminology is used and in an unfamiliar language.”, is not new and has been clearly articulated elsewhere. As indeed has the revelation that “increasingly Islamists have weaponised ‘anti-racism’ debates; employing the language of ‘Islamophobia’ to shut down legitimate debate and criticism of Islamist extremism and scrutiny of their activity.” Similarly, on p.17 the observation that “this legislative gap leaves active British fascist, Neo-Nazi and Islamist extremist organisations, who oppose our democracy and seek to replace it with a fascist or Islamist society, to operate freely”,<sup>10</sup> appears both naïve and unworldly. In a complex and extremely diverse population like Britain’s it is absurd to assume every citizen subscribes to some cosy liberal vision of secular government and western democracy. In a report published back in 2016 Phillips, Goodhart and Davies observed the following:

*Liberal evasions have been perpetuated by many people who should know better. But for many people of goodwill it may be the only way to avoid confronting an inconvenient truth: that some minority groups hold very different values and ambitions than those commonly held amongst the dominant majority; that those values and ambitions are ever further away from liberal ideals than the average; and that because they are sincerely held by those groups, they aren’t going to change any time soon. The European social liberal clings to the belief that we are essentially the same “under the skin” in the desperate hope that with time, “liberal values” will inevitably prevail amongst people of all backgrounds. This leads us to a dangerous contradiction. It is hard to see how those who claim to respect the multi-ethnic, multiracial society under the banner of multiculturalism can genuinely be embracing ethnic difference, whilst at the same time dismissing those ethno-cultural groups who do not share their outlook on say, sexual orientation, as primitives who will one day learn better to adopt the ways of western liberals. (p.15).<sup>11</sup>*

And this insightful observation seems to go to the very root of the leadership problem that causes politicians to lament the death of a colleague whilst being too timid or cautious to mention the cause of his death, that leads senior police officers and government policymakers to think that a lack of legal definition and fresh statute law is to blame for the country’s inability to provide a robust and effective response to the threat of Islamist terror and violent extremism. The myth of the global liberal consensus coupled with a change to British policing doctrine that is nothing short of constitutional vandalism, two connected and

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<sup>8</sup> Sara Khan, *Hateful extremism*, 1.

<sup>9</sup> Timothy Parsons, *Police responses to Islamist radicalization*, 101-115.

<sup>10</sup> Khan and Rowley, *Operating with Impunity*, 17.

<sup>11</sup> Phillips, Goodhart & Davis, *Race and Faith*, 15.

equally destructive policy approaches that reveal a lack of leadership, a lack of strategic vision and an ignorance and arrogance that has already resulted in catastrophe abroad and will almost certainly lead to failure at home.

### **Afghanistan: Hubris and Failure**

The NATO intervention in Afghanistan back in 2001 in which Britain played a central part, followed the now notorious Al-Qaeda terrorist attacks on the US mainland in September of that year. A colossal, military, political and financial commitment to rebuilding Afghanistan was, the British people were told, necessary to keep people safe at home and protect Britain from further terrorist attacks planned abroad. Indeed, British prime minister Boris Johnson made this very point in a speech to the House of Commons on 6<sup>th</sup> September 2021<sup>12</sup> in which he said: “Thanks to their efforts, (the UK military), no terrorist attack against this country or any of our Western allies has been launched from Afghanistan for twenty years.” Whilst factually this may be correct the British involvement in Afghanistan since 2001 can only be viewed as an unmitigated disaster. Ruinously expensive, a major toll of British military casualties and ultimately, an end result that delivers western countries right back to where they started in 2001 with a hostile Taliban government in complete control of the country. Although Britain’s military personnel have served with courage and distinction throughout the Afghanistan debacle, the country’s politicians have not. The entire venture was ill-fated from the start; an imperial adventure, a western mission to take civilisation to the Asian primitives who needed rescuing from themselves. Efforts to introduce western democracy, gender equality, secular government, agricultural reform, all have run into the ground like water through sand. A factsheet<sup>13</sup> issued by the European Union in 2016 sets out the details of the EU policing mission in Afghanistan. It talks about human rights and gender as well as “advancing the professionalisation and efficiency of the Afghan National Police (ANP) as a civilian police service.” Apparently in 2015 the mission comprised 156 international staff with a budget agreed for 2016 of 43.7 million Euros. All that money and all that effort has turned to dust in a matter of weeks. No trace will be left and taxpayers in the EU, in Britain and the United States will be paying the bill for decades to come. An outcome that was wholly foreseeable and entirely predictable.

### **Afghan Collapse “a Surprise”**

As if to compound the strategic and political errors made over two decades western leaders expressed surprise at the speed at which the Afghan government in which they had invested so much, simply collapsed disappearing entirely from view. People in Britain and doubtless in other western countries, watched in horror the unfolding chaos and tragedy in Kabul as a newly dominant

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<sup>12</sup> Boris Johnson, *Thanks to their efforts*.

<sup>13</sup> EU mission in Afghanistan, 2.

and victorious Taliban rolled into the city replete with modern weaponry, communications, and charismatic young leaders. Meanwhile, the United States and Britain's militaries frantically tried to evacuate their citizens and former Afghan employees and support staff from a barely secured airport.

The British people have been told repeatedly that all this had taken the west by surprise, that no one could have predicted such a rapid collapse in the Afghan National Army and in the western-backed government in Kabul. And yet, all this seems eerily familiar. Many people in Britain with an interest in current affairs will remember how we were taken by surprise by the emergence and rapid territorial gains of ISIS in Iraq and Syria. We were similarly surprised by the advent of the Arab spring in 2010 and the collapse of Hosni Mubarak's regime in Egypt. This followed closely our surprise at the absence of any weapons of mass destruction in Iraq and by Saddam Hussein's earlier invasion of Kuwait in 1991. Sadly this pattern of western surprise at events in the Middle East and Muslim countries further afield is neither new nor undocumented. Writing in 1981 the late Palestinian scholar Edward Said<sup>14</sup> commenting on events at the end of the 1970s explained:

*There was an extraordinarily ferocious and seemingly unending civil war in Lebanon; Ethiopia and Somalia were involved in a long war; the Kurdish problem unexpectedly became pivotal and then, after 1975, just as unexpectedly subsided; Iran deposed its monarch in the wake of a massive, wholly surprising "Islamic" revolution; Afghanistan was gripped by a Marxist coup in 1978, then invaded by Soviet troops in late 1979; Algeria and Morocco were drawn into a protracted conflict over the southern Sahara issue; a Pakistani president was executed and a new military dictatorship set up. On the whole I think it is fair to say that few of these happenings might have been illuminated by expert writing on Islam in the west; for not only had experts not predicted them nor prepared their readers for them, they had instead provided a mass of literature that seemed, when compared with what was happening, to be about an impossibly distant region of the world, one that bore practically no relation to the turbulent and threatening confusion erupting before one's eyes in the media.*

For Said, the spectacle of vast well-resourced and well-funded research institutes and foreign policy think tanks in the west being so sorely ignorant of developments on the ground was truly astonishing and equally shocking. What is perhaps more shocking today, over forty years after Said put pen to paper, is the complete failure of western intelligence agencies to identify the threats and risks and to adequately prepare national leaders for what was to come. Despite access to world-leading capabilities in electronic surveillance, reconnaissance drones, satellites, and embedded intelligence operatives in theatre, the United States Commander in Chief and the British Prime Minister were completely wrong-footed by events. How could this sorry situation possibly have happened?

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<sup>14</sup> Edward Said, *Covering Islam*, 13-23.

Said, again, offers us an insight. Commenting on the United States intelligence failures in Iran in 1979 he remarked: “*The United States made no effort either to get to know the country in depth or to make contact with the opposition. These failures were and are symptomatic of the general United States and to a lesser degree European attitude toward the Islamic world.*”<sup>15</sup> It would be reassuring to think that in the intervening decades such attitudes had changed. It is though painfully apparent that policies, practices and procedures for collecting, analysing and disseminating accurate and up-to-date intelligence have failed, leaving western political leaders flailing in a fragile and unstable policy vacuum.

From London to Kabul and back to London, the myopic procession of liberal officialdom keeps moving along. In July last year the highly respected journalist Christina Lamb wrote an article in the Sunday Times magazine<sup>16</sup> recounting her first experience in Afghanistan in 2006 when she was embedded with troops from the Parachute Regiment led by Major Paul Blair. Lamb recalls attending a meeting (*shura*) with local elders attended by Blair and Colonel Charlie Knaggs the local British commander. “With Knaggs were two women from the Foreign Office and the Department for International Development who began talking about gender rights, which did not go down well with the audience of turbaned men with long beards. When they left, Blair was given a DVD to play of messages from British officials cut with segments from the BBC series *Blue Planet*. As whales and dolphins were projected on the wall to people in a landlocked country who had never seen the sea, the elders looked astonished. “Why are they showing monsters?” one asked me.”

When speaking with Blair later, the Army Major observed to Lamb “It was a massive disconnect that I found bizarre. It smacked of colonialism back in the day, of going somewhere exotic to teach natives to play bagpipes and go to Sunday school and “we know best,” and that is a hard sell.” This small vignette of British involvement in Afghanistan is instructive. The exchange observed and recounted by a British journalist immediately raises the question: on how many other occasions over a two-decade deployment were such crass, insensitive, neo-colonial, and orientalist attitudes demonstrated towards the local population?

### A Lesson in Leadership?

Was Afghanistan a learning experience for Britain’s governing class? Apparently not. The same policy myopia, the same contempt for local people the same ignorance of custom, culture and tradition are all on display as the current government evolves a new approach to crime, security and community safety. The government’s own Beating Crime Plan<sup>17</sup> published in the summer documents

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Christina Lamb, *I survived a Taliban attack*, 32.

<sup>17</sup> UK Government, *Beating Crime Plan*, 14.



rising levels of murders, injuries caused by knife attacks and a “virulent and active” drugs trade. The solutions to these problems are neither obscure nor difficult to deliver. Anyone who is reasonably well-travelled will have been to middle income countries or even quite poor and still developing countries where the streets are safe by day and at night, where women can walk unaccompanied without fear of harassment or assault, where crime rates are low and manageable, and where there is an observable absence of public drunkenness, drug abuse, vagrancy or begging. Such an environment can easily be created by strong political and police leadership, visible and accessible police uniform patrols, robust enforcement, and punitive sentencing. All things that citizens in Britain are deliberately and ostentatiously denied by a liberal elite that puts individual agency before community safety, that prefers chaos to order and prioritises rights over responsibilities. As has been documented elsewhere,<sup>18</sup> policing is a craft, a proletarian blue-collar occupation where skills are learned and endlessly honed and refined through professional practice. But not according to Britain’s College of Policing who have at the behest of ministers decided to envelop Britain’s police service in an impenetrable cloud of vacuous pseudo-science. There is a new policing doctrine called Evidence-Based Policing (EBP).<sup>19</sup> This, to accompany a new push to professionalise the police and roll-out an all-graduate service. Pepper, Rogers & Martin set out the new agenda clearly. “it is clear that in order for the police service to be recognized as the profession to which it aspires, it requires the evolution of a body of evidence-based knowledge to underpin the profession, similar to those which already exist in medicine and theology.” No, it doesn’t. Policing is not medicine still less is it a form of religion. But there is more: “Once the EBP concept has been established, and its potential benefits are viewed from reliable and credible evidence sources within the pyramid of evidence types, the transition is made to the application of EBP within policing practice. This is designed to contextualize, extend, and challenge existing professional practice.” For the ordinary citizen it must be highly alarming to observe this sort of tendentious nonsense taking hold. But it is now clear for all to see. Research is to replace investigation, analysis will replace intervention and the problems, anxieties and vulnerabilities of local communities will be fed into the evidence base. Policing in Britain will become a grim social studies project where graduate officers having prepared their dissertations will seek out professional advancement rather than public satisfaction. The concept of policing as a craft<sup>20</sup> is an important one. The craftsman or craftswoman expects to dedicate their working life to the same role. The gem-cutter, the goldsmith, the engraver the enameller doesn’t expect to take an MBA and then move on to manage the finance department or human resources. And this goes to the heart of community policing. To embed commu-

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<sup>18</sup> Timothy Parsons, *Community Policing*, 43.

<sup>19</sup> College of Policing, *What is EBP?*

<sup>20</sup> Maurice Punch, *Policing is essentially a craft*.

nity policing successfully and in a manner that can be sustained, local police officers must be dedicated to the task, committed to a lifetime of work and service to the local community.

### The Crisis in British Police Leadership

Nothing illustrates more graphically the current crisis of leadership in British policing than the recent defenestration of the Metropolitan Police commissioner, Dame Cressida Dick. Dick, first appointed in February 2017, was initially seen as a safe pair of hands and, as the Met's first female and openly gay commissioner an appointment that very much chimed with the progressive agenda of the then government. Commissioner Dick undoubtedly had talents; a formidable intellect matched with a clear ability to manage but perhaps not lead a big organisation. Her main problem was a lack of charisma and personal authority. Often appearing in an over-size hat and ill-fitting fleece, Cressida Dick was so lacking in presence she could easily have gone unnoticed in a meeting of three people. Her commissionership was littered with controversies, but things came to head when it was revealed that a number of Metropolitan Police officers had been exchanging racist and misogynistic messages on the encrypted Whatsapp messaging service. The officers concerned were disciplined but not dismissed, indeed some were subsequently promoted. When this became public knowledge Britain's indomitable Home Secretary, Priti Patel made public her displeasure. In comments to the Home Affairs select committee as reported in the *i* newspaper,<sup>21</sup> Patel stated that "I personally think... there are problems with the culture and some aspects of the culture within the Metropolitan Police". This was on February 2, 2022, by February 10, Dick, having lost the confidence of the elected Police and Crime Commissioner for London, Mayor Sadiq Khan, resigned. It is important to place these developments into context. Dick's resignation and the reported wrongdoing of some of her officers follows the recent rape and murder of a young woman, Sarah Everard, by a serving Metropolitan Police officer Wayne Couzens. This crime, occurring on 4<sup>th</sup> March 2021 was particularly shocking, as Couzens initially detained Ms Everard whilst pretending to enforce pandemic "lockdown" restrictions then in force across the UK. This chaos and indiscipline in Britain's largest police force presents itself after two decades of ongoing and energetic diversity training delivered not only to the officers and staff of the Met' but to all police officers in Britain. A training programme designed to sensitise police officers to cultural diversity in multi-cultural Britain manifestly doesn't work. Will there now be a change of policy? A return to core val-

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<sup>21</sup> Molly Blackall, "Met Police officer sent WhatsApps about wanting to 'knife' colleagues who 'grassed' on behaviour," *iNews*, February 2, 2022, [https://inews.co.uk/news/met-police-officers-afraid-speak-out-misogyny-colleagues-report-1437223?ico=related\\_stories](https://inews.co.uk/news/met-police-officers-afraid-speak-out-misogyny-colleagues-report-1437223?ico=related_stories), accessed February 17, 2022.

ues and core purposes? Almost certainly not. A new commissioner will be appointed, another advocate of the progressive liberal creed so beloved by the country's governing elite. The problems will continue and probably get worse.

### In summary

In a fractured and fragmenting world where globalisation is in retreat and national self-interest reasserts itself, where old alliances come under renewed strains and emerging powers claim their place on the world's political stage, the fundamentals of national security, border security, community safety and access to justice become ever more important to protect and enhance, if cohesion and integration are to be maintained in national populations. Leadership requires vision, strategic perspective, and a willingness to take risks and court unpopularity. Leadership is not managerialism, it appeals to emotions, demands sacrifices and expects selfless duty and personal resilience. In government and increasingly in the upper echelons of British policing, leadership is becoming a dirty word. Far better to pursue compromise and consensus, to acquiesce to popular narratives rather than to shape them. To ensure career longevity through professional invisibility. This is the rot, the putrefaction, the corruption and decay that will collapse our state institutions from within.

If western countries are to survive the onslaught of organised crime and terrorism that is to come, the result of country collapse across North Africa and the Middle East, as well as the regional rivalries and competition for resources that will continue to play itself out across the Arctic, Eurasia and much of Africa, not to mention the destabilising great power rivalry currently in train in South East Asia; then strong leadership, robust institutions, the means and commitment to defend national interests and a willingness to forge new alliances with old rivals will all be essential endeavours for the very near future.

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