

Executive Summary

Hizb ut-Tahrir (HT) is a revolutionary Islamist party that works to establish an expansionist super-state in Muslim-majority countries, unifying Muslims worldwide as one political bloc, or “*ummah*”.

PART I: IDEOLOGY

All states are regarded as ‘lands of war’ because the party’s specific type of governance is presently not implemented. HT’s state, on the other hand, would be considered the ‘land of Islam’. HT’s conception of *jihad*, or warfare, is based on these classifications. The party believes that its state can wage war in order to annex all Muslim-majority countries and colonise all non-Muslim majority countries. HT believes that Muslims should engage in this war to convert all ‘lands of war’ into the ‘land of Islam’, and killing civilians to achieve this is permitted. HT’s state would be governed by autocratic rule and enforce an intolerant strand of *shariah* as state law. The party’s draft constitution discriminates against minorities and women.

In the absence of HT’s state, Muslims are sanctioned to engage in *jihad* in ‘occupied Islamic lands’, defined as any country that is Muslim-majority or was once ‘ruled by Muslims under the authority of Islam.’ HT believes that “terrorising” the “enemy” is a religious duty against those committing ‘aggression against the sanctities of the Muslims.’ HT defines Israel as an “enemy” state: killing Israeli Jews is sanctioned through tactics such as suicide bombings as well as hijacking and bombing Israeli planes.

Inherent to HT’s worldview is a clash between “Western” and “Islamic” civilisations. The party believes the United Kingdom and United States of America are leading a campaign against Islam and Muslims worldwide. HT considers the influence of Western thought and physical presence in Muslim-majority countries as a threat to Islam, which it wishes to “uproot”. Liberal values – secularism, human rights and pluralism – are rejected as “un-Islamic” because they differ from HT’s Islamist doctrine. Promoting democracy, for example, is seen as part of a Western conspiracy to weaken Islam. Communism and socialism are also rejected despite HT’s founder and ideologue heavily borrowing from socialist concepts to formulate party ideology.

While HT is not a terrorist organisation, its revolutionary Islamism belongs to the same political spectrum as entry-level Islamists (the Muslim Brotherhood) and militant Islamists (al-Qaeda). While they differ in methodology, the end goal of all three organisations is to create an “Islamic state”. A number of militant Islamist groups emerged in the Middle East as a result of being radicalised by HT’s sectarian ideology, and former members have since participated in terrorism.

PART II: ACTIVITY IN MUSLIM-MAJORITY COUNTRIES

Operating in over 40 countries worldwide, HT is widely banned in the Middle East, Central Asia and South Asia. The party's method for gaining power is to infiltrate military factions in Muslim-majority countries in order to facilitate a coup. The party has already staged failed coups in the Middle East in the late 1960s and early 1970s, and is currently attempting to do so in Pakistan because the country possesses nuclear weapons.

PART III: STRATEGY IN THE WEST

HT actively seeks mass support for its Islamist revolution among Western Muslims. Party ideology commands them to oppose Western civilisation and to subvert their societies. All Western states are considered "enemies" of Islam and potential land for HT's expansionist Islamist state via *jihad*.

HT targets Muslim communities in an attempt to create a monolithic bloc sympathetic to its brand of Islamism and to promote sole identification with HT's "*ummah*". To unite Western Muslims to its cause, HT encourages a victim mentality by presenting Muslims as the target of a perceived Western 'War on Islam'. Furthermore, the party denounces Muslim integration, forbids Muslims from voting in democratic elections and describes Muslims who call for human rights and democracy as apostates.

HT Britain's (HTB) activities demonstrate the party's 'keep your ideology in your heart' strategy. Since the 7/7 London bombings the party has increasingly adopted measures to disguise its intolerant ideology. HTB emphasises "political" struggle and uses euphemistic language to hide its support for *jihad*, antisemitic beliefs and totalitarian system of governance.

HTB has adopted front groups – youth groups, student and community organisations – to disseminate its ideology. Designed to circumnavigate the party's possible proscription, HTB uses front groups to embed its ideology within British Muslim communities. For example, HTB's Brick Lane Islamic Circle holds weekly study sessions in a local-government owned community centre in Tower Hamlets, London.

HTB encourages young Muslims to spread HT's ideology and work towards the party's revolution. The party focuses on university campuses, youth organisations and mosques. In some cases, HTB members have targeted school children. For example, party members run the Islamic Shakhshiyah Foundation – a charity that manages two primary schools – and write the schools' curriculum based on HT's version of Islam. The government regulatory body Ofsted has praised the schools' "Islamic" ethos and the foundation has received £113,411 in government grants.

Within wider society, HT works to mainstream its worldview as "Islamic" and present its totalitarian ideology as a non-threatening – and viable – alternative to current political thinking.

HTB presents itself as an “Islamic” voice and engages with politicians, local authorities and mainstream media. HTB’s grassroots activities have gained the support of local politicians and the party has been given a platform in the Houses of Parliament. In 2008, the party’s Chairman, Abdul Wahid, spoke at a debate funded by the government’s Preventing Violent Extremism programme.

PART IV: POLICY CONSIDERATIONS

In the UK, the Conservative Party has recently voiced its commitment to proscribe HT should they form the next government. The current Labour government has stated that any decision to proscribe HT would have to be justified under the UK’s Terrorism Act 2000, and that the party is currently under review.

HT ideologically legitimises acts of terrorism. However, there is no evidence that HTB, or party chapters worldwide, have direct links to terrorism. Since the Terrorism Act 2006, HTB does not appear to have explicitly and publicly supported suicide bombings or terrorist organisations. Any government wishing to proscribe HT in the UK would therefore have to amend current terrorism legislation.

Whilst proscription would send a strong message, it would likely prove impractical and ineffective. Furthermore, it could engender strong opposition and possibly give unnecessary legitimacy to HT’s worldview. Instead, the government could reduce HT’s public legitimacy by encouraging greater civic intolerance of the party. Some of the recommendations for government highlighted in this report include:

HT and its front groups: The government’s Research, Information and Communications Unit should circulate centralised criteria to all Prevent partners for identifying HT ideology.

Civic institutions: A ‘No Platform’ policy for HT should be established across publically-funded institutions. Local authorities should also establish mechanisms to limit civic institutions inadvertently funding or hosting HTB front groups.

Community groups: Government should establish centralised criteria for funding and engagement with stakeholders in Muslim communities. Funding and engagement should be conditional on the group and its members not sharing a platform with HT members or publicly supporting HT ideology.

Schools: HT members should be restricted from working in primary and secondary schools. HT’s antisemitism is incompatible with schools’ duty to promote racial equality. The Charity Commission and local authorities should withdraw charitable status and public funding for registered charities whose schools consistently engage in political activity by hosting HT members or publicly supporting HT ideology.

Universities: Further and Higher Education services should provide greater institutionalised support for the National Union of Students' 'No Platform' policy. University authorities should review teaching and pastoral responsibilities given to HT members.

Registered mosques and Islamic charities: The Charity Commission's Faith and Social Cohesion Unit (FSCU) should support mosques combating HT influence. Charitable status and public funding should be withdrawn for registered mosques and other Islamic charities which either host HT members, allow them to become trustees, or publicly support HT ideology.

Mosques and Imams National Advisory Board (MINAB): Since MINAB is heavily influenced by entry-level political Islamists, the government must consider if it is appropriate for MINAB to advise the FSCU, particularly in relation to identifying and combating HTB activism in British mosques.

Effects within civil society: The government should focus on promoting the shared values of a liberal democracy as effective opposition to extremism because HT undermines these values and encourages hatred and separatism towards those who do not share the party's interpretation of Islam. It is hoped that this would empower civil society and British Muslim communities to develop greater resilience to the extremism espoused by groups like HT.