



Westminster Round Up | November 2018

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17 December 2018

In Brief

As the Brexit negotiations continue at full speed, other significant issues – such as defence - seem to have taken a backseat in parliament this November.

In their debates on Yemen and Saudi Arabia, an increasing number of MPs have come to question the UK's ability to influence Saudi foreign- and domestic policy. This is significant as the UK largely predicated its relationship with the Kingdom as a means to influence their policy for the better in spite of the brutality of the war they are waging in Yemen, which has led to a serious humanitarian crisis and a significant loss of life, and the recent murder of Jamal Khashoggi. A [recent report](#) written by the Policy Institute at King's College London and commissioned by RWP, found that there was insufficient evidence available in the public domain to prove British influence over Saudi Arabia.

Late November also saw the release of an Intelligence and Security Committee (ISC) report into the failing of MI5 and the Counter Terrorism Policing leading up to the 5 terrorist attacks of 2017. The report was detailed and complimented the work of British intelligence services while acknowledging mistakes made and suggesting next steps for improvements. Such oversight offers invaluable accountability and institutionalises a process for learning from valuable lessons. RWP has [long argued](#) that such oversight would be invaluable for Special Forces as well as many other elements of remote warfare.

Focus Points

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| 21.11.18 | Hunt emphasises his influence with Saudi Arabia over Yemen – in spite of evidence

In response to poignant questions by Emily Thornberry and others, Jeremy Hunt emphasised that the UK's influence over Saudi Arabia should not be underestimated. Furthermore, in response to a question on possible legal complicity of the UK military in light of their support for the Saudi-led coalition, Hunt assured the house that the UK military will not be held responsible. However, as we've recently written, there is [little legal clarity](#) on this issue.

| 22.11.18 | Theresa May gives statement on ISC report into terror attacks of 2017

After the release of the Intelligence and Security Committee's report on the MI5 and CTP's failings leading up to the terrorist attacks of 2017, May responded that such a review was "right", so we may improve further actions. RWP would argue that the same can be said for the operations of [Special Forces](#), who are not currently overseen by parliament, and who might benefit from the accountability offered by committees such as the ISC.

House of Commons

| 27.11.18 | Discussion on violence in Nigeria, including by Boko Haram

The House discussed the causes and developments of violence between nomadic herders and farming communities in Nigeria which has seen up to 60,000 killed since 2001, as well as the complexities added by Boko Haram's violence.

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House of Lords

| 15.11.18 | Lords challenge UK's influence over Saudi Arabia in Yemen

During a debate on Yemen, several Peers challenged the notion that the UK holds significant power over Saudi Arabia's actions in Yemen. Lord Hannay of Chiswick asked "if the hand which holds the pen remains paralysed, as it has done for many months, what on earth is the use of it?" Such doubt reflects the findings of a [recent report](#) from King's Policy Institute, which challenged statements on the UK's influence over Saudi Arabia.

Government Announcements

| 12.11.18 | Foreign Secretary travels to Gulf to push for end to war in Yemen

On his trip to Saudi Arabia and the UAE, the Foreign Secretary met representatives from those two countries as well as Yemeni officials. The meeting was part of a process to bolster the strength of the forthcoming peace talks which began in early December.

About the Author

Megan Karlshoej-Pedersen is a Research and Policy Assistant at ORG's Remote Warfare Programme. She supports the team's research on changes in military engagement, as well as their work with Parliament and policy-makers. Her research interests include international security, armed groups, and sub-national conflict analysis.

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