

SOAS ICOP: A Review of the First Nine Months

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Since January 2020, Influencing Corridors of Power (ICOP) at SOAS has successfully impacted decision making in Westminster by:

- Issuing 28 [peer reviewed and ethically approved](#) briefings from academic experts, also releasing them as '5 Minute Briefings' podcasts
- Successfully informing changes to legislation
- Supporting MPs in writing official questions to the Government
- Working with MPs and their aides to support Parliamentary research.

To address the [democratic deficit](#) and the blight of policy-led 'evidence' that has come to dominate policymaking in the UK, **ICOP has had a significant and positive impact on policy and government.**

Rapidly drafted and deployed legislation has become the hallmark of 2020, as epitomised by the 359-page Coronavirus Act. Nevertheless, despite the Coronavirus Act and many other bills having been put before Parliament with less than 24 hours' notice, **our rapid system of peer-review and publication meant that ICOP was able to help academics brief MPs in advance of debates and steer them towards desired outcomes. ICOP and other NGO's [suggestion of a 6-month sunset clause in the Coronavirus Act](#) was adopted, with the result that the greatest loss of civil liberties ever presided over by a British government was recently reviewed by Parliament.**

Furthermore, while there was initial support for the continuation of the Act, ICOP recently briefed MPs and Lords on concerns that it gives the government [unreasonable powers](#) that do not even face necessary Parliamentary scrutiny. Up to 50 MPs have since **insisted on greater scrutiny of legislation before Parliament.**

Likewise, working closely with the Chair of the Muslim Doctors Association Dr Hina Shahid has enabled ICOP to release briefings on the health impacts and inequality created by the pandemic. This led to Dr Shahid working with Siobhain McDonagh MP to **successfully encourage the government to collect and publish Covid-19 mortality data in [relation to ethnicity](#) and to recognise religion as a determinant of health.** The ONS subsequently showed that Muslims had the [highest risk of dying](#) from coronavirus and this has raised important questions that would otherwise not have been asked of government. Abena Opong-Asare MP also collaborated with ICOP after receiving a briefing on [Policing the pandemic](#), and subsequently thanked ICOP in the acknowledgements of her report, [Leaving Nobody Behind](#). The extraordinary insights of the Bollo Brook Youth Club into ['The Broken Social Contract'](#) were also well received by the Education Select Committee and others.

Overall, the timely production and trustworthiness of ICOP briefings has meant that they have not only been helpful to numerous MPs – or 'invaluable', to cite a senior member of the Lords - but have also informed debate in the public domain: they have been referred to and debated on national radio and TV shows, syndicated to news broadcasts on over 300 UK radio stations, and mentioned in a [front-page](#) article in the Guardian.

Additionally, ICOP members have been consulted on the Terms of Reference of the forthcoming Independent Review of Prevent and will provide briefings to the new reviewer when they are appointed. Looking forward, ICOP will also continue to be engaged in other important Parliamentary business, most notably the EU Withdrawal Bill and the proposed Climate and Ecological Emergency Bill. **With proposed legislation addressing existential crises to both the State and to life on earth, the genuinely independent, trustworthy and timely academic expertise that ICOP is pioneering is more important than ever. So, please do get in touch with us whether you require an issue-specific briefing, or if you are an expert who we can help reach into and have a positive influence in the corridors of power.**

Visit our website for further briefings (<https://blogs.soas.ac.uk/cop/>). If you would like a personal briefing or clarification on any of the issues raised here, please contact the author at rw52@soas.ac.uk / 07960092763. Do contact Professor Alison Scott-Baumann and her team for further briefings and access to other experts as150@soas.ac.uk

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