

Why Terrorism is Apparently Increasing?

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Since the horrors of 9/11 were broadcast around the globe we appear to have seen more and more terrorist acts that are aimed at softer targets in countries removed from the source of unrest. The internet not only helps increase the support for terrorism it also enables it by providing knowledge and skills in cyber space [1]. Although these types of attack maybe increasing they are certainly reported more fully and globally using modern media. Indeed Benson [2] argues that these types of transnational attacks are not actually increasing and that the internet is equally balanced in its ability to support terrorism and to police and prevent it. Terrorism has always existed but previously attacks tended to be more focused in the local environment and may have been less news worthy outside of the region.

Terrorism is a violent form of Extremism that comprises a significant and continuing threat to society. The history of extremism is commonly seen as including those driven by a strong belief or those wanting to improve conditions for the underdog whether people or in modern time's animals. However terror can be state or intuitionally led and inspired.

In European history there are numerous examples of philosophies and beliefs driving extremism and terrorism in this wider definition for example the Christian religious war of the Crusades which were countered by a Jihadist war of the Muslims.

Fitzgerald [3] considers the problem of identifying extremism and states that each recruits' characteristics may vary. It is a mistake to only profile young men with few educational qualifications and poor employment prospects as there are many examples of educated, female and wealthy extremists and terrorists. A report "Behavioural Science Unit operational briefing note: Understanding Radicalisation and Violent Extremism in the UK" from the British Security Service (MI5) in 2008 [4] concluded that extremists and terrorists were widely distributed within the population and that they could not be profiled on the basis of nationality and demographics. This compares well with the crusades example cited above. The Crusaders were very diverse from noblemen espousing the knightly philosophy of Charlemagne, religious leaders including those with no formal rank and followers to the poorest of the poor and even women and children. They all felt threatened by the temptation of worldly sins against their religious rules and that by taking part in their crusade they would guarantee their passage to heaven. Any attack upon their brand of religion was the most serious sin of all. This common rationale was the core of the movement and galvanised them to march to war.

The word cult embodies the concept of undue influence in group behaviour (Dubrow-Marshall). The cult may be on the edge of a society and or religion and will be ideologically driven. For terrorists this ideology is the justification for the physical attacks on both infrastructure and humanity. Thus the cult could be seen as a process that reorients members to such a state that they are able to commit cruel and violent acts. The Knights Templar can be seen as a cult that arose as part of the crusades holy war and developed more idiosyncratic tendencies before finally falling into disrepute. A terrorist cult is one which: uses deceit to recruit new members, uses mind-control techniques on the new cult member to ensure they become dependent and obedient on the cult, and processes the cult members to such an extent that they are ready to attempt acts such as terrorism perceived as a justified act of war by the

terrorist. Arguably in the past many religions have held such a strong sway over their followers.

One aspect that facilitates increased levels of terrorism in modern times is the access to powerful tools like the internet and financing within wealthy economies: Boynes and Ballard [5] make the point that "social movements and organizations are dependent upon the availability of resources." To be an effective group, extremist's need members who can offer the skills and knowledge needed to develop the group's strategy, implement plans and manage the group and the individual members within the group. The group will require financial backing which may be beyond the contributions of its inner membership. In order to commit extremist activities the group will need to acquire access to materials that may be difficult to obtain e.g. chemicals for improvised explosive devices. The group may need to generate propaganda to grow membership, raise funds and ensure the groups message and coherence continues. This latter function is greatly facilitated by the internet [6].

In short the extremist group needs to develop a supportive social base from which to draw resources and if successful may become like Al Qaeda, not just a group nor even a cult but also a social movement that is all the more threatening because of its wider appeal and because it does not depend singularly on cultic control of a core group [7]. While the difference between a group and a movement may be one of scale and control both are organisations and recognising the activities that the organisation uses e.g. crime such as drug dealing or money laundering can be used to police extremist activities.

Shelley Liebert an ex 'Moonie' cult instructor in Enroth [8] describes two types of recruit: Those experiencing failure by middle class standards of the time, they may left home, live in a dysfunctional family or have emotional problems and ongoing personal issues and or have dropped out of school or university, they may have become part of a drugs sub-culture; Alternatively, they might be from a group described as successful, idealistic, and a very secure personality. There were several different religious organisations that were actively recruiting such vulnerable youths to their cults and the similarity of their modus operandi was commented upon by Enroth (1977:12) '*Commonality of certain aims to certain means is so striking*' ... *Hallmarks of cultic conversion usually include the abandonment of a familiar life style; severing ties with friends and families; a radical and sometimes sudden change in personality...*'. In recent times terrorists or those travelling to areas such as Syria to fight holy wars were often

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described as normal but perhaps somewhat more removed from everyday family and friends. The conversion taking place out of site, certainly modern communications systems will facilitate such secrecy.

The powerful combination of a strong clear black and white view point appeals to disaffected individuals, with the ability of the internet to facilitate propaganda leading to mind control and reorientation in to extremism and finally terrorist acts may account for the increasing wave of terrorism dispersed across the globe. This is mirrored by other groups using cyberspace to pursue their political and religious beliefs. The think tank Demos [9] found that a new kind of movement is gaining ground in Europe that is critical of globalisation, is anti-establishment and supports workers rights (conventional left wing politics) but also is concerned with protecting national culture and opposition to immigration (conventional far right policy) and so they do not fit into an existing political category and have been named “Populist” extremist parties. These right wing extremist parties also make good use of online social media and their online followers far outnumber the physical activists in these parties “This mélange of virtual and real-world political activity is the way millions of people — especially young people — relate to politics in the twenty-first century. This nascent, messy and more ephemeral form of politics is becoming the norm for a younger, digital generation.”

David Cameron, the British Prime Minister, recognises that there is a spectrum of association with Islamist extremism from terrorists driven by this ideology, general anti western feelings, neutrality, to outright renouncement of such an extremist interpretation of Islam by the majority of Muslims [10]. The British Security Service’s Behavioural Sciences Unit Operational Briefing Note: Understanding Radicalisation and Extremism in the UK, is reported to have found that extremists and terrorists are a diverse group and do not follow any one path into radicalisation and extremism. The British Government received a further classified report in July 2010 that also called into question the validity of conveyor belt theory; it found that the influence of extreme groups such as al-Muhajiroun or Hizb ut Tahrir and ideological factors were not the main actors within the radicalisation process [11]. The report recommends that countering extremism should be removed from the security context to prevent adverse reactions from within communities. Building stronger community links and delivering counter extremism strategies face a persistent dilemma to balance human rights against security concerns. Policing within diverse ethnic and religious communities is a challenge and police forces seek to have full representation from all the different groups. However recruitment to police forces may not be seen as appropriate for many in such groups [12].

One part of the British Government prevent strategy is to identify extremist behaviour in the young and to attempt to counter it at this early stage in the belief that such extremism might be “nipped in the bud” more easily than changing views in adults. This approach appears to be based upon the conveyor belt theory of radicalisation. As part of this approach schools are required to report any extremist pupils to the Preventing Extremism Unit within the Department of Education. Kundnani [13] found that this practice was identifying naughty or angry pupils rather than extremists and that the consequences for the pupil were increased likelihood of bullying or being ostracised following this labelling. Kundnani’s recommended that teachers need to facilitate pupil debate in schools about the issues of society and faith to develop an appreciation of and respect for the views of others. This view echoes that of Sunstein [14] who proposes that a key antidote to extremism and group polarisation is information exchange. Although the British Government has recently announced considerable extra funding for

police and security services to counter terrorism, no corresponding increase has been forthcoming for Preventative action.

The British Government’s policy to counter extremism does not seem to consider the effects of British foreign policy generating feelings of injustice that can lead to radicalisation. Baroness Manningham-Buller, former head of MI5 (British security service) stated to the Chilcot inquiry that the British involvement in the war in Iraq in 2003 may well have resulted in increased radicalisation, extremism, support for Al Qaeda and terrorism within the UK from British subjects [15]. This admission demonstrates the importance of a making foreign policy sympathetic to home policy regarding community cohesion and encouraging a British identity. The failure to turn British involvement in Afghanistan and Iraq into a clear benefit for the local population and religions enables extremists to turn these interventions into strong propaganda material. Over the last two decades there have been numerous wars between various governments and freedom groups with Muslims often being involved due to their presence in that region and sometimes driven by the tensions and schisms within their own religion. This further drives the susceptible recruit to become part of a holy war.

Human rights activists are concerned that increasing the powers of the police to deal with extremism and terrorism will drive democracies towards becoming police states. The alternative to this state control is to encourage informal social control both within society and in cyber space and in social media generally. Up to the present the internet has remained a relatively censor free medium to communicate all forms of views. Even if more laws are past the global nature of using the internet to further extremist aims makes policing extremely difficult [16,17].

Conclusion

The basic drivers for extremism are similar irrespective of the focus of the extremism. The powerful combination of foreign policy and wars, forming a cause that attracts susceptible recruits and promises immortal rewards along with the ability of the internet to facilitate the rise of digital movements creates the mixture that drives terrorism e globally in recent times.

Globalisation is a modern way of life with travel and cyberspace providing easy access to all areas. This plus the need to do evermore daring/outrageous deeds to attack global media coverage, the oxygen of the terrorist, leads to attempting more transnational and large scale terrorism.

Policing must be internationally based and maintain a balanced approach to: policing the internet without abusing human rights and drifting into electronic police state; and policing communities without alienating groups. Strong and persistent community led social control is required to counter the extremist narrative and prevent susceptible individuals from being drawn into extremism.

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