

I. Articles

Why Right is Might: How the Social Science on Radicalisation suggests that International Human Rights Norms actually help frame Effective Counterterrorism Policies

by Tom Parker

Abstract

Many states appear to turn instinctively to hard power resources when confronted with a terrorist threat. Yet existing research on violent extremism and radicalisation leading to terrorism suggests that such responses might well exacerbate the problem. Terrorist groups actively seek to exploit the push-pull dynamic that drives radicalisation and violent extremism, while one case study after the other indicates that states thereby appear to play actively into their hands. Social science research suggests that international human rights norms assist compliant states to moderate responses, build legitimacy, and ultimately craft effective counterterrorism strategies. A close reading of the literature on radicalisation and terrorist group formation offers qualitative evidence to support this conclusion.

“We also have to work, though, sort of the dark side, if you will... That’s the world these folks operate in, and so it’s going to be vital for us to use any means at our disposal, basically, to achieve our objective”.

– Former US Vice President Dick Cheney.[1]

Introduction

In the immediate aftermath of the September 11th, 2001, attacks on New York and Washington, US Vice-President Dick Cheney gave an interview to the NBC news program *Meet The Press* in which he said that the US was going to have to embrace what he termed “the dark side” if it was to triumph against Al-Qaeda. It was a remark that came to encapsulate the approach to counterterrorism strategy adopted by the Bush administration and it still exerts a powerful gravitational pull over the national security debate in the United States over a decade later.

To those accustomed to the exercise of power, there is something both reassuring and seductive to the notion that the unrestrained use of that power can meet any challenge. Indeed for many of the ‘hard men’ in the National Security community this is an article of faith. But is it sound public policy? Social science research suggests that it is not, at least not for democracies. As Nikolai Morozov, one of the earliest theorists of terrorist violence and a leading member of the 19th century Russian anti-authoritarian group *Narodnaya Volya* (People’s Will), noted in his 1880 essay *The Terrorist Struggle*: “Force is only dreadful to the obvious enemy. Against the secret one it is completely useless.”[2]

In fact, a review of the most influential social science research conducted on countering violent extremism over the past two decades suggests that the use of unrestrained force may not just be ineffective but might actually be counterproductive and that a more measured response guided by established international human rights principles might be far more effective in countering extremist threats. It is my contention in this article that a close reading of the interviews and case studies that underpin much of the literature addressing both processes of radicalisation and terrorist group formation and longevity, offers plenty of qualitative evidence to support this conclusion.

Terrorists instinctively understand the comparative advantage weakness can offer. By operating from the shadows terrorist groups make a virtue of their small numbers and neutralize the superior military resources of the state. However, they don't stop there, they actively seek to put these superior military resources to work on their behalf. By forcing the state to adopt a defensive posture terror groups hope to exhaust it through "the continuous tension of its own strength", to quote another *Narodnaya Volya* activist, Sergei Stepniak-Kravshinski.[3] Stepniak-Kravshinski went on to stab the head of the Tsarist secret police, Nikolai Mezentsov, to death on a St. Petersburg street in 1878. Osama bin Laden echoed Stepniak's insight in a 2004 video broadcast: "[It] is easy for us to provoke and bait.... All we have to do is to send two mujahedin... to raise a piece of cloth on which is written Al-Qaeda in order to make the generals race there to cause America to suffer human, economic and political losses." [4]

By crafting attacks designed to provoke a draconian state response, terrorists also hope exploit the inevitable societal polarization that results in order to attract new recruits to their banner while undermining the state's own claim to be acting legitimately. We can find clear statements of this intent present in terrorist writings from the 1860s to the present day. The first to articulate this strategy was the Russian nihilist Sergei Nechaev, founder of *Narodnaya Rasprava* (People's Justice). His *Catechism of the Revolutionist* can be considered the first 'how to do' manual for aspirant terrorists. Nechaev instructs his readers that violent officials should be "granted temporary respite to live, solely in order that their bestial behavior shall drive the people to inevitable revolt." [5] This is hardly a secret formula. You can trace this same theme through the words of Irish revolutionaries Pdraig Pearse and Michael Collins, the memoirs of Irgun's Menachem Begin, Greek Cypriot rebel commander George Grivas and Fatah's Salah Khalaf, the pamphlets of Carlos Marighela, the writings of Che Guevara, and the public proclamations of Abu Bakr al Naji and Osama bin Laden. It is, quite literally, Terrorism 101.

Indeed terror groups seem to instinctively grasp and exploit some of the very factors that the social science suggests motivates young men and women to turn to violence, while governments seem, almost just as instinctively, to exacerbate them. The purpose of this article is to explore some of the scientific findings around radicalisation, offer evidence that terrorist groups exploit that knowledge while governments do not, and to suggest that the framework provided by human rights law and international humanitarian law can actually play an important role in assisting government to respond both appropriately and effectively to terrorist threats. The former President of Israel's Supreme Court, Aharon Barak, once observed that although a democracy was often forced to fight with "one hand tied behind its back", its values nevertheless ensured that it had the upper hand.[6] The metaphor hardly helped support the sentiment. I would argue that a more accurate characterization would be that these same values, when observed, actually

ensure that, rather than swinging wildly, the state acts with greater precision – in fact, to carry an unwieldy metaphor through to its conclusion, the application of these values frees up both hands to work with much greater effectiveness.

There are many pathways to radicalisation and no one given set of criteria has much predictive force. As Adriana Faranda, a member of the post-1960s Italian Marxist group *Brigate Rosse* (Red Brigades), told the researcher Alison Jamieson: “there were a lot of little steps which led to where I ended up.”[7] A lifetime of academic study led one of the doyens of terrorism studies, Alex Schmid, to a similar conclusion: “Terrorism is not a monocausal phenomenon and there is no silver bullet solution to it.”[8] What I have tried to do in this article is to pull together those insights from the social science literature that I have found most compelling. It is important to note that many of the theories explored below do not necessarily fit neatly together. But what we can say with some confidence is that radicalisation is usually a ‘push-pull’ phenomenon, in which internal and external drivers come together. These drivers differ from person to person. Internal, or ‘push’, factors may suggest a vulnerability to radicalisation but there is nothing inevitable about an individual’s embrace of terrorist violence. The key point is that radicalisation occurs at the point in which the private and public spheres intersect and this provides both challenges and opportunities for state intervention.

Dehumanizing the Enemy

A salient characteristic of the Bush administration’s ‘dark side’ approach to the Al-Qaeda threat was a profound lack of interest in the actual character and motivations of Al-Qaeda’s leaders and their supporters. As presidential adviser Karl Rove put it with unconscious hubris:

“Conservatives saw what happened to us on 9/11 and said: we will defeat our enemies. Liberals saw what happened to us and said: we must understand our enemies.”[9] Rather than follow Sun Tzu’s much referenced maxim “know your enemy”, President George W. Bush preferred to mischaracterize Al-Qaeda’s followers, as when he told a joint session of Congress in September 2001: “They hate our freedoms.”[10] This was hardly an accurate summary of the grievances that bin Laden had itemized in two very public declarations. Such willful ignorance led to a number of semantic blunders in the immediate aftermath of the 9/11 attacks, none greater than President Bush’s ill-judged use of the word “crusade” to underscore America’s resolve in meeting the challenge posed by Al-Qaeda. French Foreign Minister Hubert Vedrine reacted presciently to Bush’s choice of words, commenting to reporters: “We have to avoid a clash of civilizations at all costs. One has to avoid falling into this huge trap, this monstrous trap, conceived by the instigators of the assault.”[11]

The dehumanization of ‘the other’ is, of course, a well-reported staple of warfare, so much so that anthropologists Ashley Montagu and Floyd Matson labeled dehumanization “the fifth horseman of the apocalypse”. [12] In his seminal work *Faces of the Enemy*, the philosopher Sam Keen coined the term “hostile imagination” to describe the process by which states dehumanize enemy forces by developing caricatured stereotypes that have a transformative impact on public attitudes and thereby create the space for violence and atrocity to unfold.[13] The German Marxist Rote Armee Fraktion (Red Army Faction) member Ulrike Meinhof offered the French journalist Michèle Ray a classic example of a dehumanizing narrative to justify the targeting of

state officials: “Of course we say the cops are pigs. We say the guy in uniform is a pig, not a human being. And that’s how we have to deal with him.”[14] In the aftermath of the September 11th attacks, it is possible to trace evidence of this process of dehumanizing the ‘other’ at work in both the western and Muslim worlds – for example, in President Bush’s marked tendency to describe Al-Qaeda in abstract terms: “We’re not fighting a nation; we’re not fighting a religion; we’re fighting evil.”[15] However, for the purposes of this paper it is enough to note that ‘hostile imagination’ is inimical to a nuanced understanding of the opposing side.

Push Factors

In actual fact, social science suggests that commonplace psychological processes that we can all relate to, such as self-actualization and empathy, play an important role in radicalisation leading to violent extremism - an important insight. The reality is that terrorists rarely conform to the popular stereotype of the death’s head killer immortalized in Percy Bysshe Shelley’s poem *The Masque of Anarchy*[16] or the “doomed man” of Sergei Nechaev’s Catechism. More often than not they are ordinary men and women who, given a different set of circumstances, could have given much back to their communities. For instance, current Al-Qaeda leader Ayman Al Zawahiri, Hamas co-founder Abdel Aziz al-Rantissi, and Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) founder George Habash all began their careers as medical doctors. Habash and Rantissi were both pediatricians by training.

There are many examples of individuals from privileged backgrounds who have been inspired to turn to violence out of sympathy for a marginal group rather than from direct personal experience. *Narodnaya Volya*, one of the first terror groups of the modern era, counted many sons and daughters of the Russian elite amongst its members, like Vera Figner and Sophia Perovskaya.[17] The American anarchist Emma Goldman argued in *The Psychology of Political Violence* that *attentaters*, like her longtime lover Alexander Berkman who tried but failed to assassinate American industrialist Henry Clay Frick, or Russian noblewoman Vera Zazulich who shot and wounded a senior Tsarist police chief for ordering the flogging of an incarcerated student she had never met, were “high strung, like a violin string” attuned to the suffering of others and that it was this compassion for those less fortunate than themselves which moved them to take action.[18]

The 19th century French anarchist Emile Henry, responsible for the bombing of the offices of the Carmaux mining Company and the Café Terminus in Paris, told the audience at his trial: “To those who say: that hate does not give birth to love, I say that it is love, human love, that often engenders hate.” Ahmed Omar Saeed Sheikh, the British-born kidnapper of *Wall Street Journal* Reporter Daniel Pearl, stated in his confession to the Pakistani police that he had become radicalized while studying at the London School of Economics after watching a BBC documentary about the Bosnia War, which he said “shook my heart.” As difficult as it might be to accept, the decision to participate in violent extremism might be driven more by empathy for the suffering of others than by the callous disregard for human life.

Abraham Maslow’s influential theory of human developmental psychology posits a hierarchy of human needs at the apex of which sits the drive for self-actualization, an internal journey of self-exploration in which an individual strives to develop his or her full potential as human being.[19]

It is perhaps the most universal human rite of passage, and terrorism literature is replete with examples of terrorist actors who have described their actions much in these terms. Jamal al-Gashey, who took part in Black September's 1972 Munich Olympics operation, described the moment he joined Yasser Arafat's Fatah movement to a reporter: "For the first time, I felt proud and felt that my existence and my life had a meaning, that I was not just a wretched refugee, but a revolutionary figure fighting for a cause." [20] Franco Freda, an *Ordine Nuovo* (New Order) affiliate and Italian neo-fascist theorist, wrote in his journal *Quex*: "We are not interested in seizing power, not even, per se, in establishing a new order... what interests us is combat, action in itself, the daily struggle to assert our own nature." [21] Saajid Badat, who was originally paired with failed Al-Qaeda shoe bomber Richard Reid to attack transatlantic airliners, explained how he had become involved in the plot at the 2012 trial of another Al-Qaeda operative, Adis Medunjanin, in New York: "It was almost the glamour factor of it, drawing me in." [22]

In the field, the failure of a counterterrorist official to appreciate how central a political choice might be to an individual's core identity can have tragic consequences. Humam Khalil al-Balawi was a Jordanian doctor of Palestinian origin who began his career as a militant jihadist posting his articles on radical websites and chat rooms from his home computer under the alias Abu Dujana al-Khorasani. Slowly the Khorasani persona – named for a celebrated swordsman among the Prophet Mohammed's companions and a Koranic verse about an invincible Muslim army – seems to have consumed the apparently mild-mannered doctor who wondered aloud in one post: "When will my words taste my blood?" [23] Al-Balawi's online activities brought him to the attention of the Jordanian General Intelligence Directorate, he was recruited as an asset and dispatched to the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) of Pakistan to try to infiltrate Al-Qaeda. There he changed sides again and was directed by Al-Qaeda to carry out a lethally effective suicide bombing of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) station in Khost, Afghanistan, which killed 9 CIA and allied security personnel and injured 6 more.

Perhaps one of the most explicit examples in the psychological literature on the process of self-actualization at work comes in the form of the *Sozialistisches Patientenkollektiv* (Socialist Patients' Collective), founded in 1970 by Heidelberg psychiatrist Wolfgang Huber. The Collective embraced political violence as therapy for mental illness. The group was made up of patients from Huber's clinic who believed mental illness was a condition created by capitalism. They embraced political therapy as a cure, as the group's bulletin Patient Info Nr. 1 put it: "There can be no therapeutic act, which isn't first and foremost clearly a revolutionary act... The system has made us sick, let's give this sick system the death-thrust!" Four former Collective members participated in the takeover of the West German Embassy in Stockholm by the *Rote Armee Fraktion's* Kommando Holger Meins in April 1975, in which two hostages and two terrorists ultimately lost their lives.

The bottom line is that terrorists are just people driven by many of the same impulses as the rest of us. Understanding this is essential to understanding the push side of the radicalisation equation – it is also essential if a state is to develop effective countermeasures to the threat such people pose. Consider the approach adopted by the Bush administration to interrogating captured members of Al-Qaeda and the Taliban. Driven by a hyperbolic construct of the enemy, encapsulated in a comment made by the chairman of the US Joint Chiefs of Staff General Richard Myers in a press briefing in January 2002 that "these are people that would gnaw

hydraulic lines in the back of a C-17 [aircraft] to bring it down”[24], the Bush administration authorized the use of interrogation techniques, such as water-boarding and wall-slammings, that amounted to torture under existing international legal standards. This decision was taken despite the Federal Bureau of Investigation’s impressive track record gaining the cooperation of hardcore Al-Qaeda members - such as Millennium bomber Ahmed Ressaam, Nairobi Embassy bomber Mohamed Rashed Daoud al-Owhali and bin Laden’s former bodyguard Abu Jandal - using traditional law enforcement techniques.

Proponents of torture contend that it gets results that cannot be obtained using lawful techniques. The counterfactual is of course impossible to prove one way or another, but while undoubtedly some people do cooperate under duress, the historical record clearly shows that others do not. Darius Rejali noted in an extensive study of the Gestapo’s use of torture that this most brutal of organisations failed to break senior leaders of French, Danish, Polish and German resistance groups, and that, compared to the information generated from public cooperation and informers, the leads gained from torture were “pathetic.”[25] Perhaps the best-known example of an individual holding out against torture in the counterterrorism context is that of Henri Alleg, editor of the Communist newspaper *Alger Républicain*, who was arrested in June 1957 by French paratroopers during the Battle of Algiers. Despite being subjected to electric shocks and water torture, burned, beaten, and drugged with sodium pentothal, Alleg did not give up the name of the individual who had hidden him from the authorities.[26] Self-proclaimed 9/11 mastermind Khalid Sheikh Mohammed, who was subjected to water-boarding 183 times in a CIA ‘black site’, told delegates from the International Committee of the Red Cross who interviewed him in Guantanamo: “I gave a lot of false information in order to satisfy what I believed the interrogators wished to hear in order to make the ill-treatment stop.... I’m sure that the false information I was forced to invent...wasted a lot of their time and led to several false red-alerts being placed in the US.”[27]

Henri Alleg’s account of his treatment in French custody, *The Question*, became a *cause célèbre*, helping to undermine domestic support for French operations in Algeria. Alleg also ruminated on the effect the use of torture had on those doing the torturing, describing the detention center in which he was held as “a school of perversion for young Frenchmen.”[28] The US adoption of so-called ‘enhanced interrogation techniques’ proved to be a profound misstep that generated little intelligence,[29] alienated close allies, and provided Al-Qaeda with a propaganda windfall – Guantanamo was mentioned 32 times in Al-Qaeda propaganda messages between 2003 and 2010 and 26 times by affiliate groups.[30] As General David Petraeus observed in an interview in 2010, “Abu Ghraib and other situations like that are non-biodegradable. They don’t go away. The enemy continues to beat you with them like a stick.”[31]

Pull Factors

However, it is on the ‘pull’, or external, side of the radicalisation equation that ill-conceived and heavy-handed state countermeasures can be most counterproductive. Studies of voter responses in Israel, Europe and the United States by Claude Berrebi, Esteban Klor and Christophe Chowanietz suggest that electorates respond to terrorist attacks by supporting more hawkish candidates almost in direct proportion to the lethality of the actual attacks themselves.[32] The

angels of our better nature are often trampled in the rush to ‘rally round the flag’ and effective counterterrorism policies suffer as democratic politicians feel constrained to reflect, rather than reshape, public sentiment. US presidential candidate John Kerry discovered firsthand on the campaign trail in 2004 the high political price that those who try to swim against the tide can pay when he characterized Al-Qaeda as “primarily” an intelligence and law enforcement problem. [33] That was not a position the American public was ready to embrace - as Clark McCauley and Sophia Moskalenko have noted, radicalisation can be a two-way street.[34]

Deploying military forces to regional trouble spots is a common counterterrorism tactic designed to both deter potential threats and reassure the general public. Yet this is also a tactic that is repeatedly referenced in personal memoirs and radicalisation literature as a major driver of political violence. In his influential study of micro-mobilization processes in 1970s Northern Ireland Robert White found that Provisional IRA (PIRA) violence increased significantly in months following incidents in which the security forces shot down civilians and in response to the introduction of internment.[35] In a series of interviews with PIRA volunteers, White found that their personal interaction with British troops was cited again and again as they explained their decision to take up arms.[36] Similarly, a senior member of PIRA told John Horgan: “For me anyway, the sight of the B Specials and the RUC [Royal Ulster Constabulary] beating nationalist people off the street in Derry was a big factor in joining the Republican movement.”[37]

Once the British Army was deployed to Northern Ireland in August 1969, foot patrols rapidly became a familiar, and much disliked, presence in Catholic neighborhoods, along with the random stopping and questioning of pedestrians. In 1972 British soldiers searched more than 36,000 homes, in 1973 this number had increased to 75,000. Between April 1973 and April 1974 four million vehicles were stopped and searched at military checkpoints.[38] Sinn Féin leader Gerry Adams later commented: “The attitude and presence of British troops was also a reminder that we were Irish, and there was an instant resurgence of national consciousness and an almost immediate politicisation of the local populace.”[39]

George Grivas, the commander of *Ethniki Organosis Kyprion Agoniston* (National Organisation of Cypriot Struggle), made much the same observation about the manner in which British troops on Cyprus tried to subdue the underground movement dedicated to driving the British off the island and achieving *enosis* (union) with Greece: “The ‘security forces’ set about their work in a manner which might have been deliberately designed to drive the population into our arms. On the pretext of searching, they burst into people’s homes by day and night, made them stand for hours with their hands up, abused and insulted them... Anyone who protested had scant hope of getting justice.”[40] In his memoirs, General Grivas mocked British commanders for their over-reliance on conventional military forces, noting: “One does not use a tank to catch field mice – a cat will do the job better.”[41]

Khalil Shikaki, Director of the Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research in Ramallah, has published research suggesting a positive correlation between support for suicide bombings and the number of Israeli checkpoints Palestinians have to pass through as they go about their daily routines.[42] In June 2009 the Israeli military established an average of 70 flying checkpoints in the West Bank every week.[43] Not for nothing has the Palestinian journalist

Zuhair Kurdi observed: “The legal father of the suicide bomber is the Israeli checkpoint, whilst his mother is the house demolition.”[44] Israeli counterterrorism experts are not unaware of the dilemma as the former head of the Israeli security service Shin Bet, Amy Ayalon, has acknowledged: “War against terrorism is part of a vicious cycle. The fight itself creates... even more frustration and despair, more terrorism and increased violence.”[45]

Shikaki’s findings are also echoed by Robert Pape and James Feldman’s research into the causal variables most closely associated globally with suicide bombings. Pape and Feldman found that 95% of suicide attacks from 1980-2003 occurred to eject democratic states from territory viewed by terrorist groups as part of their national homeland.[46] To underscore their point, Pape and Feldman referenced several of the martyrdom videos recorded by the 9/11 hijackers, including this quote from Hamza al-Ghamdi: “And I say to America: if it wants its armies and people to be safe, then it must withdraw all of its forces from the Muslim lands and depart from all our countries. If not, then let it await the men, prepare its coffins and dig graves for its citizens.”[47]

Australian soldier-scholar David Kilcullen has coined the term “accidental guerrilla” to describe the radicalizing impact that military deployments may have on third parties not directly involved in a conflict. Kilcullen describes the effect NATO operations in Afghanistan have had on local communities with no particular sympathy for Al-Qaeda or the Taliban. The lack of cultural sensitivity, limited political understanding and clumsy targeting decisions that are inevitable by-products of expeditionary warfare in unfamiliar territory can alienate, and ultimately inflame, hitherto neutral communities. As Baitullah Mehsud, deceased leader of the *Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan* (Student Movement of Pakistan), put it: “Every drone strike brings me three or four new suicide bombers.”[48]

Jeff Goodwin argued in *No Other Way Out* that repressive state practices ‘construct’ revolutionary movements as effectively as the best professional revolutionaries, by channeling and organising political dissent along radical lines.[49] By adopting repressive measures, the regime is also likely to be reinforcing an ideological narrative which aims to show the regime in a negative light, challenge its legitimacy and enhancing the credibility of the terrorist cause - thus contributing to a process labeled “frame amplification” by sociologist David Snow.[50] That states will respond aggressively to a terrorist threat is almost inevitable in the absence of a steady hand on the tiller.[51]. Indeed, Louise Richardson has gone so far as to suggest the existence of a pathology of state overreaction.[52] This is an opening that terrorist groups are actively and explicitly hoping to exploit, as Che Guevara explained in his Message to the *Tricontinental*: “We must attack [the enemy] wherever he may be... Then his moral fiber shall decline. He will even become more beastly.”[53] The Brazilian leftist group *Alianca Libertadora Nacional* (National Liberation Alliance) actually went so far as to spell out its intention to create a crisis that would provoke a military response in its founding manifesto.[54]

Anthony Oberschall has noted that at the outset of a terrorist campaign there is often a specific “precipitating incident” that prompts a group to go underground and embrace violence.[55] For German Marxists this precipitating incident was the 1967 death of Berlin student Benno Ohnesorg at the hands of a policeman. Michael Baumann of the anarchist Movement 2nd June described the impact it had on him: “Benno Ohnesorg. It did a crazy thing to me. When his casket went by, it just went *ding*, something got started there.”[56] For the Italian Brigade Rosse,

it was the 1969 bombing of the headquarters of the *Banca Nazionale dell'Agricoltura* in Milan's Piazza Fontana, which killed 17 people and injured 88 injured. The event was used by the Italian authorities to justify a clampdown on leftwing activism – an anarchist framed for the attack, Giuseppe Pinelli, died in police custody. Police Commissioner Luigi Calabresi, from whose office Pinelli plunged to his death, was killed in turn by the leftwing group *Lotta Continua* (Continuous Struggle). The Piazza Fontana bombing was most likely carried out by right-wing extremists with the connivance of the Italian *Servizio Informazioni Difesa* (Defence Intelligence Service) making it perhaps the purest example of the unintentional social construction of a terrorist movement by a state.

Emblematic incidences of state repression can also foreshadow significant escalations in pre-existing conflicts. The killing of 13 unarmed demonstrators at a Londonderry protest march on 30 January 1972 when soldiers from the British Parachute Regiment opened fire on the crowd, provoked a furious response from the Republican community. The public coroner in Londonderry accused the paratroopers of “sheer unadulterated murder.”[57] In Dublin an enraged mob responded to “Bloody Sunday” by storming the British Embassy burning it to the ground.[58] However, of most significance was the dramatic escalation of Republican terrorist tactics. In an explicit response to the events of ‘Bloody Sunday’, the *Official IRA* left a 280lb car bomb outside the Officer's Mess of the Parachute Regiment in Aldershot, Hampshire.[59] The blast killed seven people – the first deaths on the British mainland as a result of ‘The Troubles’. Deliberate attacks on civilian targets by the Provisional IRA on the British mainland soon followed, including four simultaneous car bombs left in London in March 1973, bombs at mainline London railway stations in September 1973 and in public houses in Guildford and Birmingham in the autumn of 1974.

Similarly, the application of the death penalty in terrorism cases can rebound on states that employ it. In December 1893 Auguste Vaillant bombed the Chamber of Deputies of the French National Assembly to protest the execution of the anarchist François Claudius Koenigstein, better known as Ravachol. The attack injured 20 deputies. Vaillant was executed in turn, despite the fact he had killed no one – the first Frenchmen executed in 19th century for a non-fatal crime – provoking outrage on the left. Emile Henri bombed the Café Terminus in Paris in an explicit act of revenge, killing one diner and wounding twenty. He later justified his action thus: “You have hanged us in Chicago, decapitated us in Germany, garroted us in Xerez, shot us in Barcelona, guillotined us in Montbrison and Paris, but what you can never destroy is anarchy.”[60]

The British decision in 1916 to execute the ringleaders of the Easter Uprising gave fresh impetus to the Irish struggle for independence, as Michael Collins himself acknowledged: “that valiant effort and the martyrdoms which followed it finally awoke the sleeping spirit of Ireland.”[61] The French decision to execute two Algerian *Front de Libération Nationale* (National Liberation Front) members, Zabane and Ferradj, led to the outbreak of the Battle of Algiers in 1956. FLN commander Ramdane Abane ordered his subordinate in Algiers, Saadi Yacef, to “kill any European between the ages of eighteen and fifty-four” and within seventy-two hours forty-nine French civilians had been murdered in retaliation.[62] In August 1966 the *Muslim Brotherhood* theorist Sayyid Qutb was sent to the gallows by the regime of Gamal Nasser following a failed assassination attempt on the Egyptian leader. Qutb was offered several opportunities for

clemency but refused them all telling his sister: “My words will be stronger if they kill me.”[63] Qutb was defended in court by Ayman al Zawahiri’s uncle, Mahfouz, and Osama bin Laden attended public lectures given by his Qutb’s brother, Muhammad, at King Abdul-Aziz University in Jeddah. It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that Sayyid Qutb’s prediction about the force of his posthumous legacy was correct. This does not bode well for the US decision to make the death penalty available for sentences based on Military Commission hearings in Guantanamo.

Less lethal forms of repression can have equally disastrous consequences. Psychologists have long posited that prolonged isolation can strengthen group bonds, creating “totalistic groups” that become all-consuming for their members.[64] Historically, the practice of indefinite detention appears to have served to accelerate this effect. The confinement of hitherto peaceful *Zemlya i Volya* (Land and Liberty) activists for several years in grim Tsarist prisons in the 1870s, during which dozens died of disease or suicide, radicalized a significant minority to establish *Narodnaya Volya* under the leadership of Alexander Michailov.[65] Internment camps also serve radicalisation’s purpose by bringing together militants from far-flung places who might otherwise never have met, creating bonds among them that long survive their eventual dispersal. After the failure of the Easter Uprising, the British interned almost 2,000 Irish nationalists in a prison camp named Frongoch in rural Wales. Frongoch would later become known in Ireland as *ollscoil na réabhlóide* or the University of Revolution. It was there that Michael Collins was elected head of the Frongoch contingent of the Irish Republican Brotherhood that would go on to pioneer urban guerrilla warfare with the creation of The Squad. In the words of his biographer Tim Pat Coogan: “When the Frongoch gates swung open he was in a position to ensure that the spores of revolutionary violence blasted into the air above the [General Post Office] in Easter Week would be wafted into every corner of Ireland.”[66] Indeed, Collins’ legacy spread far beyond Ireland. The German terrorism expert Peter Waldmann has posited a “contagion effect” for successful terrorist strategies [67] and Collins inspired national liberation movements around the world by his example. One notable admirer was future Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir, who as leader of the Zionist terrorist group *Lohamei Herut Israel* (Fighters for the Freedom of Israel), adopted ‘Michael’ as his *nom de guerre* during his struggle against the British mandate authorities - in explicit homage to Collins.[68].

Sins of Omission

It is not just purposeful state action that can pull more hostile actors into an existing conflict. Radicalisation is a phenomenon in which sins of omission can be just as damaging as sins of commission. The failure of a state to grapple with underlying social problems and inequalities can also be a significant driver of violent extremism. Social exclusion, boredom and a demographic youth bulge are all powerful potential predictors of radicalization. When coupled to a strong sense of community and a well-framed grievance, this can be an explosive mix.

In his seminal study *Why Men Rebel* (1970), political scientist Ted Gurr posited that, although poverty was not directly correlated with political violence, significant income inequality coupled with a sense of injustice about the disposition of wealth and privilege often was – a concept he termed ‘relative deprivation’ and defined as the “perceived discrepancy between men’s value expectations and value capabilities.”[69] For instance, Catholics in Northern Ireland in the 1960s

and 70s compared their situation to Ulster Protestants and not to that of Catholics south of the border in economically more backward Eire. Gurr also considered a significant or dramatic adverse alteration in status to have a similar effect on groups and individuals. Here one might consider the radicalizing impact that the Tsarist decision in the early 1870s to withdraw university scholarships from poorer students had on young liberals. The decision effectively pushed more than half of these educated young men and women onto the streets. Many of them ended up in communes of former students where radical ideas spread like wildfire.[70]

Relative deprivation is a factor that can be identified especially in class-based struggles. Susanna Ronconi was a founder of the Italian Marxist-Leninist terrorist group *Prima Linea* (Front Line). She was linked directly to three murders, to the planning of six more, and to the notorious kneecapping of ten business students at the School of Industrial Management in Turin. Ronconi justified her actions in terms that Gurr would have recognized: "I did not, and do not see myself as a violent person, but I believed that under certain conditions, when one class held power and the other didn't, the use of violence was legitimate." [71] Although Gurr subsequently somewhat backed away from the concept of relative deprivation, the personal accounts of many of the individuals who turned to violence in the anti-authoritarian and Marxist waves of terrorism suggest that it continues to offer a useful insight into radicalisation processes. Che Guevara's memoir of traveling around Latin America as a young medical student, *The Motorcycle Diaries*, is an apt example – repeatedly encountering great disparities in wealth and circumstance, typified in one passage by 'blond' American tourists photographing Peruvian Indians picturesque in their destitution, Guevara concluded: "I knew that when the great guiding spirit cleaves humanity into two antagonistic halves, I will be with the people." [72]

One might also extend the concept of 'perceived discrepancy' rather further than Gurr intended, to argue that a similar process is at work when states fail to abide by the standards that they publicly espouse. Government hypocrisy is a frequent complaint in terrorist statements. Ayman al Zawahiri addressed this point in his book *Knights under the Prophet's Banner*: "The West is not only an infidel but also a hypocrite and a liar. The principles that it brags about are exclusive to, and the personal property of, its people alone. They are not to be shared by the peoples of Islam." [73] Khalid Sheikh Mohammed also touched on the same theme in a statement submitted at his first Military Commission hearing in 2008: "You have violated all laws of war, and in particular, your treatment of prisoners of war, in Afghanistan and Iraq. We are the best example of such violations and your "Black Sites" for torturing prisoners." [74] Similarly, *Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula* (AQAP) bomb maker Ibrahim al-Asiri told an interviewer that he turned against the Saudi state after he was interdicted and imprisoned while trying to make his way to Iraq to join the insurgency against US forces: "They put me in prison and I began to see the depths of [the Saudi] servitude to the Crusaders and their hatred for the true worshippers of God, from the way they interrogated me." [75]

Social exclusion is another side of this same coin. The societies we create and the actions we take can be a prime driver of radicalisation, especially when minority 'out groups' feel excluded from the opportunities afforded to those considered part of mainstream society. Forensic psychiatrist Marc Sageman's study of 172 self-proclaimed jihadists found that 80% were "cultural outcasts living at the margins of society" as unassimilated first- or second-generation immigrants in majority non-Muslim countries. [76] Mohammed Merah, the Al-Qaeda-inspired

gunman who murdered seven people in the French city of Toulouse, in 2012 had previously tried unsuccessfully to join the French Army and the French Foreign Legion. An old school friend, Faoud, told the *New York Times*: “Our passports may say that we are French, but we don’t feel French because we are never accepted here. No one can excuse what he did, but he is a product of French society, of the feeling that he had no hope, and nothing to lose. It was not Al-Qaeda that created Mohammed Merah, it was France.”[77] The aunt of British-born Al-Qaeda shoe bomber Richard Reid attributed his radicalisation to precisely this type of alienation: “He was so lonely, his life so empty... he found solace with his Muslim brothers.”[78] In his youth Reid had been abandoned by his father, placed in foster care, convicted of multiple petty crimes, and incarcerated in two different prisons.

Social exclusion can also operate at the international level. The internationalization of Palestinian nationalist terrorism in the 1970s was driven in large part by a sense that the world was ignoring the plight of a community languishing marginalized and forgotten in refugee camps scattered around the fringes of their former homeland. PFLP founder George Habash explained to the Italian journalist Oriana Fallaci the logic behind his group’s decision to target international air travel: “The world has been using us and has forgotten us. It is time they realized we exist.”[79] At the beginning of 1972 the Palestinian Liberation Organisation wrote to the International Olympic Committee (IOC) seeking to field a Palestinian team at the 1972 Munich Olympics.[80] The IOC ignored the letter, setting in motion the chain of events that would lead to the Palestinian group *Black September* holding hostage members of the Israeli Olympic team in the middle of the competition, and ultimately to the deaths of eleven Israeli athletes and five members of *Black September*. In a statement released by *Black September* entitled *The Will of the Munich Guerrillas*, the hostage takers sought to justify their actions in the following terms: “There is a people who have been suffering for years under the yoke of an enemy who has his place at this tournament. So, let the games stop for a few hours.”[81] Salah Khalaf, the PLO Intelligence chief better known as Abu Ayad who had participated in the planning of the attack, noted that the Munich operation had ensured that “world opinion was forced to take note of the Palestinian drama.”[82]

Political scientists Jack Goldstone and Gary Fuller have suggested that a ‘youth bulge’ can be a major risk factor for violence, with Fuller drawing a correlation between the 15-to-24-year-old age group exceeding 20% of the Tamil population in Sri Lanka and a surge of *Tamil Tiger* activity in the late 1980s.[83] Recent studies suggest that this factor is particularly exacerbated when coupled with either social exclusion or modernization and rising expectations.[84] In the years preceding the first Intifada, the number of Palestinian men with 12 or more years of education doubled while their real wages declined by 30% and unemployment climbed as high as 50%. Field research undertaken by Scott Atran in North Africa and David Kilcullen in Afghanistan has identified boredom as a powerful causal factor in youthful radicalisation.[85] Kilcullen describes an ambush in Afghanistan in which a US unit was attacked first by Taliban forces and then by unaffiliated local youths. The youths later told Kilcullen that their intervention in the firefight was not motivated by any personal animosity towards the United States: “When the battle was right there in front of them, how could they not join in? Did we understand just how boring it was to be a teenager in a valley in Central Afghanistan? This was the most exciting thing to happen in their valley for years.”[86]

The work of Marc Sageman has popularized the importance of social networks to the development of terrorist organisations.[87] His studies demonstrate the role of certain individuals as organisational hubs connecting disparate activist nodes. “Small world” social networks can draw heavily on family and community connections – for example, the 1993 World Trade Center bomber Ramzi Yousef and 9/11 architect Khalid Sheikh Mohammed are nephew and uncle - making them difficult to penetrate. Political scientist Max Abrahms argues that individuals who join terrorist groups are in essence ‘solidarity seekers’ driven to violence as much by social networks as by ideology[88]. Psychiatrist Jerrold Post reported finding “an overarching sense of the collective consumes the individual” in his interviews with incarcerated terrorists.[89] Sociologist Scott Atran has reported that groups like Hamas have set up youth soccer teams in disadvantaged areas like Hebron’s Wad Abu Katila neighborhood, precisely so they can take advantage of this dynamic.[90] The Basque separatist group *Euskadi Ta Askatasuna* (Basque Homeland and Freedom) similarly looked to recruit new members from youth mountaineering clubs.[91]

A powerful sense of belonging can trump other, more practical, considerations – the German militant Michael Baumann described how he kept faith with his comrades despite his own deep misgivings: “I saw that it was going to go a hundred percent wrong... I only participated out of solidarity.”[92] Clark McCauley and Sophia Moskalkenko recount the personal history of Adrian Michailov who was sucked into the terrorist campaign unleashed by *Narodnaya Volya* against senior Tsarist officials out of a sense of loyalty to his radical “family,” when he would have preferred to return to the countryside and resume efforts to raise the political consciousness of the peasantry.[93] An anonymous member of the *Brigate Rosse* told Donnatella Della Porta that the sense of shared sacrifice was a large part of the appeal of participating in the Italian underground: “We shared the idea that the armed struggle... was also an occasion to build human relations which had to be... absolute, based on a readiness to die, the opposite of everyday life, of the individualization of a capitalist society.”[94] When asked by the FBI agent interviewing him in Guantanamo why he had remained in Al-Qaeda even though it had targeted so many innocent people, Osama bin Laden’s driver Salim Hamden replied: “when one is part of that home, from the inside it is very difficult to think of what is happening on the outside.”[95] Sociologist Chester Barnard termed this subordination of the individual to the collective the ‘condition of communion’.[96] The implications of the social science research in this field for public policy are profound.”[97]

Martha Crenshaw has argued that a thirst for revenge generated by violent government action can become an end in itself - what she terms “a modern form of feuding” - and of course such action also further serves to amplify the anti-government frame within which militant groups operate.[98] Louise Richardson identified ‘revenge’ as one of the ‘three Rs’ of terrorism – the others being ‘renown’ (for which we might substitute self-actualization) and ‘reaction’. Scott Atran cites the example of Elza Gazueva, one of the so-called Chechen “*Black Widows*”, who in November 2001 walked into the headquarters of the Russian commander who had ordered the torture and execution of her husband and brother, and detonated a suicide vest killing them both.

[99] Ami Pedahzur noted that the elimination of Palestinian leaders in the 1970s and 1980s “heightened the desire for revenge against the Israelis and were a shot in the arm for the localization of terrorism.”[100] On 31 December 2000 the IDF ambushed and killed Dr. Thabet

Thabet, a Fatah member and suspected leader of a Tanzim cell, as he drove through his home town of Tulkarem. In an explicit act of revenge for the killing of his uncle, Dr. Thabet's nephew, assisted by other members of Fateh, murdered two Israeli businessmen in Tulkarem on 23 January 2001.[101]

The fact that targeted killing has emerged in the past decade as an increasingly utilized counterterrorism tool is, in the light of the above, a great cause for concern. In recent years Turkey, Colombia, Russia, Israel and the United States have all carried out targeted killings of alleged terrorist suspects overseas. Past experience suggests that even if, as the Israeli Defense Force has claimed in testimony before the Knesset Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee, some "useful" tactical benefit is gained by the elimination of a key terrorist figure,[102] at the strategic level operations of this nature are only like to provoke further terrorist attacks. In 2001, Israel assassinated Abu Ali Mustafa, Head of the PFLP, one of the five most prominent figures in the PLO at the time. Mustafa was killed on August 27 in a helicopter strike on his office. The PFLP responded by killing the Israeli Minister of Tourism, Rehavam Zeevi, in October of the same year, breaking the post-9/11 ceasefire declared by Yasir Arafat.[103] The reported June 2012 elimination of a senior Al-Qaeda member, Libyan-born Abu Yahya al-Libi, by a US drone strike in Pakistan, was, within hours, followed by a bomb attack on the US mission in Benghazi, Libya. A local Islamist group operating under the nom de guerre *The Brigades of Imprisoned Sheik Omar Abdel-Rahman*, claimed responsibility for the attack, stating explicitly in online posts that it had been carried out in response to the US strike on al-Libi.[104]

Jenna Jordan's research on so-called leadership decapitation strikes found that decapitation was effective in only 17% of the cases in her dataset but that in the vast majority of cases decapitated groups actually had a slower rate of decline than groups whose leadership remained intact.[105] She also found that decapitation strikes were likely to have "counterproductive effects in larger, older, religious, and separatist organisations." [106] David Kilcullen and Andrew McDonald Exum have observed that it only took 18 days after the killing of Abu Musab Al Zarqawi, for Al-Qaeda in Iraq to resume operation under new leadership.[107] It is also worth noting that innocent people and third party nationals are often caught in the crossfire of such actions – the Israeli Operation *Wrath of God*, launched against Fateh and the Black September Organisation in response to the 1972 Munich Olympics massacre, also accidentally claimed the lives of a Moroccan waiter, a British Student, a French nun and an elderly Italian woman before it was finally discontinued.

The Moral Deficit

When a country adopts counterterrorism policies that contravene human rights norms or accepted international legal practices such as targeted killing or coercive interrogation not only is it likely to reinforce, or amplify, the narrative frame that its targets are using to attract support, thus pulling more individuals into the fight, but it is also likely to make it increasingly difficult for allies, at least those wedded to democratic values, to work as closely with it as before.[108] In an influential constructivist study of US-Israeli relations, Michael Barnett found that US support for Israel was strongest when the values underpinning the national security cultures of the two countries were most closely aligned.[109] In the past decade, we have seen European support for

US counterterrorism measures drastically impacted by policies that would fall foul of the European Convention of Human Rights. Perhaps the most dramatic example of this is the *in absentia* conviction of 23 US agents in an Italian court for the role they played in the extraordinary rendition of radical imam Hassan Mustafa Osama Nasr from Milan to Cairo in 2003.[110] Criminal investigations involving US counterterrorism officials have also been initiated in Spain and Germany.

The British authorities have been surprisingly open about the difficulties this divergence has caused for the transatlantic 'special relationship'. The Director General of the Security Service (MI5), Dame Eliza Manningham-Buller, acknowledged in testimony before the Parliamentary Intelligence and Security Committee (ISC) in 2007: "We certainly now have inhibitions... greater inhibitions than we once did." [111] Sir John Scarlett, Chief of the Secret Intelligence Service (SIS), similarly reported that his agency sought "credible assurances" that any action taken by the US on the basis of intelligence provided by UK agencies would be "humane and lawful" and that when such assurances were lacking "we cannot provide the information." [112] The decision by Polish prosecutors to charge the former Head of Polish Intelligence, Zbigniew Siemiatkowski, with "unlawfully depriving prisoners of their liberty" because of the alleged role he played in helping to establish a CIA secret prison in Stare Klejkuty, north-eastern Poland, in 2002-2003, will undoubtedly have had a chilling effect on the predisposition of many US allies to work closely with American covert operators. [113]

Conclusion

As the United States began to frame its aggressive response to the 9/11 attacks, White House counsel Alberto Gonzales notoriously dismissed some of the protections afforded detainees in the Geneva Conventions as "obsolete" and "quaint". [114] The prevailing view amongst the Bush administration was that concepts such as international humanitarian law and universal human rights would only obstruct an effective attempt to meet the threat posed by Al-Qaeda. As the former Head of the CIA's Clandestine Service, Jose Rodriguez, told reporter Lesley Stahl: "We needed to get everybody in government to put their big boy pants on and provide the authorities that we needed." [115]

However, a cursory review of the terrorism literature outlined above ought to have given even the most 'gung-ho' member of the Bush administration pause for thought. Social science research findings support the contention that observing the human rights norms that guarantee due process, equality before the law, and equal access to basic services, while outlawing torture, indefinite detention, the death penalty and targeted killing, can actually help ensure that states avoid falling into practices that can serve as drivers of radicalisation. As I have sought to demonstrate above, personal testimony from individuals who have actually become involved in terrorist violence consistently references coercive state action, or discriminatory treatment, among the factors contributing to a decision to take up arms. This is not something that any policymaker seriously committed to defeating terrorism can afford to ignore.

Grievances do not fall fully-framed from the heavens. They start somewhere and, more often than not, that starting point is an individual's interaction with an agent, or agents, of the state. A grievance may be amplified or in a sense pre-conditioned by social, structural or developmental

factors such as group membership, organised discrimination or personal exploration - but it is very rarely fixed in amber. Grievances are by their very nature dynamic and discursive, and while they can be subject to amplification, mitigation is also a possibility - if not necessarily for hardcore members of terrorist groups, at least for their sympathizers without which they cannot operate for very long.

Getting the public policy response to emerging terrorist threats right is therefore absolutely crucial. The use of torture may have tipped the balance for the French armed forces in the Battle of Algiers but it ultimately further radicalized Algerian Arabs, alienated the French public, and eroded good order and discipline within the French army to the point that France was ultimately politically defeated by the *Front de Libération Nationale*. [116] It can also be argued that only once the British government managed to bring its counterterrorism strategy in Northern Ireland more or less within the framework of human rights norms, after a series of embarrassing reversals at the European Court of Human Rights, did it become possible for the British to build a partnership for peace with the Irish government, based in large part on shared values and mutual interests, which ultimately persuaded the Provisional IRA to abandon the armed struggle. [117]

In the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks some commentators, most notably Conor Gearty and Michael Ignatieff, speculated that the world might be entering a period in which concern for human rights would be forced to take second place behind the demands of greater security. [118] The implicit assumption was that respect for human rights norms would inevitably prove to be an obstacle to effective counterterrorism policies, and historically this has proved to be an enduring narrative. I have drawn on anecdotal evidence and personal statements from terrorist actors from different time periods, far flung regions and disparate ideologies to suggest that in fact the opposite is true. Inevitably, some of these examples will be more persuasive to the reader than others, but my purpose here is simply to point the way for further research.

Radicalisation is not an 'Us' and 'Them' issue – states are actors in the radicalisation process and how they respond to threats and the policies they adopt can – for better or worse - make a real difference. Asymmetrical warfare is all about turning an opponent's strength into a weakness. Terrorist groups around the world have been extraordinarily successful at doing just that. International human rights standards can help states moderate their responses so that they do not play into the hands of those who would seek to do them harm and, quite literally, turn themselves into their own worst enemies. In other words, as far as the struggle against terrorism is concerned, right is quite literally might.

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Notes

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