Between Fear and the Need for Security:

Counterterrorism Since 9/11

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Abstract

Following the tragedy of 9/11 the impression we had of international terrorism changed dramatically. It became clearer that global terror organisations were deeply rooted within national societies, and counterterrorism strategies had to be reassessed as a consequence. We also learnt in investigating 9/11 that ccontemporary terrorist groups have a fluid structure which can be a real challenge for policy-makers, especially considering their use of force against civilian targets as well. Counterterrorism strategies have also implied a certain degree of encroachment on civil society which is seen as affecting life styles in ways that a few years ago could not have been thought possible. The changing nature of terrorism itself and the consequential actions taken by governments in order to tackle this issue are requesting new points of view on this subject. This paper aims to analyse policy positions on the matter, specifically the Patriot Act approved in the United States in the aftermath of 9/11, and by focusing on this issue, it will demonstrate how

terrorism has the power to deeply change public opinion and what actions are being taken by governments to inspire a sense of security in the population. The questions that need to be answered are, first, is the price that comes for security worth its cost?; and secondly, are the counterterrorism strategies endorsed so far are actually enough to deal with this complex matter?

Introduction

In order to develop a complete analysis of the evolution of counterterrorism strategies it is important to focus on their effectiveness and embrace more comprehensive approaches. There is arguably a strong connection between counterterrorism policies and radicalisation, and understanding this interaction is crucial if we want to better realise how and why terrorist groups recruit. In this regard, Max Abrahms' paper 'What terrorist really wants: Terrorist motives and counter terrorism strategy'[1] could lead the way in such a debate. Policy-makers often underestimate the importance of discerning the principles behind terrorist actions; they prefer to focus on terrorist actions methodology and endorse in short-term fighting strategies rather than developing long-term solutions by understanding the fundamentals of terrorism and terror's

foundations. The use of the term 'fighting' is not accidental as since 9/11 there has been a change in the perception of terrorism and in how it should be tackled. Before then, counterterrorism was seen as an internal security issue to face traditional anti-crime strategies similar to the ones engaged against national and international organised crime. At the time of the 9/11 attacks al-Qaeda was well known to national intelligence services but few believed in its power to export its ideology outside Middle East. 9/11 crisis proved that Western powers lacked in preparation and that they were unable to foresee a possible attack; moreover, it showed that the wide network of terrorist groups was able to strike everywhere and in every moment. Terrorism quickly became an enemy to fight with all means, regardless of the costs. Terrorism was not perceived as a way to accomplish a political ideal or to advocate a cause, but as a warfare strategy put forward by a rational actor. In this regard President George W. Bush based his rhetoric on fear in order to put emphasis on the need for a national security strategy designed to fight against terror. It became possible to develop a new strategy with terrorism as a target, and legitimate the Republican administration's strategy, which saw in al-Qaeda the perfect nemesis.[2] The administration built its mandate around this 'enemy' and gave birth to the Patriot Act.[3]

The effectiveness of the norms issued in the Patriot Act, however, are questionable and limited in their goals. Furthermore, President Bush responded to 9/11 with a mere focus on preemptive operations to prevent new terrorist attacks, with the aim of dismantling terrorist cells before they could act. By doing so, he arguably reduced the efforts towards longer term solutions for the problem of terrorism. Several studies have shown that the idea of individuals being ready to join a terrorist group guided by blind faith is partially incorrect. During the first stage of recruitment the social component has a significant role which seems more relevant than ideology,[4] and this could change our view on the whole recruitment process.[5] These studies became more meaningful in relation to the transnational nature of al-Qaeda and Daesh: The content of their messages and the structure of these groups challenge the national intelligence units' ability to locate and fight the cells. Furthermore, terror groups' activities compels us, in the context of a coherent counterterrorism strategy, to consider the establishment of strong international cooperation networks with different countries. At the same time, the social attractiveness of these entities may require more than a traditional approach to face possible deviant actions. In this paper I will first analyse the nature of terrorist act itself, trying to outline the dualism terrorist-terrorism and lay the basis for a better understanding of the reasons behind the choice of joining a terrorist group. The second part of the paper mainly focuses on the analysis of how the Patriot Act, as a relevant case study, showing how the use of fear – with a scary resemblance to terrorist strategies – has played a crucial role has affected American society. The last section is dedicated to the understanding of the connection between culture of fear and indigenous radicalisation, and I will try to explain the social features behind the development of terrorist cells inside Western societies.

Terrorism and Terrorism

Before considering the Patriot Act as a relevant example of a post-9/11 counterterrorism policy, it is necessary to define the basis of the analysis and to do so we need a proper definition of terrorism. Due to a lack of consensus on the matter, it is better to use a semantic approach for the sake of this analysis. The Oxford Dictionary definition of terrorism is "the use of violent actions in order to achieve political aims or to force a government to act". We have a quite similar definition in the strategic model, the decision to appeal to terrorist actions is a rational decision made in order to achieve a set of goals in line with the organisation's rhetoric and ideology.[6] The terrorist group that we are going to take into consideration

for this study is al-Qaeda. This group has a traditional structure made up of coordinated but independent cells, with a defined programmatic objective which operates with both conventional and unconventional warfare strategies. The Islamist terror network, born as resistance against the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan, evolved and inherited the place occupied during the previous decades by terrorist groups with a politically oriented ideology, such as the German Red Army Faction (RAF) and the Italian Red Brigade. The main difference between those groups is – apart from the different kind of rhetoric used to motivate their political claims – al-Qaeda's international dimension and its ability to reunite a wide range of different affiliates despite their different national and cultural origins. The global extension of al-Qaeda together with its ability to infiltrate its agents inside Western countries (with a large use of sleeping cells which recall the strategy used during Cold War by the two superpowers), make its cells hard to localise and eradicate. Moreover, the Islamist terrorist group managed to create a feeling of clear and present danger as no one did in the past. Europe was not new to terrorist actions: Countries like Spain and the United Kingdom had already faced the threat of ETA and the Irish Republican Army (IRA), and the Bologna massacre had left a bloody mark on modern Italian history. The main differences

with the post-9/11 attacks was to be found in the common source behind the attacks, such as political ideology, and the relatively small size of the groups. The outsourced and independent structure of al-Qaeda made identifying their targets extremely problematic.

Further attacks could have taken place anywhere, thus creating a sense of constant fear and expanding the impression of danger, de facto generating a sort of state of war.

However, al-Qaeda mostly failed to achieve its political goals despite the political and media rhetoric and the massive success of their terrorist operations. Its actions were not enough to eradicate the Western presence from the Middle East and led to the exact opposite scenario, with a renewed commitment of the United States in the region. The work of Max Abrahms, already mentioned, can help explain why this has been so. [7] The American author tries to demonstrate in what measure the assumptions of strategic models regarding terrorist groups are wrong. In this paper he recognises seven major puzzles within terrorist organisations tendencies:

- The coercive ineffectiveness;
- The use of terrorism as first resort;
- The uncompromising nature of most of the terrorist groups;

• A protean political platform;

• The anonymity of the attacks;

• The fratricide attitude of certain groups; and,

• The presence of a never ending tendency in terrorism.

First of all Abrahms points out how terrorist groups are defined by a chronic coercive inefficiency, which he argues can be discerned from an historical point of view.[8] In al-Qaeda's case, as already stated above, targeting American citizens inside the United States created an aftereffect in direct opposition to the organisation's goals. Furthermore, al-Qaeda's political agenda has evolved several times over the years: While born as an anti-Soviets resistance it became, once the war was over, an international movement which aimed to support local conflicts in Bosnia, Russia, Spain, and other countries of the region, to its final stage as the global herald of jihad.[9] Terrorist groups are also outlined by an uncompromising nature as far as they tend to consider terrorism as prime and only resource to pursue their goals. Most of the time they are not open to dialogue to establish peace and they tend to renew, as already stated for al-Qaeda, their narrative to keep up the fighting. They do so because of the fear that their main goal might become outdated and not enforceable due to shifts in the national political settings. The sum of all these factors supports the thesis which states that the irrationality of terrorist groups, thus invalidating the assumption of strategic model on the subject. But if they are not rational actors, counterterrorism strategies have to take into account more variables than a simple cause-effect relationship.

According to Abrahms, if several terrorists join a terrorist group it is not because they share its goals or ideal but because they are in search of a sense of belonging. Demographic studies show how these groups attract mostly marginalised and socially-alienated individuals, often with severe difficulties to integrate, for example single young men or widowed women.[10] Other subjects susceptible are displaced persons and immigrants without family and far from their culture of origin. In his study of 172 global Salafi Jihadists, for example, Sageman shows that such factors are particularly relevant to al-Qaeda members as far as they can be categorised as cultural outcasts living on the margins of society.[11] For many terrorists this feeling of belonging to an inclusive deviant group becomes more important than ideology or political aims. In Oliver Roy's view al-Qaeda's common soldiers and their leaders are not aware of the most basic tenets of Islam, or of Bin Laden's general political ideas. The recruitment strategy is focused mostly on young and directionless socially marginalised Muslim men.[12] We will see later how the case of the 7/7 London bombers represents a perfect example of th

indigenous radicalisation. In a similar way, Daesh's recruitment strategy follows the same frame as Bin Laden's organisation. In most of the cases, foreign fighters and Daesh brides share a common background of marginalisation and exclusion. Moreover, they often come from a second generation of Muslims grown up in Western countries, where the lack of opportunities and the difficulty to become integrated in Western society may have made such individuals particularly vulnerable to the Caliphate dialectic. With this introduction it is interesting to evaluate how policy makers are trying to counter such international terrorist organisations. The case study selected for this paper is the American Patriot Act.

The Patriot Act: A Story of Fear

After the tragic and violent terrorist attacks which became known in history as 9/11, the United States had to face the first terrorist incursion into its homeland since the Second World War, when a Japanese attack woke up the sleeping power of the Eagle, changing the course of the war and probably of history. In a similar way, 9/11 changed our perception of the world: Suddenly the world became a dangerous place to live in, and ordinary actions like taking a flight became scary. With this premise it is quite understandable that President Bush had to devote his energies and skills to directly face such a threat to the most powerful country in the world. [13] Actually the White House has had to tackle similar issues over the past one hundred years, but none of those had threated the social fabric of the country in such a deep way. During the Second World War, the Espionage and Sedition Act (1918) led to the incarceration of over 120,000 Japanese-American nationals in the name of national security.[14] During the Cold War's Red Scare, 11,000 members of the Communist Party lost their jobs because of a Congressional decision. The difference in 2001 was the shape of the enemy. While the Japanese-American citizens and the members of the Communist Party were an easily identifiable group, the new terrorists could hide anywhere in the country, ready to strike at the very heart of the United States. Anyone could be a member of one of al-Qaeda's sleeping cells. How could citizens feel safe if even their offices or their houses were in danger? Strong measures were required and the Republican administration responded in a predictable way.[15]

Every play needs an actor and the political process behind the Patriot Act is not an exception.
The American national intelligence community, for example, demanded more powers in order to protect the country despite the fact that the kind of powers and

authorities sought could in effect undermine the constitution itself. Following the Watergate Scandal and the Church Commission investigation, the National Security Agency (NSA), the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) and Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) arguably lost a significant part of their freedom of investigation on US citizens, in particular following the approbation of the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act of 1978 (FISA).[16]

Now though the fear was that the new enemy of the Eagle was potentially hiding deep amongst its own population. Some of the same immigrants who had made the United States the first economic power in the world were now seen as possible threats to American national security. However, any kind of violation of citizen's privacy was prohibited by the IV amendment, so the policy makers were required to find a reasonable justification to directly violate one of the ten pillars of the United States law.[17]Moreover, the as Republican hawks had never regarded immigration as healthy for the economy, the extremist wings of the party with xenophobic positions used the attacks as the basis for the control of immigration. The terrorist attacks, in other words, presented an opportunity to use fear as an instrument for advocating limitation of citizens' constitutional rights: This was arguably an unfair trade of freedom for security which the citizens of the United States accepted with a smile on their faces.[18] The national solidarity that rose from the ashes of an individualist society was probably the main actor involved. A large part of the population, after the shock for the attacks, looked again the 'American spirit' arguably lost during several years of American imperial decline.

The results of such deliberations in the US are borne out in poll conducted by the NPR, Kaiser Family Foundation, Kennedy School of Government on Civil Liberties on November 12, 2001 (Table 1) in which American citizens were asked if they would have supported or opposed giving more powers to law enforcement agencies in order to reduce the threat of terrorism in the US.[19]

Table 1
Post 9/11 public opinion survey on empowering law enforcement to reduce terrorism

	Support	Oppose	Don't know
a. Wiretap telephones	69	29	2
b. Intercept e-mail	72	23	5
c. Intercept ordinary mail	57	39	4
d. Examine internet activity	82	15	3
e. Detain suspects for a week without charging them	58	38	3
E1. Detain terrorist suspects indefinitely without charging them	48	48	4
f. Examine students' education records	76	22	2
g. Examine telephone records	82	17	1
h. Examine bank records	79	20	1
i. Track credit card purchases	75	21	4
j. Examine tax records	75	24	1

Source: Adapted from National poll conducted by NPR/Kaiser Family Foundation/ Kennedy School of Government on Civil Liberties.

As shown in the Table 1 the majority of respondents agreed that measures to improve and enlarge the power of the public authorities to fight the war to terrorism were positive, even if this meant directly limiting their individual rights and liberties. As the table shows, 82% of the participants found it acceptable to authorise control of on-line activities of Americans or examining their telephone records. In the 21st century such a violation of privacy appears frightening, although the most significant data is that the 49% of the interviewees found it reasonable to detain terrorist suspects indefinitely without them being charged. At least half of the interviewees basically agreed to violate the IV, V and VI amendments for suspected terrorist. The word suspected is a clear example of how far the Americans were ready to go in the name of security. At this point, it is important to see what role the presidency itself played in the Act introduction.

When President Bush took office, he was looking for an identity,[20] legitimacy, and a legacy different from his father and different from President Clinton. Bush was elected with a lack of popular consensus (as is known, he lost the popular vote). He took the White House with a few electoral votes over his Democratic rival, and in addition, as Thompson has noted, the ghost of electoral fraud was persistent and consistent.[21] The 9/11 attacks in effect gave Bush the opportunity to change the course of his presidency. As a 'heroic figure', the President tried to bring together a divided country around the idea of him being a wartime president, ready to avenge the injustice and protect his country from its enemies.[22] George W. Bush found in 9/11 the right context for his leadership and a reason to apply a culture of fear as a way of gaining national consensus.[23] In the word of Kellner:

> [Moreover,] since the September 11 strikes, the Bush administration has arguably used fear tactics to advance its political agenda, including tax breaks for the rich, curtailment of social programs, military

buildup, the most draconian assaults on U.S. rights and freedoms in the contemporary period in the so called USA Patriot Act and a highly controversial and divisive March 2003 war on Iraq.[24]

The Patriot Act was just the most vivid example of how this culture of fear made acceptable the unacceptable. In order to show to the world that the United States was hurt but not broken, the Bush Administration moved rapidly towards launching what became known as the War on Terror. The American war machine – its navy, army and air force – reacted fast and strong, hitting Afghanistan as the main base of al-Qaeda. Meanwhile, three senators (the Republicans Orrin Hatch, Arlen Specter and the Democrats Patrick Leahy) started to work on a draft bill called the Anti-Terrorism Act. Several points of this controversial draft were included in the 'Provide Appropriate Tools Required to Intercept and Obstruct Terrorism' Act. The acronym itself, PATRIOT, was symbolic, designed to recall patriots, the heroes who founded the United States with their blood centuries before. The first drafts were referred to the Selected Committee on Intelligence, and from the beginning of the discussion, the Committee asked some representatives of the civil liberty groups to leave the room, in spite the fact that they had

been previously invited to join the session. This episode has been a clear demonstration of how the dialogue on the text of the bill was undermined from the beginning.[25] In spite of this situation the agreement between the Republicans and Democrats was still possible because of the sense of uncertainty and peril; in fact, no one in the House of Representatives or in the Senate was ready to bear the burden of opposing the bill in case of a new terrorist attack. It becomes clear then how extraordinary situations lead to extraordinary responses. In a pre-9/11 situation it would have been more than impossible to predict that both political forces could find an agreement on such a controversial law. The Act was introduced in the House on the 23rd of October 2001 and seven days later the lack of agreement with the Administration seemed to be solved. The final approval was just a matter of time and, when the time to vote came, just one member of the House voted against, Senator Russ Feingold, who complained about several points in the bill.[26] His objections were ignored as the favourable vote reached was at near unanimity. A short debate (only twenty-four days passed following the first draft introduction to the Presidential Ratification) showed lack of both options, and will, to go against the Act.

The Patriot Act accomplished its first objective; it improved the perception of safety

of the United States. People of the States regained their faith in the system although they lost a large part of their freedom. The reform of the Electronic Communications Privacy Act of 1986 (ECPA) broadens the uses of wiretaps and the freedom of investigation in the citizens daily life. As Wong stated, the Patriot Act basically changed the status quo between executive and judicial power by weakening the constitutional rights of the Americans.[27] The 'sneak peek' allowed the police forces and the national intelligence community to search for terrorism clues without the presence or authorisation of the owner. Police could use FISA wiretaps for domestic purpose such as drugs or fraud investigation. The government gained also easy track and obtained information on medical records, student records, financial records, employment records, DNA samples, and drug tests records.[28] The result was that freedom was undermined deliberately to protect democracy and order. How was this trade possible? The answer could be found in the fear management theory.

This brief analysis shows us how the political environment could influence the policy-making process. As Auken stated, the Patriot Act could be defined as a textbook case of fear management.[29]

Bush's political machine drove the political consensus amongst the elite in the post-9/11 environment. Recalling the Lindblom idea:

> With the rise of democracy and the decline of undemocratic coercions, elites have become increasingly dependent on controlling minds in order to maintain their elite advantages, thus giving to unilateral communication a central place it never before had as an instrument of social control. But we still mindlessly discuss free speech largely as though the concept refers to discourse among persons all capable of voicing or writing.[30]

The elite needs a form of control to drive the policy process more than the population itself. 9/11 allowed the Republican administration to gather together all the political elite under the cover of the war on terror. The large majority approval in the House of Representatives and the near unanimity reached in the Senate are the vivid examples of how fear management gave its results. Even the Democrats found it hard to resist public opinion. Wong in his paper affirms that Bush's use of fear could be seen as a way to gain more executive power and avoid social and political accountability.[31]

Without Bush's 'political gamesmanship' the Act would not have been able to obtain fast approval of the House and without a huge political debate. In this case a substantial role was played by the manipulated minds of the populations more than the actors themselves. The role of a good leadership must be to face requests and try to satisfy them without manipulation or intromission: Can the actions of President Bush, with the fear management strategy that pursued, be defined as politically smart but still acceptable – considering how deeply the Patriot Act undermined the American constitution? And is the use of a fear-based strategy able to tackle the twenty-first century terrorism or does it create more harm than advantage?

Fear of Radicalisation

The presence of a foe is a useful tool for the creation of a climate of fear, and it is used to condition the masses and make them accept measures that can be connected to a sort of state of war. But once the desired effect is achieved – in this case, channeling of hate towards the terrorists and their sponsors – it is hard to control further collateral outcomes. An aftereffect of Bush's fear strategy is the perception of the whole Muslim community as an enemy, a perception that could lead to a radicalisation of civil society. One of the outcomes of the 9/11 was thus,

unsurprisingly; a worsening in the attitude towards Muslims inside the United States. One of the outcomes of 9/11 then, was a worsening in the attitude towards Muslims inside the United States. This escalation is astonishing in number,[32] considering that an increment of the 1600% hate crimes committed against Muslims has been detected by FBI between 2000 and 2001. [33] These repeated attacks help to establish a sense of victimisation in the ethnic group that, in the case of the American Muslims right after the 9/11 who were already facing the risk of arbitrary investigation and imprisonment, became acute. With rapid escalation these behaviours tended to create a gap in society, with the creation of a climate of constant mistrust that supports the terrorist organisation's quest for new agents. This situation is emphasised by the image of the minority as a threat built by media, which harvest news based on the attitudes and prejudices within the dominant group of the country. [34] Such stereotypes, in this case, worsen the perception of peril, and they are able to deeply influence the idea of the *other* based on their nationality, religion or ethnicity. In addition, as already stated before, a substantial part of the Muslim community in Western countries is affected by a low integration between the different ethnicities. For the sake of the analysis it is useful to take into consideration the situation in different Western countries. The France case is

emblematic considering the large number of second and third generation Muslims citizens in the country. Following recent studies a part of the population feels a systematic sense of discrimination and their access to job and careers is 2.5 times lower than their co-citizens.[35] A similar situation can be detected, as underlined by Kirby in his paper on the London bombers as "Self-starters". The work, 'A case study in indigenous radicalisation and the emergence of autonomous cliques', as part of Studies in Conflict and Terrorism, in the United Kingdom showed that Muslims facing an unemployment rate up to three times higher than the general British population and usually living in degraded suburbs felt disenfranchised. At the same time, over the 33% of British Muslims claim that they or someone they know has been subjected to racism, hostility or discrimination due their religion, while the almost two-third of them share a feeling of political under-representation. These situations have helped in creating a climate of frustration and resentment which often gave a tacit consent to terrorist actions. Pursuant to a poll conducted in the aftermath of the 7/7 bombing in London, 6% of Muslim community believed that the attacks were fully justified even if frightening, while 24% claimed to share some sympathy for the bombers or their motivations.[36] Kirby also underlines how Farhad Khosrokhavar interviews with al-Qaeda affiliates in European prisons helped to have a precious insight on this matter.

He analyzed the situation of Muslims in a Western country and he found out how Islam is equipped with an ideal structure capable to channel the rejection by the Western society. Islam crystallises the sense of alienation of many Western Muslims channeling their frustration for the society and the anger for being marginalised and dominated.[37] Khosrokhavar also found out a phenomenon he defines as humiliation-by-proxy. Political events like the ones in Chechnya, Palestine, Afghanistan tend to create the idea of Muslims being oppressed and exploited, awakening a sense of solidarity despite the distance or the fact that they are not the direct target of such actions.[38] This solidarity is clearly magnified, as a result of discrimination and racial attacks inside Western countries because of the proximity and the sense of impending danger pervading their daily lives. By bringing again on the table the ideas of Sageman we are observing a bottom-up process, with highly motivated subjects willing to join the jihad, a sort of intelligence gathering process for the terrorist group. Once the subject is identified he or she is introduced to a small group able to create a sense of community and safeness while giving a purpose to his or her life. The presence of social bonds is often the reason that supports

any ideological indoctrination. The London bombers, for example, all showed signs of alienation and tendency towards extreme behaviour, but they consolidated these tendencies and brought to the apex their indoctrination once they gathered as a group.[39] In Sageman's opinion, the formation of a clique is fundamental because its internal social dynamics are able to put pressure on the perspective agent to join the group and define a unique social reality with a strong collective identity and even stronger bound of friendship among the members. The demi-reality created by the clique facilitates the escalation into extreme commitments due the increased sense of estrangement from the rest of society of its members. Step by step their individual identity is consumed and their reality becomes completely filtered by the clique vision, providing the moral authorisation to commit extreme actions in order to restore what is right.[40] This process can be explained thanks to the Control Theory, which is very useful in order to trace the likelihood of criminal or anti-social behaviour in relation with social structures such as school, family and the strength of the social bonds among the participants. The theory takes its first steps asking why the majority of population avoid deviant behaviours and then theorizes that our observance of certain rules is modeled by the bonds we have with the society? We are aware of the rules of the game and we respect them because everybody else does so. The more a subject is isolated and unbounded to the rules, the more he/she will feel free to act without taking them into consideration.[41] In the case of indigenous radicalisation we can witness an erosion of the respect for conventional norms and values via an increasing religious militancy, emphasised and driven by an abundant internet propaganda. The rejection of the general Western society is strengthened by the growing social bounds among the members of the group rather than an official radicalisation programme held by an affiliated recruiter. As already stated, terrorism is a means to a purpose, a vehicle to express frustration and rage against an alienated society and fulfill the request of the group and being accepted as a member of it. The ideology is ultimately the engine behind the process, providing both a binding element for the group and the necessary narrative to concretely express their anger.[42]

It can be stated that one of al-Qaeda's long term goals has been achieved despite the impossibility of completing their primary mission. They realised the idea expressed with the concept of 'the Vanguard', and inspired fellow Muslims, despite the land or the culture they lived in, to embrace the jihad against their own government and co-citizens. The acts of the London bombers, or the attack to Charlie Hebdò (in this case connected to

Daesh), although in partial autonomy from the main organisations' control, can be interpreted as a long-term project of the above-mentioned terrorist group. Despite the congruence we must not confuse the general long term consequence of al-Qaeda strategy with the real dynamics leading this phenomenon. As stated above, the terrorist ideology is the fuel for a process that began independently from the very bottom of society.

Conclusion

As a direct consequence of this analysis, most counterterrorism strategies may be perceived as inadequate, thus underestimating the importance of social dynamics behind the formation process of terrorist groups. The contemporary strategies, as the Patriot Act we have analysed, try to control the population without being able to guarantee a long term solution to the problem. The understanding of the process of indigenous radicalisation is mostly undervalued. These methods and the strategies in force in many countries, despite the effectiveness in tackling the single terrorist cell, are not integrated in a wider framework able to stabilize the situation and fight the process at its roots. Moreover, the approval of legislations such as the Patriot Act only increase the fracture in civil society, while emphasising the climate of fear they were supposed to prevent.

Many similarities can be found with the phenomenon of organised crime and gangs. These types of organisations fill up an empty space left by the State creating a sense of community and morality, different from the one shared by the rest of the society. Deviant behavior is recognised as legitimate and encouraged as they are judged as positive by the other members of the group. And as for those organisations, a simple approach aimed to fight their actions seems to be ineffective. In addition, the international nature of the threat tend to minimise the effectiveness of the mere control over the information made by the intelligence services. Terrorists could hit anywhere and they could be anyone. There is no intelligence in the world with enough men and resources able to effectively ensure a complete safety net against this type of threat. To answer the question made at the beginning of the paper an effective counterterrorism strategy should be featured by a multi-level approach with an intense cooperation among national and international actors.

On a national level the legislators should focus their efforts on introducing integration policies able to reduce the need for an alternative to the state. Closing the gap between the different parts of the society is a first but necessary step to deprive those groups and individuals of a fertile ground to recruit and build their propaganda. At the same time a coordinate framework of investigation and operations should be undertaken under the aegis of competent international organs, such as the INTERPOL, with a strong cooperation between intelligence agencies and police forces. The progress made in the European Union with the EUROJUST project are reassuring but probably not enough. The paradox is exactly there: Trying to stop an international fluid entity, operating in a three dimensional world with a two dimensional strategy. A wide international agreement on the matter is a long way from being reached but progress so far has been made, and considering recent developments in the international scenario, more is yet to come.

Notes

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