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VIOLENT-EXTREMISM: AN EXAMINATION OF A DEFINITIONAL DILEMMA

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Abstract

This article aims to demonstrate how radicalisation, violent-extremism and terrorism are terms often used interchangeably – terms that do not have the same meaning and are generally poorly defined. It will reveal, as with other terminologies pertaining to this area of interest, how violent-extremism has no universally accepted definition, and remains tainted with ambiguity. Arguably, the term is predominantly used as a social label in discussions on terrorism and other forms of extreme violence – particularly applied to those who have a distorted interpretation of religious ideology to justify the use of violence to achieve specific socio-political aims. To provide a better understanding of violent-extremism, its root causes and its prevention, a proposal of an accurate depiction of its meaning and clarification on the context of its use are paramount. This article will provide a brief introduction to the terms radicalisation, violent-extremism and terrorism; and will present various ways they have been defined in existing academic literature and policy documents. It will further explain the delineation between the three terms; and propose a practical definition for the term violent-extremism to enhance our ability as a community to apply appropriate measures to prevent escalation of root-cause issues that potentially lead to violent action.

Keywords

Radicalisation, violent-extremism, counter violent-extremism, terrorism, counter-terrorism, root-causes, at-risk, ideology

INTRODUCTION

What do the terms radicalisation, violent-extremism and terrorism have in common? Can they be used and discussed interchangeably, or does our current understanding of violent-extremism (VE) have an imprecise and slanted perspective? Without having a clear and considered understanding of these terms; how they relate to one another and how they differ in context and meaning, the community, as well as law enforcement and intelligence agencies (LEIA) will continue in their attempts to address underlying issues without having a realistic perception of the driving forces that lead individuals on paths to extremism, where the use of violence is imminent.

With no commonly accepted definitions for these terms, literature on the topic largely defines radicalisation, VE and terrorism in much the same way. Though there is certainly an interdependent relationship between the meanings behind them, it is the position of this article that there exists a clear demarcation. An individual who justifies the use of violence in pursuit of ideological goals, typically does this once they have moved through a *process* of radicalisation that leads to the adoption of VE *as an ideology*; where terrorism is solely the *act* of violence carried out in pursuit of these goals.

The purpose of this paper is to clearly understand the relationship between these terms, so that the prevention of violence and/or the threat of violence can be more successful. Focusing on ideological root-cause issues provides a better understanding of how at-risk individuals can be diverted from committing violent acts – where at-risk individuals are those who are vulnerable to, and/or can be influenced by fundamental and ideological inculcators; and who as a result can be driven to commit violent acts (Striegher, 2013, p. 25). As LEIA focus on countering such acts; it is the role of government (policy), academia and community to address the problems of violent-extremism prior to individuals—or groups of individuals—being imprisoned for violent action;” and not solely be confronted by the underlying issues after the commitment of a crime (Striegher, 2013, p. 20).

ROOT CAUSES

Bjørge and Horgan (2009) assert that just because an individual holds radical views, does not mean they will be led to radical or violent behaviour; and that an individual’s views and their potential behaviour are indeed much more complicated. In their research regarding how individuals become involved in terrorism, they conclude that an individual does not inevitably join an extremist group because they hold extremist views; however they could develop violent-extremist ideologies over time, should they progress through stages of radicalisation (Aly, 2011; Aly & Striegher, 2012; Bjørge & Horgan, 2009; Horgan, 2008b). Though this paper focuses on terrorism as a

by-product of the radicalisation process, not all terrorists espouse radical ideological views, and radicalisation should not be confused with the actual practice of terrorism (Francis, 2014; Horgan, 2008b). There “is no single terrorist profile or a root cause” that can determine what leads an individual into a radicalisation path to terrorism however; nor is there a single path that individuals will take in the use of terrorism for ideological aspirations (Bjørge, 2011, p. 278).

Amongst the literature on motivations that lead to radicalisation and to terrorism, Sageman (2008, p. 20) states that experts traditionally claimed that terrorism was reliant on “social, economic, political, cultural, and historical factors” that allude to a host of explanations. Factors such as poverty, ignorance and naïveté, biased education, seductive preaching, charismatic brainwashing, insufficient economic opportunities, relative deprivation, a surplus of males without responsibility, sexual frustration due to prohibitions against premarital sex, and restrictions on free political expression are a number of these explanations (Sageman, 2008).

Though these justifications may have some credence; many of them create the illusion that terrorism is simply at the culpability of the terrorist; and do not credibly rationalise the underlying issues. Moreover, these factors have since been debunked with evidence indicating that the majority of the reasons suggested were established on theoretical speculation, and loosely based “subjective interpretations of anecdotal observations ... [that] ... rarely meet the criteria for insanity” (Mahan & Griset, 2013, p. 13).

For a more widely accepted and contemporary perspective, Wilner and Dubouloz (2011) outline three precursors of home-grown radicalisation – socio-political alienation; religiosity and globalisation; and reaction to foreign policy. This explanation separates terrorists from the traditional understanding of its causes; establishes a more realistic comprehension of the underlying issues; and further highlights the implications on western nations that have involvement abroad. Root-cause issues are rarely just a simple manifestation of ideological drivers that validate an individual’s acceptance of VE, however with greater understanding of some of the contributing factors that motivate terrorists, the deconstruction of radicalisation is arguably simpler; and it follows that the development of intervention programs becomes less arduous for LEIA and the community.

TERMINOLOGY

VE and radicalisation, and VE and terrorism are terms that are frequently used interchangeably (Bjelopera, 2013b; Joffé, 2013; Schmid, 2013); and attempting to define VE remains an evolving concept (Nasser-Eddine, Garnham, Agostino, & Caluya, 2011). In the literature, the term VE remains unclear, ill-defined and elusive (Southers, 2013) with “no tangible distinction between” it and terrorism (Nasser-Eddine et al., 2011, p. 9). Radicalisation and VE are also often used synonymously; “exclusively with Muslim Identity adherents” (Southers, 2013, p. 4) and in conjunction with religious connotations such as “[jihadist, jihad, jihadi,] “violent jihadist” and “jihadist terrorist””(Mahan & Griset, 2013; White, 2009, p. 10).

Though extremism is a predominant feature of terrorist behaviour, it is an “ideology or a viewpoint” that does not necessarily “reach the threshold for an act of terrorism” (Mahan & Griset, 2013; Southers, 2013, p. 4). It is herein argued that radicalisation is a process that leads an individual down a path to extremism (Bartlett, Birdwell, & King, 2010, p. 18; Borum, 2011; El-Said & Harrigan, 2013; House of Commons, 2010, p. 24; Hunter & Heinke, 2011); is often a precondition to an act of terrorism (Aly, 2013); and that violent-extremism is purely the ideology that accepts and justifies the use of violence to reach a particular ideological goal.

Radicalisation Process

There is no universally accepted definition or path of radicalisation (Heath-Kelly, 2013; Hutson, Long, & Page, 2009; Neumann, 2011); nor is there any decisive or accepted process recognised within the literature that identifies how an individual chooses to embark and progress on a path of radicalisation that leads to terrorism (Aly & Striegher, 2012; Ashour, 2009; Borum, 2004; Federal Bureau of Investigations [FBI], 2006; Horgan, 2008a, 2008b; Hutson et al., 2009; Precht, 2007; Silke, 2011). It would appear that radicalisation or being radicalised are the prevailing social labels used when debating VE, terrorism and/or terrorist related activity. The vast majority of people seldom understand these labels, and the socially understood definitions of radicalisation predominately remain within the context of terrorism.

Radicalisation however is a distinct process that does not necessarily equate to VE or terrorism. Relevant literature clearly establishes that radicalisation is a transformational process—both cognitive and behavioural—that largely asserts how individuals modify their behaviour and ideology over time (Aly & Striegher, 2012; FBI, 2006; Horgan, 2005, 2008b; Silber & Bhatt, 2007; Smith, 2009; Taylor & Horgan, 2006). Time in this context will be considered immaterial, as each individual advances through ‘their’ process at varying paces as a result of individual circumstances (FBI, 2006; Heath-Kelly, 2013; Smith, 2009).

Definitions

There is no argument that radicalisation is a process whereby an individual's belief system and ideology shifts over a period of time (Taylor & Horgan, 2006). In the West, various countries including Australia, Canada, and the United States of America have outlined detailed definitions of the term radicalisation for its use in the context of *Countering Violent-Extremism* (CVE); and for drawing up domestic and foreign policy regarding terrorism.

The Attorney-Generals Department states that radicalisation is:

“the process by which an individual's beliefs move from the relatively mainstream ... [with] a negative impact on harmony, rights and freedoms ... [though the use of violence is not inevitably realised,] “some individuals come to believe that violence is justified to achieve ideological, political or social change” (Attorney-Generals Department, 2014).

The Royal Canadian Mounted Police defines radicalisation as:

“the process by which individuals ... are introduced to an overtly ideological message and belief system that encourages movement from moderate, mainstream beliefs towards extreme views ... [and who] espouse or engage in violence or direct action as a means of promoting political, ideological or religious extremism (Smith, 2009, p. 1).

These definitions are comparable to that of the FBI (2006, p. 4) who state that “...the radicalization of an individual is a fluid process that does not have a timetable and does not always lead to action.” Cilluffo and Saathoff (2006, p. 3) however quote Allen (2007), who states that radicalisation is “the process of adopting an extremist belief system, including the willingness to use, support, or facilitate violence, as a method to affect societal change.” Though each definition confirms that radicalisation is a process that moves an individual's mindset from moderate to extreme, they vary in that some assume violent action is an inherent part of this process where others do not.

Other relevant definitions include that of Gartenstein-Ross and Grossman (2009, p. 7) who refer to Brian Jenkins who states that radical “applies to one who carries his theories or convictions to their furthest application,” including extreme action. According to Bartlett et al. (2010, p. 50) however, the word radical is a relative term used in the context of an individual “who merely expresses significant descent from prevailing norms;” outside the social norms of any given country or society. It can be concluded that radicalisation can come in a number of different forms, and that a person that is radical has not necessarily been through a radicalisation process that leads to violence. This in mind, social labels habitually attached to radicalisation are at times a misinterpretation of two distinct types.

Divergence

The two opposite categories often detailed by academics and researchers are radicalisation that leads to violent action, and radicalisation that does not lead to violent action (Bartlett et al., 2010, p. 8; Gartenstein-Ross & Grossman, 2009; Southers, 2013). This is supported by Wilner and Dubouloz (2011, p. 420) who maintain that “not all radicalization is necessarily negative, nor does radicalization necessarily lead to violence.” The journey to radicalisation is therefore unique for each individual, where they can develop and espouse an extrinsic view of the world around them. This inherently cultivates an extreme sense of what the world should look like – stemming from affairs that are “economic, racial, legal, political, religious, familial, or social” in nature (FBI, 2006, p. 6). The adoption of VE as an ideology is not guaranteed on this journey however, nor is the commitment of an act of terror.

Radicalisation processes

In his report entitled *Radicalization – A Guide for the Perplexed*, Smith (2009) outlines a number of radicalisation processes proposed by various organisations and experts. In addition to the FBI and Silber and Bhatt's models, Smith (2009) provides insight into a number of other processes. These include Sageman's *four-stage process*, Taanrnby's (2005, p. 22) *eight-stage recruitment process*, and Gill's *pathway model*. For reasons of asceticism, this article only provides an overview of the FBI and Silber and Bhatt's models.

The FBI (2006) state that radicalisation is a four-stage process; pre-radicalisation, identification, indoctrination and action (FBI, 2006: 3). To briefly explain, pre-radicalisation alludes to a pre-state of moderation; the identification stage refers to a period where the introduction and initial acceptance of extreme ideology takes place. The indoctrination phase is that where an individual begins to espouse this extreme ideology; and the action stage signifies the point where an act of terror may become a reality.

The FBI's radicalisation process is not too dissimilar to the four-step process suggested by Silber and Bhatt (2007): pre-radicalisation, self-identification, indoctrination and jihadisation. The two processes overlap in most areas, however mainly differ in the progression between one stage and the next. The mind-set of individuals of the FBI's process begins and ends with what appears to be 'one step ahead' of the process as explained by Silber and Bhatt (2007).

Additionally, those who do progress through each of the stages are more likely to adopt violent extremist ideologies and get involved with planning and implementing terrorist acts (Silber & Bhatt, 2007). Further to this, and according to the research, the initial three stages of radicalisation can develop over a number of months or years, whereas the jihadisation or action stage can transpire rapidly (Horgan & Taylor, 2001; Silber & Bhatt, 2007). Borum (2004) quotes McCormick (2003), who addresses this process as the "developmental approach," and contends that the resultant action of terrorism is "the end result of a dialectical process that gradually pushes an individual toward a commitment to violence over time" (Borum, 2004, p. 27).

Though these radicalisation processes are built on the basis of Islamic fundamentalism, the stages can be applied to any ideology *behind* radicalisation (Aly & Striegher, 2012; Striegher, 2013b). Each step of an individual's process is herein distinctive and dependent on "fortuitous factors as well as by the conjoint influence of personal predilections and social inducements" (Borum, 2004, p. 27, quoting Bandura, 1990, p. 186). It must also be understood that an individual will not necessarily follow each of these phases in a gradual step-by-step process, and may in-fact deviate from the process of radicalisation at any given point (Aly & Striegher, 2012; Bjelopera, 2014; Sageman, 2008; Silber & Bhatt, 2007; Silke, 2011).

Violent-Extremism: Ideology

It is important that the ideology behind VE be clearly understood and challenged (House of Commons, 2010, p. 6; Joffé, 2013; Liht, Savage, & Williams, 2013; Schmid, 2013), however there are few stand-alone definitions of VE in the literature; and as previously cited, the term is more often used in conjunction with those pertaining to radicalisation and terrorism. The amalgamation of these terms and the lack of a single working definition of VE present a number of prevailing issues. These include our ability to truly understand and challenge its basis, as well as apprehend how it should be treated within legal frameworks and judicial systems.

Disentangling VE from other terminologies is therefore essential. It is important that government, academia, and community discuss VE in consultation, and within a context that is both relevant and consistent. This in turn will aid efforts to develop robust policies in relation to VE and its prevention. If VE is understood to be, and is addressed in the same manner as terrorism; and is not defined within its own context, efforts to counter violent-extremism will merely focus on preventing physical acts of terror as opposed to working at the grass-roots level, and combatting the ideologies that drive individuals to commit such acts.

Definitions

VE is arguably the most ill-defined and misunderstood of the three topical terms. Definitions afforded are more often intermingled with that of terrorism, and create confusion between the two. To outline and demonstrate this and a number of inconsistencies, the Australian Attorney-General Department's *Resilient Communities* website has two definitions of VE. On their webpage, '*What is Violent Extremism?*' it states that:

"Violent Extremism describes the beliefs and actions of people who support or use violence to achieve ideological, religious or political goals. This includes terrorism, other forms of politically motivated violence and some forms of communal violence. All forms of violent extremism, no matter what their motivation, seek change through fear and intimidation rather than constructive democratic processes" (Attorney-General's Department, 2011), and

on their webpage, '*Definitions and Glossary*' it states that VE is:

"The ideologies and actions of people who use violence or support or advocate the use of violence to achieve ideological, religious or political goals. The Australian Government's strategies aim to counter all forms of violent extremism, including terrorism, other forms of politically motivated violence and some forms of communal violence" (Attorney-Generals Department, 2011).

It is undetermined why there are two altered definitions provided by a single organisation; however to further augment its differentiating terms, Nasser-Eddine et al. (2011, p. 9) state that "violent extremism is to provoke the target into a disproportionate response, radicalise moderates and build support for its objectives in the long term."

Another contrasting definition offered is that of the Crown Prosecutor Service in the United Kingdom who define VE as “the demonstration of unacceptable behaviour by using any means or medium to express views which:

- foment, justify or glorify terrorist violence in furtherance of particular beliefs;
- seek to provoke others to terrorist acts;
- foment other serious criminal activity or seek to provoke others to serious criminal acts; or
- foster hatred which might lead to inter-community violence in the UK ...” (Crown Prosecutor Service, 2004).

Lastly, Nasser-Eddine et al. (2011, p. 9 quoting National Counter-Terrorism Committee) state that VE is “a willingness to use or support the use of violence to further particular beliefs, including those of a political, social or ideological nature. This may include acts of terrorism.”

These examples demonstrate the variations and irregularities presented between various definitions of VE; and how there is obscurity around how well the term is understood. Most definitions of VE tend to incorporate actual physical acts of terror within their meanings, and this is where further confusion is drawn into the debate. By isolating the *ideology* from the *act*, LEIA can differentiate between individuals who espouse certain beliefs and/or attitudes from those who commit to carrying out acts of terror; and can address each accordingly. From this, perhaps a more acceptable definition of VE is ‘*an ideology that accepts the use of violence for the pursuit of goals that are generally social, racial, religious and/or political in nature.*’

Typologies

Violent extremism is often used to refer to ideologies that oppose societal principles and values, and justify the use of violence in order to advocate particular beliefs – including racial, religious, or political (Neumann, 2011). This is supported in the book *Homegrown Violent Extremism*, where Southers (2013) explains that there are “a broad range of ideologies and factions” around VE, and that ideological motivations include race, religion and issue motivation (Southers, 2013, p. 22). These are further compiled and illustrated in Table 1 – *Ideologies* (Southers, 2013: Chapter 2). Of note, Mahan and Griset (2013); and Bolz, Dudonis and Schultz (2012, pp. 197-226) have a similar overview of ideologies in their respective books *Terrorism in Perspective* (3rd ed.), and *The Counterterrorism Handbook: Tactics, Procedures, and Techniques* (4th ed.).

Race Ideology	Religious Ideology	Issue-oriented Ideology
Black Separatists	Christian Identity	Anti-government
New Black Panther Party	Aryan Nations	Anti-abortion
Ku Klux Klan	The Creativity Movement	Environmentalists
Neo-Confederates	Muslim Identity	
Neo-Nazis	Jewish Defence League	
White Power Skinheads	Aum Shinrikyo	
White Nationalists		

Table 1 - Ideologies

The above examples outline the differing typologies in relation to VE; and all generally advocate an individuals’ acceptance to promote and undertake violence for their ideological causes. Of note, although religious ideology and Muslim Identity is highly represented in discussions on VE and terrorism; as illustrated, it is only represented in but one subset.

Divergence

It is appropriate to contend that VE is purely an ideology; it is a belief system that advocates the use of violence for the furtherance of an ideological cause. VE is not the act, more the expression of the extreme sanction of religiosity, race, politics etc. Violent acts of terror are thus a further manifestation of this ideological expression – not necessarily a part of it. In a similar manner to radicalisation that either leads to violence or does not— those who espouse a violent extremist ideology can either undertake violent action or not. The differentiation is

significant as complications can arise in prosecutorial processes when investigating acts of terrorism as LEIA cannot successfully prosecute an individual for holding violent extremist views.

Terrorism Act

The term terrorism has a multitude of definitions in the literature (Bowman-Grieve, 2011; Lord Carlile of Berriew Q.C., 2007; White, 2009), yet still remains obscured by much complexity and illusory (Cooper, 2001). It is essential to recognise the clear distinction between terrorism and VE (Bolz et al., 2012, p. 5; Mahan & Griset, 2013; Nasser-Eddine et al., 2011), and how they relate to one another. Aly (2011, p. 8) states that there are a number of “perspectives on what defines terrorism: the terrorists ..., the victims’ ... and the public’s ...” Furthermore she asserts that the use of terrorism is differentiated as either an ideology or a tactic when contemplating counter-terrorism strategies.

Whilst it may never really be formally defined, the “term terrorism has spawned heated debate” (White, 2009, p. 3) and the definition of terrorism among social scientists, policy makers, lawyers, and security specialists cannot be agreed on – they only equally agree that terrorism is a problem. This is further compounded as there are many types of terrorism, and these types have varying degrees of motivations that impact society, the politics between states, and the bodies that govern them. With this, Hoffman (2006, p. 3) and Blackburn (2011) suggest that terrorism is very difficult to define perhaps because the meaning of the term has changed so frequently over the last two centuries; and “depends entirely on the subjective outlook of the definer; and ... such a definition is unnecessary for the international fight against terrorism” (Ganor, 2002, p. 287).

Numerous governments and academic organisations currently define terrorism in different ways. “Terrorism has been described variously as both a tactic and strategy; a crime and a holy duty; a justified reaction to oppression and an inexcusable abomination” (Austin, 2009, p. 10; Joints Chiefs of Staff, 2014, p. 265; White, 2009, p. 7). The very nature of terrorism however, can never really have clearly defined lines, rules, or even a common, single enemy (Wilkinson, 2006).

Definitions

There are many definitions of terrorism stipulated in the literature on this topic, none of which have been universally accepted or adopted. In the past, the lack of a working definition of terrorism caused significant problems for the United States when “terrorists were apprehended and brought to trial” (Bjelopera, 2013a, p. 12). This by no means is an issue restricted to the United States. In February 2009, then 24-year-old British citizen Mohammed Gul (GUL) was arrested in the United Kingdom for uploading a number of videos glorifying atrocities deemed as acts of terror (Coco, 2013; Murray, 2012).

The defense for GUL argued that under international humanitarian law, GUL had not committed an act of terror based on their definition, as he had not committed the acts of terrorism himself; however it was argued by the prosecution that he had in fact committed terrorism based on the definition in the United Kingdom. This dispute caused significant problems and delays in the actual case, as well as in the Court of Appeals of England and Wales (Coco, 2013; Murray, 2012). It further substantiates how a lack of a universally accepted definition could be extremely detrimental in cases of terrorism, especially where international boundaries are traversed.

As with the definition of VE, Australia, the United States and the United Kingdom have established their own definitions for the term terrorism, which were developed in attempts to better understand terrorism, as well as to help devise policies and practices to prevent terrorism from impacting society. The definition of a terrorist act as defined in Australia includes that of the Australian *Criminal Code Act 1995*, section 100.1, which states that an “action is done or the threat is made with the intention of advancing a political, religious or ideological cause” (Attorney-Generals Department, 2011). It is further defined by the Australian National Counter-Terrorism Committee as “... an action or threat intended to advance a political, ideological or religious cause by coercing or intimidating an Australian or foreign government” (National Counter-Terrorism Committee, 2012, p. 4).

These definitions are not dissimilar to that of the United States Department of Defense, which states that “terrorism is the calculated use of unlawful violence or threat of unlawful violence to inculcate fear; intended to coerce or to intimidate governments or societies in the pursuit of goals that are generally political, religious, or ideological” (Hoffman, 2006, p. 31). They are also comparable to the definition in the United Kingdom who state that terrorism is where “the use or threat is designed to influence the government or an international governmental organisation or to intimidate the public or a section of the public ... [and] the use or threat is made for the purpose of advancing a political, religious or ideological cause” (Lord Carlile of Berriew Q.C., 2007).

All definitions are consistent in their stipulation that terrorism is the physical *act* or *threat of an act, use or threat of violence* to *advance a political, religious, or ideological* cause. They each have characteristic similarities to the definitions of VE – in that the motivations are generally political, religious and/or ideological in nature. Where VE is identified as the ideology that accepts violence, terrorism can be considered the act. From a functional perspective, an individual can espouse a violent extremist ideology without committing a crime. When the planning, preparation and/or execution of an act takes place, it is then that charges can be made. This is where a clear distinction becomes necessary and must be assumed.

Typologies

It is important that professionals in the field clearly differentiate between the various terrorist typologies in order to understand the critical root-cause factors behind them (Noricks, 2009); as well as reduce the instances of unintentional biases caused by focusing specifically on “... race, religion, ethnic origin and political affiliation” (Cid, 2012, p. 2) – which is both counter-productive and ineffective (Striegher, 2013b).

The literature pertaining to terrorism typology is varying, complex and problematic (Bjørgero, 2011; Horgan, 2005, 2008b; Phillips, 2004; University of Maryland, 2008). Griset and Mahan (2003, p. 10) claim that “terrorism is a complex phenomenon that varies from country to country and from one era to another” and one must “examine the social, economic, political, and religious conditions and philosophies at an existing time and place” in order to really understand terrorism. Bjørgero (2011) further claims that profiling terrorists is convoluted by the fact that individual ‘activists’ do not fit in to one ideal type; more often they fall between differing profiles and become indistinct.

Relevant literature, academics and institutions have devised different versions of terrorist typologies. In 1979, Reid concluded that there were six terrorism typologies: civil disorder, political terrorism, non-political terrorism, quasi-terrorism, limited political terrorism and official/state terrorism. Phillips (2004), an Associate Professor of Philosophy and author of *A Typology of Terrorism* suggests that there are sixteen typologies that are divided between indiscriminate or discriminate; lethal or non-lethal; state or non-state; and domestic or international terrorism.

With these, the United States Secret Service classifies their terrorists into five categories: crusaders, political terrorists, anarchists, religious fanatics, and criminals (University of Maryland, 2008); and the literature presents a further number of other variations to the way typologies of terrorism are presented. Though there are differences in classification types – the common denominators are activists with a potent motivation and a dogmatic ideology (Bjørgero & Horgan, 2009; Horgan, 2005). This warrants the need to distinguish between the different types of terrorism as not all terrorism is the same, yet the “few datasets that are available lump all types of terrorism together, and ... these datasets as well as case study data are skewed heavily toward long-standing conflicts in which reporting of terrorism has been reported” (Fink & El-Said, 2011, p. 53).

In describing the term terrorism in his book *The Psychology of Terrorism*, John Horgan (2005: 7, quoting Bruce Hoffman, 1998) states that “on one point, at least, everyone agrees: terrorism is a pejorative term. It is a word with intrinsically negative connotations that is generally applied to one’s adversaries, or to those with whom one disagrees. This is evidenced by the popular expression, ‘one man’s terrorist is another man’s freedom fighter’, a statement that is quite subjective when considering the meaning of terrorism and its subjects (Asseri, 2009). The late Nelson Mandela (born Rolihlahla Mandela) who had once been deemed a terrorist eventually became known as a world symbol for peace (Bevins & Streeter, 1996; Rollason, 2013). Verne Harris, the project leader at the Nelson Mandela Center of Memory stated that Mandela had “led an armed struggle ... [and] by many definitions he was a terrorist. That’s been washed away” (Dixon, 2013, para. 6). In understanding terrorism, it is therefore essential and relevant to consider its definition as well as its context.

INTERVENTION

As viewed by a number of experts in the field (Bartlett et al., 2010, p. 7; Borum, 2011; Lieberman & Collins, 2008, p. 4; Silber & Bhatt, 2007, p. 16), radicalisation and VE are underpinned by a multitude of different belief systems and ideological dynamics of religion, socio-economic and personal tribulations; and are dependent on the regional location individuals come from (Hutson et al., 2009, pp. 19-20). In saying that, there “is no single, predictable path to terrorism” (Bartlett et al., 2010, p. 31).

Whether socially, racially, religiously, or politically motivated, it is evident that individuals are driven to use violence for the strategic benefits of inciting fear and forcing political agendas; where others espouse violence as a part of their extremist ideologies and belief systems (Borum, 2004; Striegher, 2013b). By understanding the delineation between various motives to use violence, law-enforcement agencies, academics and psycho-analysts

will be in a better position to innovate and differentiate approaches to establishing programs that address the prevention of violence, with an all-encompassing, inclusive approach – formulating proactive rather than reactive strategies that address the ideology of VE, regardless of its social, racial, religious and/or political agenda (Aly & Striegler, 2012).

Though discussing intervention programs in isolation is outside the scope of this article, current programs (deradicalisation programs) are restricted by the fact that their application is on individuals who have already thoroughly progressed through a process of radicalisation; and/or have already committed an act of terror that has adversely impacted human life (i.e. incidence of death, destruction to infrastructure, the creation of fear and doubt, and all associated economic costs). Establishing an applicable definition of VE will inevitably provide a solid basis to confront its ideological root-cause issues.

CONCLUSION

This article focuses on providing a better understanding and contextual framework of violent-extremism through three distinctive and often misunderstood terms. By reviewing some of the current definitions of radicalisation, violent-extremism and terrorism in policy documents and academic literature, pertinent points within each have emerged. As outlined, although the *processes* of radicalisation, the *ideology* of violent extremism and the *act* of terrorism have interdependent relationships, they are in fact three distinct terms that must be clearly understood.

By examining each term and its definitions in isolation, a palpable distinction for each was evidenced and a revitalised definition for violent-extremism was proposed. Though acts of terror are not solely a derivative of the radicalisation process, understanding the relationship between the two is paramount to successfully countering violent-extremism. In isolating the three terms we are able to reduce misrepresentation; appreciate and successfully address root-cause issues; devise more pointed policies and programs for intervention; and cope with relevant legal statutes more effectively.

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