Global neo-Jihadi Terrorism in the West & the Turn to Political Violence

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What is the threat?

• Global neo-Jihadi Terrorism in the West
  – Use of violence by non-state collective actors against non-combatants in the West in pursuit of a global neo-jihad

• What is the trend in the West since 9/11 (duplicated x 3)
  – In the name of global neo-Jihad
  – Acts in furtherance
  – No sting operations
  – No loners with mental disorders and no link to global neo-Jihad

• 63 Plots in the West
Global neo-Jihadi Terrorist Plots in the West since 9/11
AQ Plots in the West
AQ Affiliates Plots in the West
GnJT Homegrown Plots in the West
The turn to political violence

• Political violence emerges out of a specific context
• 2-STEP PROCESS
  1. Involvement in political protest community (still legal)
  2. Turn to violence (illegal: extremist violence)
• Very low base rate: 4/100 million/year
• SPECIFICITY:
  – Focus on transition from 1 to 2, by comparing violent guys with controls in the political protest community
Discursive Political Protest Community

- Politically active
  - Demonstrations, internet forums, social media
- Anchored by specific symbols & rituals
  - Jihadi cool youth counter-culture → life style
- Rejects both Western society AND parental traditions
- Political protest social movement: social blob
  - Vague, diffuse, porous & fuzzy boundaries
  - Internally very fluid, No central command & control
- Joins through friendship and kinship
- Now strongly influence by the Internet: virtual blob
2nd Step: Turn to political violence

- **Moral Outrage**: Emotional driver for violence
- **Disillusionment with effectiveness of blob**
  - Too involved to simply abandon political activism
  - Criticism of blob leaders or imams ("talk, talk, talk…"), leave mosque
  - Rejection of blob & non-violent tactics: "enough is enough"
- Personal duty to protect *ummah*: *Fard ʿAyn*
- Martial identity: SoA, martial activities
Gradual increase in suspicious activities

- Initiation of a conspiracy by an active core
- Travel abroad for fighting or training
- ↑ interest in legitimacy of killing
- ↑ interest in terrorist activities (may be illegal)
  - Downloading information for skill acquisition
  - Discussing terrorist activities online, practicing, casing targets
  - Financing operations: personal $/ fraudulent loans (not expensive)
- **Getting means of destruction (may be illegal)**
Turn To Violence: 2 Step Process

Political Protest Community

“Blob: A loose amorphous collection of people who act without a central command”

Join the blob: extension of home network
-- Utopian counterculture
-- Politically active
-- Violent extremism (legal/protected ideas)

Emerge from the blob:
-- Moral outrage
-- Personal duty to protect community (Soldier of Allah)
-- Acts in furtherance
-- Extremist Violence (criminal/illegal acts)
Turn to political to violence

- Violence comes at the tail end of political social movement
  - ↓ blob → ↑ people frustrated with it & turning to violence
  - Disorganized, scattered: loners
    - Often mediated by social media

- Not linear path: 2 step process
  - Fits & starts; zigzag patterns of commitments according to local &
    foreign historical contingencies

- **Not deterministic**: most give up even at advanced stage

- Very rare events:
  - Hostile environment & lack of availability
  - Dependent on chance connections & perseverance of active core
    in pursuit of conspiracy despite ubiquity of difficulties & obstacles
Legal issues

• How to prevent potentially devastating violence (WIMD) when process of becoming violent is NOT deterministic?
  – Threat of terrorism is so inflated: even a near perfect method of detecting terrorists yields an enormous number of false positives.

• How to preserve civil rights, especially political dissent, in a liberal democracy while protecting the population?
  – Being tough on terrorism is popular & politicians rarely resist temptation of enacting and implementing very restrictive laws

• At what point does militant advocacy cross the line to criminal action?

• How do you preserve privacy on the Internet?