

***“From Radicalisation to Terrorism:  
Can detectable patterns of  
behaviour help to determine  
potential risk?”***

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# My background

- Former Senior Research Leader, RAND Europe
  - Lead on terrorism & counter terrorism, insurgency & counter insurgency, 2006 to 2015
- PhD
  - Thesis (2002); Origins and evolution of terrorism & counter terrorism in the UK
- Former Detective Chief Inspector, New Scotland Yard, London
  - Specialist in terrorism and counter terrorism, 1982 - 2006

# What is this presentation about?

- Examining the *potential* for current behaviour to be used to indicate possible future intentions
- Examining a selection of evidence for this from UK case studies, focused on violent jihadists terrorists (VJ)
- Putting the findings in a wider context

# Preventing VJ Terrorism (1): Early phases in the development of radicalisation



# What characterises these early phases?

- **Predominantly they are:**
  - Thoughts, words and/or “harmless” or “borderline” actions
  - Activity is mostly not unlawful, up to and including extremism
  - Necessity for State intervention can be difficult to justify
- **Protected by the ECHR (up to a point):**
  - Freedom of thought, conscience & religion (Article 9)
  - Freedom of expression (Article 10)
  - Freedom of assembly & association (Article 11)

# Preventing VJ Terrorism (2): Final phases of radicalisation where VJ *actions* can transform into terrorist attacks



# What characterises these final phases?

- Increasingly dominated by *actions & behaviour* of:
  - The individual
  - The group or cell they belong to
  - Individuals acting *on behalf of* a group or cell
- Increasing proportion of activity is illegal/criminal
  - The closer this is to an act of terrorism, the more of it will become unlawful
- Becomes easier to determine the level of commitment to violence (individual & group)
- ***There may be a direct leap from 'Active Transition' to 'Terrorist Attack Planning & Preparations' without any travel or training***

**...*BEHAVIOURS* in all these phases can be potential indicators of future intentions**

- **Is there any evidence to support this assertion?**
- *‘Exploring Patterns of Behaviour in Violent Jihadist Terrorists: An analysis of six significant terrorist conspiracies in the UK’*

by

Lindsay Clutterbuck and Richard Warnes, RAND TR-923-ANT, 2011

[www.rand.org/publications](http://www.rand.org/publications)



# What research information was gathered?

- Analysis & comparison of the six most serious VJ attacks & conspiracies in the UK (2004 to 2007)
- Looked for:
  - “**Characteristics**” (x15) - of the group/cell and the individual i.e. age, background, numbers in group/cell
  - “**Behaviours**” (x54) – of the group/cell, the individual acting on behalf of the group and the individual generally)
  - Meta-data of individuals
- mm

# What is the evidence base?

- **The six UK case studies, 2004 – 2007**
  - **Operation CREVICE** (fertiliser bomb)
  - **Operation RHYME** (VBIEDs as potential “dirty bombs” )
  - **7/7 suicide attacks** (Underground x3 & bus x1, 52 killed)
  - **21/7 failed suicide attacks** (Underground x5, no injuries)
  - **Operation SEAGRAM** attacks (Failed VBIED x2 in London & car conflagration suicide attack at Glasgow airport)
  - **Operation OVERT** (Suicide IEDs on up to 9 planes to USA)
- Looked at **38 individuals** either killed in the attacks (5) or convicted of participating in them (38)

# How was the information gathered and dealt with?

- Information was only gathered from *open sources*
- Information *categories* were created (derived from operational experience) and further relevant information was then sought
- The categories were *analysed and compared*
- The resulting information was *assessed* and conclusions drawn

# What are the advantages of this approach?

- Uses modified ***Grounded Theory***– conclusions are derived from real world findings, not trying to fit a pre-conceived hypothesis to the evidence
- *Flexible* and can be continually added to/updated/amended
- *Compares and contrasts* similarly-minded individuals, not against the general population
- Targets very specific and relevant *behaviours* (i.e. what their *actions* are), not aspects such as education, income etc

# How can a behavioural approach assist us?

- **Radicalisation is a dynamic, non-linear process over time** and during it, the individual will change and their thoughts, words and actions (behaviour) will also change to reflect this:
- **For example:**
  - Noticeable **changes** in the pattern of behaviour seen in an individual **may** be indicative of the presence of the process of radicalisation, especially where they appear to have **re-engaged with their heritage religion (Islam)**
  - Individuals exhibiting a **change** from no or minimal religious observance to **noticeable** religious observance with their own 'heritage' religion i.e. Islam

-34.2%

# Primary behaviour can be driven by religious strictures

- Individuals whose lifestyle and behaviour in their recent past was *at odds with the strictures of Islam* e.g. they drink alcohol, took drugs, smoked tobacco, dated girls etc

-23.7%

- Consequently, these individuals must have **STOPPED** drinking alcohol, taking drugs, smoking tobacco, dating girls etc .....

# And there is more...

- ....Some of them also ***STARTED*** to become ***noticeably religiously observant***
- Some of those who were already religiously observant ***became even more so*** – 21%
- Some ***discarded western style dress*** for clothing with religious significance – 28.9%
- Some **attended** external religious schools/activities or other, less formal religious “study circles” – 42.1%

# What does this show?

- In other words, **changes in behaviour** were visible in some of those who went on to become involved in VJ
- However, **we do not know** how many took these steps **but did not make the transition to VJ**
- At least **two** are known (one from this study & one other) to have decided not to participate in terrorist attacks



# Are these findings valid over time?

Yes, they are, for example:-

Arrests made in Birmingham, **September 2011**, convicted February 2013

- “The **ringleaders**...had **travelled to Pakistan** twice for **training** – on the second occasion spending two months at an **AQ training facility** in north Waziristan. They were **recruited**... and **on their return** began to **draw others into the plot.**”
- Plus other relevant factors:
  - Leaders previously **trained together in Pakistan** (March 2009)
  - Fraudulently raising money for charity to finance their activity (**involvement in crime**)
  - Selected others **to be trained** and then facilitated their **trip to Pakistan**
  - **Recorded ‘suicide messages’** when in Pakistan for **AQ to use after the attacks**

**But their Modus Operandi (MO) today has also changed and evolved:-**

- e.g. today the role of physical contact in radicalisation& recruitment is much reduced, while the use of P2P contact has increased greatly
- Syria (and to a much lesser extent Somalia) have become the destinations of choice for potential VJ

# What conclusions can be drawn?(1)

- All but one of attacks and conspiracies seen in the UK between 2004 and 2007 (at least) tended to follow a **common trajectory**
- The phases began with **Radicalization**, moved on to **Transition to VJ** and progressed into planning and preparations for one or more **terrorist attacks**
- The **catalysts** for this process were one or two individuals in each group/cell who **already had links** to an existing terrorist movement (Al Qaeda) and who had been **selected/trained by them in Pakistan** to return to the UK to plan and carry out terrorist attacks

## What conclusions can be drawn?(2)

- During each of these phases, individuals showed particular behaviours, some of which were **indicative** of what stage of the attack cycle was then underway
- However, it is, at best, a **proof of concept**. It is **not** a fully developed and validated methodology
- More, **country-specific** research is required....

# Any Questions?

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