Extremism, Radicalization and Security

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An Identity Theory Approach

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For Lynne

Preface

The year in which this book was written was a truly extraordinary one in politics and society. In Britain, a long and bitter campaign leading up to the referendum on whether to leave or remain in the European Union (EU) – a campaign which seemed to be based as much on myth as on any solid fact on both sides of the debate – culminated in a seismic shock to the political and economic establishment with a decision by a majority of the voting public to remove the country from the Union. The campaign managed to turn politics on its head and deliver complex alliances that rode roughshod over traditional party boundaries. As far as Britain was concerned, if there was any doubt that postmodern and postmaterialist politics had resolutely arrived, it was dispelled during 2016.

On a much darker note, the referendum campaign had also seen the murder of the Labour MP, Jo Cox, by a man supporting Far Right ideology; the first time a sitting MP had been killed in Britain for more than twenty-five years. The period before and after the June 2016 referendum was also marked by an upsurge in abuse and intimidation directed at immigrant communities and ethnic minorities, some of it at a very serious level. It seemed as if the overthrow of traditional politics was revealing a dark underbelly of us/them intersubjective politics, with all its attendant security concerns.

Such a populist political wave and its accompanying acrimonious rhetoric have been repeated across many parts of the world, as evidenced by the election of Donald Trump; a fitting finale to a most surprising year in world politics.

While all this was happening, many parts of Europe continued to experience a number of serious terrorist attacks, many of which seem to masquerade under the banner of a zero-sum sectarian ideology. Many of these incidents are bound-up in the ongoing maelstrom of politics in the Middle East, and in the intractable conflict in Iraq and Syria, but there is also an apparent ideological underpinning in the shape of rejectionist us/them discourse. This seems to strike at the very heart of European and Western identity.

All these security concerns and developments come together in the question of why selected individuals in our society choose to turn to extreme violence against their neighbours as a way forward.

This book attempts to address this question by adopting a theoretical approach rooted in matters of identity.

Clearly for some, identity theory is an unhelpful deflection from the deeper structural questions of socio-economic and political inequity in society. Some will even suggest that to consider individual motivations in violent attacks somehow opens the door to a moral justification for terrorism. Instead, argue such critics, we should be focusing squarely on the top-down effects of radical and extreme ideology.

The argument presented in this book, however, is that an identity-based approach that begins with a bottom-up analysis of why individuals may be motivated to turn to violence is not only of critical utility for observers and policy-makers alike, but seems to be becoming ever more prescient in an environment of heightened identity politics in contemporary society.

Within such a thesis, this book takes the view that identities are social and political constructions based as much on myth as on any reality. This allows for a detailed and critical look at discourses across different realms of identity politics and commentary, and a deeper understanding of the way in which identity is manipulated and shaped to pursue political agendas.

The case study of Britain is the centre of focus in this book, but this absolutely does not exclude the significance of other environments and societies when considering questions of identity and security. Frequent reference is made in this book to parallel and contrasting factors in other contexts outside of Britain, with the overall aim of encouraging further research and assisting our collective understanding. Indeed, promoting such a comparative analysis is one of the central aims of this book.

A further key factor is the question of policy decisions and approaches which flow from the academic debates and critiques. I often say to my own students that they must always consider the "so what?" question in their analysis. What I mean by this is that, while it is interesting to debate particular moral, ethical or political questions, what should the people paid to translate these into sensible policy do with our money? This book asks such questions in the context of the British policy experience, not least since British counter-terrorism and counter-extremism policy have been uniquely bound-up in questions of "suspect communities" and "threats within". Such controversies and debates are explored in this analysis, again with the aim of stimulating similar discussions across a variety of environments.

Some of the critical strands of research in this area have suggested that much academic debate and indeed government policy have been based on limited empirical data. This book somewhat rejects such a charge in its entirety, but does acknowledge that we are a long way from having conducted anything like enough empirical research on how an individual's identity is shaped and formed; and what the link is between identity and security in our societies. The answers to such questions remain of the highest significance in social studies and policy development, and it is hoped that this book generates at least some further steps towards an understanding.

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Abbreviations

ACT	Affect Control Theory
AfD	*Alternatif für Deutschland* (Alternative for Germany)
BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
BFP	British Freedom Party
BNP	British National Party
CAIN	Conflict Archive on the Internet
CESB	Counter Extremism and Safeguarding Bill
CIRA	Continuity Irish Republican Army
CNN	Central News Network
CONTEST	Counter Terrorism Strategy
CTSA	Counter Terrorism and Security Act
DG	Director-General
DPP	Danish People's Party
EDL	English Defence League
ETA	*Euskadi Ta Askatasuna* (Basque Country and Freedom)
EU	European Union
FGM	Female Genital Mutilation
FP□	*Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs* (Freedom Party of Austria)
FOIR	Freedom of Information Request
GWOT	Global War on Terror
HUT	*Hizb-ut Tahrir* (Party of Liberation)
ICSR	International Centre for the Study of Radicalization and Political Violence
ICT	Identity Control Theory
IRA	Irish Republican Army
IS	Islamic State
ISIS	Islamic State of Iraq and *al-Shaam* (Syria)
JIC	Joint Intelligence Committee

LeT	*Lashkar-e Toiba* (Army of the Pure)
M5S	*Movimento 5 Stelle* (Five Star Movement)
MAPPA	Multi-Agency Police Protection Arrangements
MASH	Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub
MI5	Security Service (Britain)
MQM	*Mohajir Qaumi Mahaz* (Mohajir National Movement)
MP	Member of Parliament
NF	National Front
NI35	National Indicator 35
NPCC	National Police Chiefs' Council
NUS	National Union of Students
NYPD	New York Police Department
PEO	Prevent Engagement Officer
PSNI	Police Service of Northern Ireland
PTA	Prevention of Terrorism Act
PVE	Preventing Violent Extremism
PVV	*Partij voor de Vrijheid* (Party for Freedom)
RAF	*Rote Armee Fraktion* (Red Army Faction)
RIRA	Real Irish Republican Army
RUC	Royal Ulster Constabulary
SNP	Scottish National Party
SVP	*Schweizerische Volkspartei* (Swiss People's Party)
TACT	Terrorism Act
TPIM	Terrorism Prevention and Investigation Measure
UAF	United Against Fascism
UK	United Kingdom
UKIP	United Kingdom Independence Party
US	United States
WMD	Weapons of Mass Destruction