



THE OMINOUS PULL OF JIHADISM

-“Ideas are bullet proof”-Allan Moore, Mind Gone Wrong V for Vendetta

A powerful idea can get a life of its own. The new Jihadism is one such idea. It is religious all right but it is more complex than that. It is intractable as a force for the simple reason that an ideology is something abstract. The danger is that it can be anywhere and everywhere. Hence, bombing it in one location is unlikely to help in the longer term, at least.

Jihadism is seen drawing out younger generations from their cosy family homes into the battlefields of Iraq and Syria and it has the backing of the older folk of Muslims in ways unforeseen. Those who remain home remain to plot and bomb and kill. Often bypassing normal channels of dissemination Jihadism spreads mostly through internet and social media bringing in waves of supporters. Have the Americans and the West got hold of the wrong end of the stick in controlling this phenomenon? Here, in Australia, has Tony Abbot been able to distinguish the wood from the trees? In order to meet this threat it is important to realize the complexity of the issue. I am wondering if Western leaders have had the patience and the prescience to comprehend this.

The Pull of Jihad

Jihadists are made and they don't fall from the sky. What exactly makes them? What is it that invests this ideology with such a pulling power and a power to unleash destruction?

Sixteen Australian Muslim youngsters have so far fallen victim to the pull of Jihad. The eighteen year old youngster, Abdul Numan Haider from a Melbourne outer suburb is the latest victim. Apparently, the Melbourne and Federal police have been following him for some time. It is alleged Numan was seen with an ISIS flag at a shopping centre; that he was having links with extremist groups; that he had received and sent hate mail via internet. All sorts of stories are flying about this hapless youth who ended his promising life in vain. He is supposed to have threatened to kill the cops and wrap them in the Islamic flag of ISIS. It is hard to separate truth from fiction. However, the police got wind of all this and summoned Numan to the cop station for questioning. The teenager pulled out a knife and stabbed two police officers who are now in hospital. In defense, he was shot dead.

Numan was so out of touch with reality to imagine he could have brought down the police with his knife? This exactly is the nature of Jihadists. They evince symptoms similar to the psychotic state of schizophrenia, namely a disconnect with reality. It is important for Australia and Western society in particular to try and figure out the factors that bring about such manic and dysfunctional behaviour. This is a study for professionals and not for politicians who tend to simplify social issues and take hasty action based on superficial assumptions.

Previous to Abdul Numan a number of other instances had surfaced here in Australia. In a recent Australian Daily, The Age, writers Trent Dalton and Greg Bearup cite three more cases. One is of a girl called Amira Karroum who journeyed "from sitting outside her mum's house in suburban Gold Coast, finger-etching love hearts with her boyfriend into wet footpath concrete, to the shell-pocked streets of Aleppo, Syria." Amira Karroum had left for Syria with her young husband, Yusef Ali, to fight for a fundamentalist group, Jabhat al-Nusra. The two were shot dead alongside each other.

Ahmed Succarieh was the other victim. This youngster from Runcorn State High School, Brisbane, went to Syria and allegedly drove a truck full of explosives ending up as a suicide bomber killing 35 people plus herself making a total of 36 valuable human lives.

Numan, Amira Karroum, Yusef Ali and Ahmad Succarieh-all followed the same path from being perfectly decent innocent young men to self-destructive delusional

Across all Faiths

The nature of religious faith is basic to our understanding. Throughout history religions have demonstrated a tendency for intolerance and radicalisation. This phenomenon has occurred across all religions. Even today, America is home to some lunatic Christian evangelists who prey on the minds of followers. They do not, however, go to the extent of beheading non-believers. Creationism is still taught in American schools although 200 years ago Charles Darwin destroyed the theoretical assumptions of such a ridiculous doctrine. However, besides the danger these evangelists do in attempting to ask followers to suspend their reason, these mad men and women do not go to the extent of beheading non-believers. The instrument of the Inquisi-

tion that prevailed during the Middle Ages had been employed to ferret out those who entertained the slightest doubt about Bible teachings and to crush them mercilessly. The Crusades was a war by Christians meant to destroy Mohammedans.

Religion's Potential for Violence

Even the world's most peaceful religion-Buddhism-cannot avoid violence as one observes in Sri Lanka and Burma where marauding monks go haywire on a path of hate and destruction. Hinduism showed immeasurable violence during the partition in 1947 provoking Pandit Nehru to remark, "I am horrified at the spectacle of religion."

Sam Harris, well-known writer and atheist said, "religion itself produces a perverse solidarity that we must find some way to undercut." Richard Dawkins, in his best-selling, God Delusion, stated, "Only religious faith produces a strong enough force to motivate such bitter madness in otherwise decent people."

Both these authors were focusing their minds on monotheistic Abrahmic religions like Christianity, Judaism and Islam. There is a reason for this. Those who believe in one God, the creator and supervisor of men and women, and in the Holy Book that this God had supposedly passed down believe in the absolute truth of their faith that leaves no space for questioning. The word "Islam," itself signifies an unquestioning obedience to the faith and Qu'ran. A religion that's so cocksure will not tolerate non-believers of any sort. Such inherent intolerance leads to violence against individuals. Salman Rushdie had a Fatwa issued on him for writing a book criticizing Islam. When they are dead right and when God is on their side who cares?

The puzzling thing is that the generic intolerance of non-believers is picked up by factions within the broad religion. In medieval Europe Protestants and Catholics went for each others' throats. Currently, we observe raging battles between Sunni and Shia followers within Islam.

Stages of Radicalisation

The above quoted feature in Australian newspaper refers to a year 2007 study done

by the New York City Police Department that identifies four stages in the process of radicalisation:

Stage One: Pre-radicalization. Here the individual plays an ordinary and conventional role in family and society. Go back to the above reference to the early life of Amir Kharroum and that gives a typical illustration. They go to school or do their job return home and engage in normal activities. However, often at this stage the seeds are sown by parents and elders who transfer their religion and associated prejudices to the offspring. Parents must, therefore, be cautious in bringing up their kids. They must at all times avoid planting their sociopathic attitudes to their kids and they must encourage kids to think critically in an atmosphere of freedom. This becomes more easily said than done with a theistic faith which demands unquestioning obedience.

Stage two: "Self-identification" stage. At this point individuals "slowly migrate away from their former (mainstream) identity," frequently following an event such as job loss, alienation, discrimination or a death in the family.

Stage three: Indoctrination. Here, disaffected individuals typically join fundamentalist organizations that play on them and they "accept a religious-political worldview that justifies, legitimises, encourages, or supports violence against anything kufr, or un-Islamic, including the West, its citizens, its allies, or other Muslims whose opinions are contrary to the extremist agenda". Numan Haider is being suspected of having had links to the controversial al-Furgan Islamic Centre in Melbourne. He was receiving and sending hate mail via internet. The affected person in stage three shows symptoms similar to the psychotic condition called Schizophrenia in the sense that the person has a difficulty in recognizing reality and is unable to regulate his emotional responses.



Stage four: "Jihadisation", sees them "accept their individual duty to participate in jihad and self-designate themselves as holy warriors or mujaheddin." The delusion hardens into a personality disorder.

Other Contributory Causes

Behind the apparent religious character of Jihadism there are social factors. We have seen how religions confer and strengthen social solidarity. The Islam faith is linked to the ethnicity of Arabs world over. Many Arabs have a spoken and unspoken hostility to the West that created Israel and appear to support Israel over the Palestine issue. Muslims feel oppressed by the West. Underlying Jihadism is an antipathy to the West. Secondly, Muslim migrants in Western countries including Australia perceive a discrimination towards them. It is a two-way process. Jihadist violence against Americans and Westerners in general has given cause for discriminatory feelings toward Muslims in the host countries. The discrimination, in turn, has tended to solidify apprehensions toward the host countries. It is a vicious circle in operation. There was a reported instance where a Muslim job applicant in Australia had his application turned down several times in spite of his qualifications. When this applicant re-applied later under a non-Mohamed name he got the job. Joblessness is one great disaffecting cause among young Muslims in Western host countries. Although Australia has been unbelievably tolerant, in countries like France laws have been passed to ban the women's use of Burqa.