

Chapter 11 – RESILIENCE AND RADICALIZATION

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I was asked to tell about the Netherlands. I will start by talking about a documentary shown in the Netherlands in May, during a commemoration of World War II, an interesting film about an 80-year-old man who took part in the Dutch resistance. He killed a man and now has doubts if the killing was for the right reason. The man he killed was said to be a traitor by the head of the group (based on a rumour). They took him to an isolated farm and killed him. Now, in the last stages of his life, the killer had doubts. He looked in archives to find information about the victim. During the search, he found no incriminating evidence. He concluded that he killed based on a rumour. He decided to approach the family of the man to apologize. The family had never found out what happened to their relative. They had suspicions that he was sent to a camp. They had hired a private investigator. For 65 years, they didn't know what had happened. What is the lesson? 65 years later – people can try to find out what they've done and bring to closure their troublesome acts. People in armed conflicts may have the same issues – and it can take your whole life to process (the experience). Also, you can learn from your mistakes. He learned, apologized and came to closure. The Defence Department found the remains and they reburied them. What does this mean for current conflicts? World War II was perceived as an occupation. At first the resistance was chaotic, but later it became organized. Resistance groups stole rations and distributed them to the poor and participated in political activities. It is no wonder that we see the resistance activities in Iraq and the engagement in terrorist activities. How long will it take for these people to process what's going on?

I will talk about Dutch experiences with terrorism, approaches to terrorism and then findings. In terms of the experience in the Netherlands with terrorism – the Netherlands is very peaceful. Only in the late 70's, there were people from Indonesia, Malaccans, 2nd generation, who took hostages, and conducted kidnappings. The Dutch government deployed military forces to deal with a situation in which hostages were taken on a train – this was traumatic for the government. The Prime Minister gave a press conference and viewed the deployment as a failure. The Dutch government chose, at that time, to counter terrorism using social-psycho and social-economic approaches. They did three things. The Malaccans wanted an independent state. The Dutch government gave them a plane ticket to go there and see what it was like and they came back disillusioned. So, they decided the situation in the Netherlands was much better and they wanted to stay. This effectively took away an important grievance and the desire for an independent state. Another grievance was due to the fact that the Malaccans were housed in old army barracks, a bad-housing situation. The Dutch government improved this situation and took away the grievance. The third thing regarded employment. At the time, there was discrimination; therefore, affirmative action-like policies were put in place to selectively hire Malaccans for a while. Also, the Dutch view of the conflict was the only one known. So they wrote a study from the Malaccan view of the conflict as well.

These same strategies are being used against radical jihadi threats. There is lots of debate about counter-terrorism policy in the Netherlands. In 2003, a big decision was made – they reorganized and also appointed a Counter-Terrorism (CT) Coordinator, with a staff of about 80 people. One of the things developed by the CT coordinator: a public relations campaign by the government to inform people about the threat of terrorism. There was discussion as to whether this should be a one time or long-term campaign – they chose the latter – on radio and TV. This campaign has been successful, based on the results of a survey assessing the level of fear. The level of fear was high in 2005; however, now only 8% of those surveyed think terrorism is the biggest issue now – they are more concerned with the economy and jobs. This is partly due to the information campaign.

The Counter-Terrorism Info Box is a collaboration between military and police. Prior to this, there were issues about sharing of information on suspects. Agencies had only partial information and did not know what was available in other agencies. They started a cooperative effort to create a complete dossier based

on information available in all agencies. This results in more complete overviews of all suspects and enables the creation of individual strategies for what to do – deport the individual (if he is not a citizen), arrest them for violations, etc. Also, they would in some cases let the person know that they were following them; however, this was deemed to violate the privacy of the individual and was stopped. Some of the suspects had violated immigration laws, so some were deported. Another counter-terrorism strategy involved the complete reorganization of strategic levels of government – those organizations responsible for the protection of Dutch society were divided into thirteen sectors: oil, banking, harbour, nuclear, etc. The goal was to enable/encourage them to all talk together and discuss and come up with strategies, counter-measures; however, there are issues in terms of trust and information sharing between departments.

Another thing the CT Coordinator did was to formulate some generic attack scenarios with responses and responsibilities for different agencies. The first crisis they had to deal with was to deal with backlash from an announcement of the release of a provocative video called “Fitna” by Geert Wilders, a Minister. [Note: This video is a short (approximately 17 minutes) that shows selected excerpts from suras from the Qur’an, interspersed with media clips and newspaper cuttings showing or describing acts of violence and/or hatred by Muslims. The film attempts to demonstrate that the Qur’an motivates its followers to hate all who violate Islamic teachings. A large part of the film focuses on the purportedly violent and negative influence of Islam in the Netherlands]. The government took counter action. They had months to act and so much debate had occurred that people became tired of the subject before the film was even aired. The video had a big impact internationally – Al Qaeda wants to attack the Netherlands to retaliate. There were plans to attack the Dutch embassy in Islamabad but it is not known if this was a onetime deal or if a series of targets were planned or if they will send people into Europe to attack. There have been indications of people sent from Pakistan to Europe to execute attacks in Europe. The “Fitna” crisis experience demonstrates that, with government counter-strategies, it was possible to downplay the impact of the video. Another video is planned next year. He [Geert Wilders] will continue to provoke Muslims with his videos. He is seen by some to be a hero due to his actions protecting “freedom of expression”. He developed relationships with conservative Americans, some of whom he got funding from, and Danes. He has stated that, “10 of the 53 Million Muslims in Europe should be kicked out”. He exploits frustrations of some in Dutch society since the murder of Pim Fortuyn, a politician who formed his own party and was assassinated by Volkert van der Graaf who claimed that he did it to stop Fortuyn from exploiting Muslims as “scapegoats”, and Theo Van Gogh, a film director who was assassinated by a member of the Hofstad group, a militant jihadi organization.

The government is seen as weak in terms of their response. The recent election was an opportunity to build this constituency. Geert Wilders was one of the big winners in the election – a signal to the current government that they’re not doing very well and need to change. The elections were exploited for other reasons. MP Wilders says he’s going to be the next PM in the Netherlands. He will get significant support in the next election, which will result in significant changes in the government. There are only 16 million Muslims in Europe, not 53 million as he claims. I believe Wilders was referring to a German website which had the number of Muslims in Russia to be 25 million and these are citizens. He is being protected by Dutch security, as Mr. Wilders would be a likely target of a retaliatory attack (by AQ, etc.).

In terms of terrorism research in the Netherlands, the CT Coordinator has a budget; however, he has trouble spending the money. They fund only three to six month efforts that are policy oriented, no fundamental or basic research projects have been funded. Because of the murders of Fortuyn and Van Gogh, the Dutch society is regarded as a laboratory for radicalization. Kluwer published a 1000 page volume on terrorism summarizing research on terrorism, deradicalization and radicalization. It is only available in Dutch right now and is the best summary of terrorism research in the Netherlands. We have been participating in a European Union project on radicalization for four years that has produced lots of background papers. There is information on this project on website <http://www.transnationalterrorism.eu>. This website is very useful – you should check it out. There are a number of research institutes with reviews on radicalization, etc., such as TNO and Crisis Research Team. A former colleague, Ronald Sandee of the NEFA Foundation, wrote

a piece entitled, “9/11 Finding Answers”. They have collected legal files and published what’s available on terrorist subjects, compiling profiles on them. The information includes field interviews with jihadi organization leaders. This is a private organization and some defence organizations, including intelligence organizations, are using their information. They are thinking of making the website subscribers-only – I believe this will happen soon. Unique, in terms of information, are the videos that you don’t find in many places and dossiers.

I will make some closing remarks on policy regarding PTSD. The Netherlands is active in peacekeeping operations; therefore, they have a growing group of veterans with PTSD. The government didn’t do much initially, but they now have a policy to screen pre- and post-deployment. Previously this was voluntary, but is now mandatory. That is a positive development in terms of veteran policies. Also, now on Veterans Day, veterans from other missions other than World War II are included (a sign of more attention to veteran issues). Because the government is now paying more attention to PTSD, it is likely to fund more research on this. It was mostly the work of independent journalists writing about military members who acted out violently against their families that brought the PTSD issue to light. The government had to introduce a new policy and program to deal with PTSD.

11.1 DISCUSSION

Who were the four countries that were seen as provocative by AQ? Denmark, Norway, Sweden, and the Netherlands. This is seen as a way to justify attacks against the West.

(Danielsen) Norway was a target before this video incident. Ideologists from the Balkans, Norway and US will be on the list. We’re so friendly; he (Bin Laden) must have mixed up Norway and Denmark. How can we be a target – there is denial...

(Wientjes) A comment to Berto (Jongman). In every country, it is quite possible that countries have priorities in state activity. There are attempts to follow up on potential threats. This is against human rights. But if they are involved, then the priority should be on human life. If they are intent on murdering people, we have to prioritize legislation to protect civilians. It is difficult to judge if western European governments are ready to make such comments to their legislators. It is my opinion that individual human life should be fixed in legislation. Other rights for human life, privacy, religious beliefs – these are secondary priority. In the United Kingdom, they have special control measures if the individual hasn’t violated a law, they can be monitored – they can’t be prosecuted but they are monitored since they are seen as a threat. Different countries deal with these situations differently. With Abu Qatada, a UK citizen was kidnapped and the captors demanded Abu Qatada be released and when this did not happen, the UK citizen was killed. It is the same with the Guantanamo prison run by the US. Some prisoners couldn’t be prosecuted, so they created military tribunals to prosecute them, but this is the debate as to whether this is the right way. Also, how should we prosecute people if the information was obtained under torture? This is a legal issue as well.

On the subject of Guantanamo prisoners: The military are not trained to collect forensic evidence, so now we are training them so they can assist people being prosecuted and thus ensure the prosecution will stand up in court. In many cases, they are certain that the person did something wrong. Abu Qatada was in prison and inciting violence. In some cases, they knew they were guilty but could not prove it in court.

There is a new development of “law fare”, meaning that jihadi organizations or jihadi ideologues exploit western legislation to get people released and to protect their supporters’ activities. For example, in the book entitled, “Alms for Jihad: Charity and Terrorism in the Islamic World” written by J. Millard Burr and Robert O. Collins, the names of the “golden chain” were listed – financiers for jihad – they were all found in the office of an NGO in Sarajevo. The writer of the book was charged with libel and the book taken out of publication. Others that have researched finances and they have been sued. So it is a deliberate tactic to counter negative publications by exploiting western laws that they can twist in their favour.

