

We can't deal with terrorists like other criminals

Would-be terrorists are motivated by ideology, psychology and opportunity

MAITHA SABAH

For a word that strikes such fear in the heart, no one seems quite able to define exactly what terrorism is, let alone how to deal with it. The word has its roots in the bloody reign of terror wielded by Maximilien Robespierre in late 18th century France and describes the fear imposed by his Jacobin regime. It was several more years before the word terrorism made its way into the Oxford English Dictionary as “the unlawful use of violence and intimidation, especially against civilians, in the pursuit of political aims” but it has had many different interpretations since then. Even the UN has not been able to come up with a satisfactory definition of terrorism, despite decades of trying to do so.

To better understand how to counter terrorism with deradicalisation and rehabilitation, therefore, one must understand the difference between other kinds of criminals and terrorists. A criminal uses fear on his or her victim to achieve an end goal; a terrorist aims to spread fear far beyond those affected as a means of propaganda, to engender support and to recruit new members. The repercussions of terrorism are often far greater, which means we cannot simply deal with terrorists as we do other criminals.

Criminology contains clear definitions of criminal acts, together with a suitable punish-



Mohammed Ahmed from Birmingham in the UK is serving more than 15 years in prison after joining Al Nusra Front in Syria in 2012

ment for each. However, this is not the case when it comes to terrorism, which has evolved over time as terrorists develop new tactics. In Bruce Hoffman's book *Defining Terrorism*, the author – a senior fellow for counterterrorism and homeland security at the Council on Foreign Relations think tank – clearly demonstrates the way terrorist strategies, motives, interest and methods change over time, mak-

ing it difficult to narrow down a singular definition of terrorism or a sole route into it.

We can see three reasons why individuals become radicalised or involved in political violence: ideology, opportunity and psychology. Opportunity-related reasons are hard to separate from ideological and psychological ones. The ideological reasoning suggests terrorists are rational actors who engage in political vi-

olence for social reasons, a sense of belonging or money, among others. The psychological trigger implies individuals with personal or political grievances view violent groups as an opportunity to express their frustrations.

John Horgan, a psychologist and academic professor who has studied the psychology behind terrorism, states that most strategies for counterterrorism depend on assumptions related to

American competitiveness and the global



AHMED ALMADHOOB

In an interconnected world within the information age, it is almost impossible to stop any innovative idea from rising around the globe. Wherever you block it, there will be other way for it. In his “The Open Society and Its Enemies”, one of the Modern Library Board's 100 best non-fiction books of the 20th century, the well-known philosopher Karl Popper defends the necessity of dynamic civil life in front of static systems of law or religion which function like a closed mind.

Present-day knowledge economy is based on openness, and the information technology (IT) sector plays a central role in the coming global transformation. For example, in the United States (US), which is considered as the world's largest or second largest economy, all of the 10 heaviest equity securities in NASDAQ-100 list are IT-only companies excluding PepsiCo.

In that context, in order to continue leading global markets they have to maintain a healthy business ecosystem that secures high competitiveness rankings. We never move forward if we destroy the great liberal principles of the founding fathers, so you should have some foundations to build upon and develop progres-

sively. Senator Bernie Sanders, the longest-serving independent congressman in US history, says: “Capitalism does a number of things very well: it helps create an entrepreneurial spirit; it gets people motivated to come up with new ideas, and that is a good thing.”

As an active member of Google Developers Group in Manama, I have received an invitation from Google to attend their annual international conference on the 7th of May 2019, which will be held at the heart of the Silicon Valley. After getting my invitation, I went to the web to learn more about the area. It is a famous global economic center for technology and innovation, which covers all San Jose-Sunnyvale-Santa Clara metropolitan area in US state of California.

According to the Brookings Institution, this area has the world third highest gross domestic product (GDP) per capita, after Zurich and Oslo in the EU. The term “Silicon” refers to the main material used in electronic microchip manufacturing. The Silicon Valley is located in a multicultural metropolitan area with many demographic features such as their unique diversity including large Chinese and Indian communities, so it is a transparent elastic society like its Silicon substance.

Again, we live within an information age where you cannot stop knowledge sharing around the globe. Nowadays, we have many new valleys such as “Sil-



icon Roundabout” area in East London. Furthermore, the French “Staten F” in Paris is currently considered as the world's largest tech incubator, while Germany has more than 2,500 startups around its “Silicon Allee” neighborhood in Berlin. I think the EU countries will gain much greater influence in near future, especially because they protect their “four freedoms” to guarantee the free movement of labour, capital, goods and services.

The Indian subcontinent has its own story in Bangalore, the

so-called Silicon Valley of India. Russian Federation also has its milestones in that field. However, the biggest competitor to the Silicon Valley currently in my opinion is the People's Republic of China. First of all, the Chinese population is the largest internationally. Moreover, they have the world's highest GDP based on purchasing power parity according to International Monetary Fund estimates, so we can consider it as the world's largest economy. In Beijing municipality, Zhongguancun is a high-tech area, which

often referred to as China's Silicon Valley with over 12,000 companies including global names like Lenovo who purchased the American IBM's PC division with \$1.7 billion in 2005.

Heading south to Guangdong province near Hong Kong we will find Shenzhen city, another China's Silicon Valley described by *The Economist* magazine as “hothouse of innovation” and it is home to IT giants such as Huawei Technologies who has its Middle East headquarters in Bahrain. Recently, the Chinese technology

Amazon's decision to set up data centre in the Kingdom will boost the country's knowledge economy