

Terrorism

The Causes of Terrorism

- **Terrorism** – The illegal use of violence to cause fear and intimidation, almost always in an effort to inflict political damage or fulfil certain political aims. Usually carried out against citizens rather than the military because this cause more outrage and forces the government to take action.
- Some people will take terrorist action because there is no alternative, for example:
 - **Independence** – Some groups feel that to achieve independence they must commit ‘terrorist’ acts in order to convince people they are a military force in their own right.
 - **Forcing Change** – Some people feel they can as an individual inflict change by killing themselves or by killing others, they send a message and are often martyred by a group for their actions. These are called ‘lone wolf’ attacks where an individual chooses to attack on their own.
 - **Culture War** – Many cultures throughout history have been suppressed by authorities and told they cannot carry out their practices, terrorism is commonly used as a way to attempt to force international authorities to recognise their culture and nationality.
- In the 1930s, Zionist terrorist groups looking to establish a Jewish state bombed British targets in what is now Palestine, in an effort to speed up the recognition of Israel (or another Jewish state) as a valid nation. It did work to an extent and forced some action, but it didn’t work fully until 1948.

Islamic Extremism

- More modern terrorist groups can be found in the fragmented middle-east region with groups like ISIS and in the recent past Al-Qaeda dominating western news headlines for over a decade.
- While ISIS is really an offshoot of Al-Qaeda after it collapsed, it is definitely an individual entity. This is because ISIS stands for ‘Islamic State in Iraq and Syria’ and directly seeks to establish an Islamic State where the motives of Al-Qaeda were not of land but of revenge for western intervention.
- It is important to know that not all Muslims support the actions of terrorist groups, in fact, the majority of Muslims condemn the interpretation of Jihad (an inner-battle/struggle for Allah) that these groups teach their followers. They say it causes unnecessary violence.
- An Islamic State, if established, would follow traditional Shariah law as is written in the Quran.
- Often terrorist attacks are focused on the west in order to seek international recognition of their power and sovereignty, however, this hasn’t really worked and has pushed people apart.

- The British response to this has largely been one of unity against these groups, one of the ways the government have tried to combat it is by using the 'CONTEST' strategy, which has been criticised.
- CONTEST originally seeks to prevent or reverse the effects of all sorts of extremism, whether that is far-right (Neo-Nazism) groups plotting attacks against Muslim communities such as in Islington in 2017 or Islamic preachers spreading hateful messages about the west and British values.
- Radicalisation is not 'by nature' a necessarily bad thing, as it simply encourages highly divergent thinking. What happens as a result of that, or the actions that are encouraged by that radicalisation, are the real problem in society. Part of the CONTEST strategy called 'Prevent' has been criticised for racially profiling people based on their community and where they live.
- The biggest issue associated with Islamic Extremism in the UK is not trained terrorists, but people who have consumed terrorist content online and been inspired by such a thing.

Christian Attitudes to Terrorism

- The Catholic Church openly condemns terrorism, the Catechism says: '**Terrorism threatens, wounds and kills indiscriminately, it is gravely against justice and charity**'.
- Pope Benedict (the previous Pope) said that terrorism that is openly violent in order to achieve a particular aim is unacceptable even if it seeks to make a better society.
- Both Catholics and Protestants state that violence, hatred and other terror-based solutions are not a viable way to solve a disagreement or crisis. They also say war should be avoided at all costs.
- After 9/11 in America, the Catholic Church called on both parties to seek a peaceful resolution rather than retaliate violently, but eventually accepted that a declaration of war might be necessary to defeat terrorism altogether and preserve innocent lives on the whole.
- The Church of England obviously opposes terrorism, but they promote a peaceful response to it and also teaches that in communities where other faiths are of the majority then talking about forming a stronger community and actively working for it will affect change more than anything else.

The IRA in Britain

- Until 1920 the whole of Ireland was ruled by Britain, but then 26 of the 32 counties were granted independence, as they wished to occur due to popular opinion. The remaining 6 counties were split off from the 'Republic of Ireland' and became known as 'Northern Ireland'.
- The controversy came because Protestants wanted to remain in the UK, while Catholics wanted an entirely independent Ireland not under British rule. However, the Protestants actually controlled the government as they made up around 2/3 of the population which meant there was no possibility of an independent Ireland and Catholics were commonly discriminated against.

- Discrimination included people being less likely to get a job if they were Catholic and also attacks on their beliefs and practices, despite them being relatively similar.
- However, some Catholics who were angry at this founded the IRA (Irish Republican Army) which used terrorist tactics including hostage situations, bombings and shootings to demand power.
- Oftentimes, attacks were on British soil as well as Irish soil and targeted civilians, military personnel and politicians. The most dramatic of which was a targeted attack on a Brighton hotel where several top-tier British conservative politicians were staying for the Conservative party conference, among them were Margaret Thatcher, the British Prime Minister at the time. She narrowly escaped injury but 5 Conservative party members were killed and 31 were injured.
- Eventually a peaceful solution was reached under Labour Prime Minister Tony Blair in 1998 called the 'Good Friday Agreement' which brought with it a ceasefire, the agreement meant that Catholics and Protestants would have to share power in the Irish parliament, the Stormont.
- Unfortunately, many of the killings by the British Army of suspected IRA terrorists have since been found unlawful and resulted in many apologies by British politicians themselves.
- Even more unfortunately is the fact that the power sharing agreement in the Stormont has since broken down as the republican party Sinn Fein has complained that the unionists, the DUP, had too much power. No conflict has yet broken out, but Irish government funding has been spent by the British government because there is no one to administrate. There is also a disagreement between the two parties because the Good Friday Agreement implied that the British parliament would remain outside of the Stormont unless it collapsed, but Theresa May's conservative party formed a coalition with the only accepting party, the DUP which has created much controversy.