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von Hakim Khatib

in Terrorismus

Kommentare (0)

Terrorist Attacks in Brussels – A Clash of What?

by *Hakim Khatib*

Here we go again. Recent terrorist attacks against another European capital city in less than a year continue to shake the core of world politics. It is worth to note that terrorist attacks are not only happening against European states, but also against other countries, most notably Turkey and Indonesia. Is it a clash of cultures, religions, or it is merely politics? How do we keep serving Daesh (Islamic State)?

What to Expect

The blasts are expected to generate an international response to express disapproval of violence and terrorism, similar to that of the sickening tragic events against Charlie Hebdo in January 2015, and to the terrorist attacks in Paris in recent months.

It is also anticipated to hear condemnation and calls for solidarity against terrorism by a spectrum of Muslim dignitaries in and outside Europe and by world political leaders, including Arab ones.

Although some of the victims of the attacks at Brussels airport and the Metro station might be Muslims, this doesn't change the fact that Daesh-affiliated madmen call themselves Muslims as well. This is going to be one of the leading arguments for the far-right populists in Europe, who are more likely to shift the debate towards issues of failed integration, clash of cultures, threats against European "Christian" values, Islamisation of Europe etc. In other words, it is expected to culturalise the discourses around the crisis of terrorism in Europe and the world over.

It is also more likely that, in order to enforce security, western states will increase their military response against Islamic State, as if it is the sole reason behind these assaults. In short, rifts in European societies due to shared alienation and victimisation, increase of security measures, rise of far-right voices and the continuation of old, yet unsuccessful solutions of military power to combat terrorism are going to be the main guiding lines over the next few weeks, and probably months. Daesh is baiting the whole world with its random attacks, and it seems to be working.

Culturalisation of Discourses Serves the Bait

Culturalisation of discourses means to constantly look for evidence and explanations in the culture of the penetrators. Culturalisation dominates the discourses on such issues, although most recent terrorist attacks in Europe were committed by individuals born and brought up in the West.

When culturalisation of discourses is too broad to hold, religion, which is more often used interchangeably with culture, comes into play. Again discourses around Brussels attacks become islamised to address issues of Islamism, integration, conflicting values etc. However, the role of culture and religion cannot be marginalised, but also cannot be excessively emphasised when analysing political, economic and military power relations.

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In theory, increasing people's tendency to make inferences about others' disposition, traits and characteristics on the basis of what has been observed of their actions correlates with the escalation of contentious practices. In other words, through observing the behaviour of out-group members, we tend to draw hasty conclusions about others' characteristics and to find explanations of why they behave the way they do. Well, this is a "perceptual error" and not sophisticated enough to produce a satisfying explanation.

In practice, perceptual errors lead us to develop discourses based on people's tendency to explain behaviour of in-group members by looking at causes in the environment and context, but for the out-group members in their traits themselves.

Culturalisation of discourses, accompanied with the lack of proper knowledge, opens a space for building up generalisation and stereotyping patterns against the collective other.

"Instead of looking at ethno-national cultures and religions as identity difference-lines, there is an urgent need to understand them as politically embedded and historically changeable phenomena," explains Kira Kosnick, a professor at the institute of sociology at the Goethe University of Frankfurt.

Controversy of Denial

Injustice, corruption and chaos in the world offer a perfect environment for producing terrorism. However, fighting terrorism starts when western and Muslim-majority countries acknowledge the fact that the problem mainly lies in religious and political governance. Every time such a criminal action happens, Muslim individuals become the first victims not only in the western world but also across the region of West Asia and North Africa such as in Iraq, Syria and Yemen. But why is it a controversy of denial and why does it serve Daesh?

On one level of denial, some Islamic clerics incite violence, and then the same clerics condemn those who carry out violent acts. On a second level of denial, Arab political leaders support freedom of speech defying terrorism and extremism in the West but they choose to do otherwise in their own countries. On a third level of denial, western countries base their relationship with states in the region of West Asia and North Africa on security, stability and economic calculations, turning a blind eye to all the violations and atrocities penetrated by their authoritarian allies. On a fourth level of denial, while the West has an unclear position concerning protracted conflicts in the heart of the Muslim majority countries, it has built strong ties with states known to export extremism and sectarianism such as Saudi Arabia and Iran.

This controversy emerges when actors are unable or unwilling to improve people's lives in the region. Consequently, extremist groups find a fertile environment for recruitment in these structures.

Solutions in the Age of Daesh

Solutions to reform Islamic thinking necessitate the willingness of political as well as religious leaderships to stop instrumentalising religion whenever it deems convenient.

The problem is not that some terrorists joined or learned from Daesh but rather why they were inclined to join and support Daesh, or Al-Qaeda at the first place. Radicalisation is a process that takes several years to crystallise. There is hardly evidence that people become radicalised because of a three-month visit to Daesh. But evidence suggests that many of those who join Daesh are already prepared to embrace, learn and instate such an extremist

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ideology.

The newcomers to Daesh or any other terrorist organisation are more likely to have developed their radical views in their home countries. It could be at schools, home, religious books, Islamic interpretations or religious sessions. Therefore, the reasons behind violence incitement could be in the books held most sacred by Muslims.

We all know that attacks such as the ones in Brussels and else where in the world are not going to break the states in questions. Yet, there are consequences to these attacks. They mainly sharpen the rifts between Muslims and non-Muslims in western societies, although an overwhelming majority of Muslims in the West might be willing to engage in serious cooperation to eliminate any risks against their home countries.

Increasing alienation helps Daesh to recruit the most marginalised and distressed individuals. Against this background, Daesh offers them the illusion of being a part of a great project in the name of god.

Hakim Khatib is a lecturer in journalism, intercultural communication and politics and culture of the Middle East at Fulda University of Applied Sciences and Phillips University Marburg. He specializes in the application of religion into political life and discourse in the Middle East and the editor-in-chief of the Mashreq Politics and Culture Journal (**MPC Journal**).

 Tags: **attack, bombing, Brussels, daesh, islamic state, islamism, terrorism**

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