



Profiling of Terrorists to Understand Psychology of Terrorism -Case Studies

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ABSTRACT

The understanding of terrorism and its psychological implications are essential in order to implement policies and counter-terrorism prevention strategies. A deeper understanding of forensic issues, counterintelligence, and vulnerabilities of potential targets of these harmful terrorist activities and to anticipate them are important in psychological examination. The major purpose of this paper is to discuss important set of terrorism cases in which various Psychological techniques were implemented like Forensic Psychological Assessment, Draw A Person (DAP) test and Polygraph Examination of terrorists to understand their psychological character and to evaluate criminal dangerousness for predicting future extremist acts of violence.

Keywords: Terrorism, Forensic Psychological Assessment, Draw-A-Person test, Polygraph Examination.

INTRODUCTION

The understanding of terrorism and psychological implications are essential to comprehend psychological and motivating factors surrounding the root of terrorism in order to implement policies and counterterrorism prevention strategies as terrorism undeniably constitute a vital challenge for the nation. It is the universal truth that terrorists carry out their mission using any conventional or nonconventional means to accomplish their goals to cause fear and to kill people. It can be understood that terrorists are psychologically normal in the sense of not being clinically psychotic. They are neither depressed nor severely emotionally disturbed, nor are they crazed fanatics. Indeed, terrorist groups and organizations screen out emotionally unstable individuals and they represent a security risk. Terrorism is a very complicated social issue which can be studied by exploring the underlying processes ranging from individual to social and societal issues which are deeply interconnected. The attributes of terrorists are shaped by processes of social interaction. Many individuals are more inclined to go into violence because of psychological traits or of a particular history but political decisions can also built the ground for terrorist act. The terrorist are trained in a way that they do not show any feelings of remorse after mercilessly committing murders or mass killing and other tumultuous acts.

There is need to deconstruct the concept of terrorism and to understand how the choice of violence by the terrorists can be explained by their psychology. Psychology of terrorist relies on the facts how youth choose the act of terrorism as a way to express their ideology, their opinion or their struggle. Psychology of terrorism discusses the social psychological variables that underlie the terrorism phenomenon and the consequences of these terrorist acts on the society. The psychological assessment of terrorist radicalisation could be of particular interest from the perspective of Forensic Science in evaluating criminal dangerousness and to understand the act of extremist violence for adopting security measures and also in correctional psychology. In order to comprehend psychological and motivating factors which surround the root of terrorism, there is need to understand the psychological mindset of individuals drawn to terrorist behaviour to account for the level of perceived, deep-rooted injustices and feelings of oppression from cultural segregation or discrimination, aggression due to social exclusion which led a number of individuals to turn to violence to implement acts of terrorism. The aim of terrorists is that they only want a lot of people dead and many people being intimidated by fear. Several factors like socioeconomic and psychopathological factors can be determined which help to create the profile of terrorists by their behavioural patterns.

CURSE OF TERRORISM IN INDIA

In India, many terrorist attacks are carried out frequently by a number of terrorist and insurgent groups which includes Lashkar-e-Tayyiba, Jaish-e-Mohammad, Al Qaeda. The main targets of these terrorist groups are tourist spots, pilgrimage places, hotels, railway stations, markets, sporting venues where they can kill a lot of people and can create future panic. The terrorists carry out a detailed reconnaissance of the prospective targets in order to identify the loopholes in the security system before targeting them, thereby increasing civilian casualties and maximise the impact and publicity. The terrorists also shift their targeting patterns from civilian to government or military targets to spread intimidation and create a permanent state of fear psychosis. The burgeoning enticement of the Indian youth towards such extreme terror organisations is posing a major challenge to the Indian internal security. An inclusive policy need to be adopted in India to tackle the rising radicalisation of the youth in the country.

PSYCHOLOGICAL EXAMINATION

The subjects brought for the psychological examination were those terrorists who were directly and indirectly involved in carrying out various attacks in India. All of them were of the age group of 25-40 years. Some of them were the prime suspects in carrying out attacks and others were involved in reconnaissance around and surveillance of the potential targets. They were brought with request to conduct various psychological tests to probe the critical issues linked with the terrorist activities transpired at various places in India. Their orientation of time, places, and persons was normal. They did not bother about the loss of lives in the attacks. To get the fruitful results various psychological tests were conducted on those subjects.

➤ Forensic Psychological Assessment

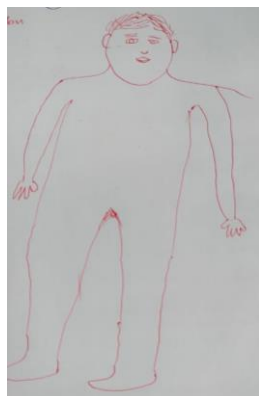
The objective of Forensic Psychological Assessment is to help the investigator to find out whether the person is guilty or not. The subject's verbal behavioural assessment and non verbal behavioural assessment, cognitive ability, appearance, emotional mood, speech and thought pattern are noted carefully during the course of interview.

The Forensic Psychological Assessment of subjects focused on the major terrorist trait tendency including their aggressor's behaviour, state of mind behind violence, bombing, destruction, kidnapping, mass killing in society which are used in order to achieve political aims and to destroy the public's sense of security and to create fear among them. The psychological assessment was conducted to assess their emotional maturity and personality characteristics. On the basis of psychological assessment, it was observed that the subjects were characterized by deep rooted inferiority complex, negative self-concept, frustration and suppressed aggression. Their perceptions of weapons are fetishes and adherence to violent sub cultural norms. They were all pessimistic towards their life and highly sensitive towards their religion and jihad. The mental status examination of the subjects revealed no observable symptoms of any neurotic or psychotic disorder. There was no erratic or evasive or rapid posture change adopted by the subjects during the interview and no feeling of insecurity was noted in them. Some of them were found to be calm and relaxed as they completed their mission. No regret feeling was observed on their face. These traits make up an "authoritarian-extremist personality."

➤ Draw a person test

The Draw-a-Person test or Goodenough-Harris Draw-a-Person test is a psychological projective personality or cognitive test used to evaluate an individual for a variety of purposes. The human figure drawing can be understood to be the way the individual projects his inner reality of past experience and current moods, tensions and concerns by the symbolism of his body image. The overall quality of the drawing is analysed and hypotheses are formulated based on the configuration of signs.

The aim of DAP test is to evaluate various psychological states, especially assessing emotional disturbances, aggressiveness, social conflict, psychic status including psychiatric illness and personality state of an individual. The picture drawn by the person is analysed on a number of dimensions to measure non-verbal intelligence and to screen emotional or behavioural disorder. The points considered for assessing personality traits from the drawing are size of figure, omission of body parts, any special feature observed.



Picture-1



Picture-2

The pictures drawn by the subjects are unstable and poor integration of all parts of body represents a sense of instability, inadequacy, inferiority complex, emotional disturbances, psychosis, and aggression. The interpretations of the pictures drawn by the subjects are given as follows:

Body part	Picture 1		Picture 2	
Head	Small	Feeling of intellectual inadequacy, obsessive compulsive, expression of the desire to deny the site of painful thoughts and guilt feeling.	Large	Narcissism, aggressive and expansive tendencies, possible grandiosity and egocentric attitudes based on feelings of inadequacy
Eyes	Disproportionately small	Desire to shut out world, self-absorption	Hollow socket	Reluctance to view world, possible hostility towards others, tendency to avoid unpleasant situations.
Facial expression	Features dim	Timidity, withdrawal	Omitted	psychosis, hysteroid and narcissistic traits, evasiveness, superficiality in interpersonal relationships, inadequate environmental interest, or possible withdrawal tendencies
Nose	Truncated Nose	Regressive response to conflict, indicate castration fear, infantile male who projects defects to a female.	Omitted	Withdraw or depressive personality style, or feelings of castration
Hairs	Vigorous shading of hair with poor form delineation	Expressions of virility conflicts brimming over into some sexual	Heavily shaded	Excessive sexuality; severe anxiety about sexuality or mental control; anxiety over

		deviant behaviour		thinking or fantasy
Arms	Long arms	Aggressive, inadequacy, ambition for achievement	Arms reinforced	Assaultiveness, Aggressive tendencies
Hands	Large	No guilt feeling, aggression externalized	Omitted/dim	Inadequacy, schizoid
Fingers	Large	Assaultiveness	Claw shaped	Aggression externalized
Legs	Large	Assaultiveness	Tapering	Effeminacy
Feet	Wide apart	Aggressive counteracted by a feeling of insecurity	Omitted	Withdrawal

➤ Polygraph Examination

Polygraph examination works by measuring the physiological changes in the body when the individual being tested is asked certain questions. The polygraph examination is split into three parts with a pre-test interview, the test itself and a post-test interview. The polygraph instrument measures changes in heart rate, blood pressure, respiratory rate and sweat and the changes to the individual's normal rates in all parameters are studied through polygrams. The examination is used to provide information whether the person is truthful or deceptive. The examination can also take the form of new disclosures made by the offender and information provided by them during the course of pre test interview and post test that may provide leads for further investigation.

During the interrogation the subjects denied any contact with the terrorist groups and their involvement in the terrorist activities. The relevant issues were probed during polygraph examination. Significant changes (such as a faster heart rate, higher blood pressure, increased perspiration) were recorded during the examination. The analysis and evaluation of polygrams revealed deceptive responses on the relevant issues.

PSYCHOLOGY OF TERRORISTS

It is generally accepted that psychological explanation of terrorism must take multiple levels of analysis into account, linking the individual to the group and to society. The psychology of terrorists relies on the main issues how individuals choose the path of terrorism; how terrorists consider such insane acts as a way to express their ideology, their struggle or their opinion; what psychological factors leads them to sink into the quagmire of terror and what is the staircase of terrorism.

The psychological examination conducted on the subjects revealed that:

- A terrorist's moral code actually approves of any action if it contributes to achieving a given aim.
- Terrorists are psychologically normal in the sense of not being clinically psychotic.
- Terrorist groups and organizations screen out emotionally unstable individuals and they represent a security risk.
- They do not show any feelings of remorse after mercilessly committing murders or mass killing and other tumultuous acts.

The staircase to join terrorist group involves following steps:

▪ **Motivation and joining to Terrorist groups**

Interestingly, poverty or unemployment is not the only factors attributed to join terrorism, but unfortunately youth with proper educational backgrounds and from middle class families are also enticed towards this dreaded phenomenon. Most of the youth have either been self motivated by watching radical propaganda material on the internet or have been so brainwashed that they have left their jobs and decided to take up the path of terrorism. Another critical issue is the use of the social networking sites and the internet related activities that are fuelling the terrorism. The over ground workers (OGW) of the terrorist groups motivates the local youth of to follow the right preaching of their religion and for this purpose trainings are imparted. There are different sessions of training like motivating the youth to join group for sake of their religion, then giving them weapon and technical training. Then after, the highly motivated youths are given rigorous training and respectively sent to various cities of the country to perform the terrorist attacks.

▪ **Training imparted to young terrorists**

Initially, their training is emphasized on physical training and how to perform religious tasks. After completing basic training, they are motivated to join jihadi arms training for the sake of their religion. The training camp consists of group of many people of age of 20 to 25 years who are randomly selected for training. During that training program, they are given training on physical endurance, weapon handling, night march, and handling arms and ammunition. After completing the training they join another training under the banner of specific terrorist group. There they are imparted training for specialization in GPS handling, map reading, wireless operating, compass reading and deep knowledge about use of Google Earth application. They are then selected for the operational group to carry out attacks in various parts of India. They are also given the code to contact with other group persons already present in India. The operational group is also provided with arms and ammunition and other equipments like wire cutter, telescope, night vision device, knife, mobile handsets.

▪ **Attempts for Fidayeen attacks**

The terrorists are directed by their leader for fidayeen attack on civilians and security personnel which lead to large number of casualties and killings. These attacks include surprise and shock as essential elements and are bound to cause greater damage.

CONCLUSION

The terrorist groups are constantly evolving their tactics to keep one pace ahead of the security and intelligence agencies and to avoid detection by them. The terrorists are now equipped with state-of-art navigation devices such as GPS, passive night-vision devices for navigation during the night. They have also enhanced the use of cyberspace and satellite phones for communication, propaganda and online recruitment. Online platforms of communication, social networking sites and online messaging tools are being used for coded communications. New recruitment patterns of some groups includes recruiting suicide commandos, female and child terrorists, and scientists capable of developing weapons of mass destruction. The terrorists have refined their tactical skills and the attacks are well calibrated and involve a careful selection of targets and meticulous planning over a long period before actually executing the attack.

DISCUSSION

The understanding of terrorism and psychological implications are essential to comprehend psychological and motivating factors surrounding the root of terrorism in order to implement policies and counterterrorism prevention strategies. There is need to deconstruct the concept of terrorism and to understand how the choice of violence by the terrorists can be explained by their psychology. Psychology of terrorist relies on the facts how youth choose the act of terrorism as a way to express their ideology, their opinion or their struggle. Psychology of terrorism discusses the social psychological variables that underlie the terrorism phenomenon and the consequences of these terrorist acts on the society. The profile of the terrorists obtained from various psychological techniques in different cases will help law enforcement agencies in providing intervention strategies against terrorism.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The authors are thankful to the authorities of the Central Forensic Science Laboratory, New Delhi.

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