Terrorism: a threat to humanity

The world has been on high alert since the events of 9/11. Bill Durodié presents his own critical view of global terrorism and asks: are we missing the real lessons?

Terror attacks in London in July 2005 appeared to prove the threat posed by international terrorists. In fact, these attacks and our responses to them reveal how little we understand the challenges we face. Contemporary terrorism is a problem, but the real threat is our inability to appreciate its provenance.

This nihilism is a product of our times. We too have trouble articulating a broader vision or direction for society, or goals and aims we seek to achieve. We reject the past and fear the future. As a consequence, we live in an eternal present, with little ambition or hope of transcendence.

Unsurprisingly, we breed our own extremists; including the Oklahoma bomber, the Columbine High School killers, the Aum Shinrikyo cult in Japan and even the 19 hijackers of 11 September 2001 – most of whom were either educated in the West or spent considerable periods of time there.

When *Stupid White Men* by Michael Moore became the best-selling book on both sides of the Atlantic, it revealed how much we hate our own society. If we look for people who are anti-American, anti-Western, anti-science, anti-progress or anti-modernity, we do not need to go very far.

International terror is not spread by fanatical masterminds or even poisonous ideologies. Rather, it feeds off an alienation many people feel – not all of them Asian or Muslim – in a society unable to provide rules, structure, a sense of purpose or meaning, to realise their ambitions.

Personally I put it down to the defeat of the political agendas that marked the closing years of the 20th century. These trends can only be countered by those who hold humanity to be positive and central to our future.

> ● Four suicide bombers struck in central London on Thursday 7 July, killing 52 people and injuring 700. Three bombs exploded on underground trains at Russell Square, Aldgate and Edgware Road, with one on a bus at Tavistock Place. Four attempted bombings took place exactly two weeks later. *(BBC News)*

Groups such as the Irish Republican Army or the Palestine Liberation Organisation used terror as a means to achieving broader political ends. Today terrorism serves as the end in itself. The perpetrators rarely acknowledge responsibility for their acts or identify a programme they seek to implement. Instead, we project these upon them.

> ● Numbers provided by the government's new clearinghouse for terrorism-related information, the National Counterterrorism Center (NCTC), included statistics documenting a sharp surge in significant terrorist acts from 175 incidents that killed 625 in 2003 to 651 such attacks that killed 1,907 in 2004. *(Washington Post, 28 April 2005)*

> ● A car bomb on the Indonesian island of Bali on 12 October 2002 killed 202 people, from as many as 24 different countries, though the majority were Australians. On 1 October 2005 Bali was targeted again when three suicide bombers blew themselves up in tourist areas killing at least 19 people, mostly Indonesians. *(BBC News)*

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