



PREDICTING FAMILY TERROR NETWORKS

Dean C Alexander provides a six-stage model for spotting the signs of potential terrorist attackers

The purpose of a model to predict family terror networks is to aid the government, private sector, nonprofits, non-governmental organisations and the public to anticipate and understand possible kin-linked extremism. The model posits that family networks and relationships are highly impactful on terrorist participation. By understanding the influences of families in the creation of terrorists, anticipating the likelihood of participation in terrorism is enhanced. Such an appreciation can contribute to incapacitating future terrorists.

This schematic was crafted after assessing 118 families affiliated with terrorism involving 138 instances of kin relationships (brothers, husbands/wives, and fathers/sons). These case studies encompassed terror cells of divergent ideological leanings (eg jihadism,

sovereign citizens, militias, and hate aligned). The model addresses circumstances when household members' efforts to radicalise kin are ineffective. Therefore, the design does not argue that having a radical in the family would automatically cause a family member to support extremism.

The path of family terror networks follows six stages. At stage one, a family member (F1) is exposed to a radical ideology and supports a movement associated with this extremist tenet. The reasons for an individual joining the movement or group include: belief that the ideology is correct and merits support; revenge for real or perceived victimisation; socioeconomic marginalisation and alienation; political marginalisation and alienation; protection against perceived oppressors; acceptance, respect, or status; pressure from family, friends, and community; expunging dishonour due to moral indiscretion;

seeking purpose or excitement in life; mental disability; and alternative to failures or setbacks.

Depending on who or how F1 is radicalised, they may join or collaborate with other like-minded extremists: either in a cabal or formal group. In turn, they may support the group by raising money, gathering supplies, getting paramilitary training, conducting surveillance, testing security of a target, recruiting others or undertaking an attack. Alternatively, they may become self-radicalised and not cooperate with another person.

During stage two, the family member approaches another family member (F2) or multiple family members (F3-4) about the possibility of following the extremist ideology. At stage three, a family member (F2) or multiple family members (F3-4) accept, accept with reservations or reject the extremist tenets of their family member.

TAKING PART IN AN ACT OF TERROR

In stage four, several options are conceivable. F1 takes part in a terrorist act or otherwise supports the movement. F1 and F2 carry out a terrorist attack or support the movement. Alternatively, F1 and F2 may leave extremism. Another path affords either F1 or F2 to remain enthralled by radicalism while the other's support ends. F3/F4 may then follow any of the paths of F1/F2.

At stage five, assuming F2 has left radicalism (or never accepted it initially), F2 may try to directly influence F1 to leave radicalism or indirectly do so by reaching out for aid from others (eg law enforcement, religious and civic communities, friends, etc.). Alternatively, assuming F1 has left radicalism, F1 may pursue efforts to dislodge F2 from extremism along the same path mentioned in this stage.

During stage six, F1 may decide to: leave radicalism, protest F2's efforts, leave the premises (assuming they

perspectives. Enquiry into Tamerlan's wife's possible involvement in the Boston Marathon attacks did not lead to any criminal prosecution.

In this case, stages one and two were followed as previously described. At stage three, F2 accepted the jihadi tenets presented by F1. At stage four, F1 and F2 conducted the attacks. Stages five and six were not reached as the brothers carried out the bombings at stage four.

Jerry Kane Junior, the father (F1), travelled across the US with his teenage son Joseph (F2) preaching facets of sovereign citizen ideology, such as paying mortgages with fictitious financial instruments. F1 indoctrinated F2 with sovereign citizen ideals, particularly having a strong animosity towards police. During a 2010 traffic stop in Arkansas, F2 shot and killed two police officers with an assault rifle. The pair was subsequently shot and killed by police.

In the Kane case, stages one and two were followed as portrayed. At stage three, F2 accepted the extremist tenets presented by F1. At stage four, F2 murdered the police officers, most likely at the behest of F1. Stages five and six were not reached as an attack was carried out at stage four.

Jaelyn Young (F1) and Muhammad Dakhalla (F2) fell in love and married. F1 became enamoured with ISIS propaganda. According to F2, she convinced him that the pair should try to travel to Syria to live in the Islamic State. The pair was arrested at the airport on their first leg to travel to Turkey and, ultimately, Syria. They pleaded guilty to conspiracy to provide material support to an FTO, ISIS. F2 was sentenced to eight years. F1 received four additional years, as she was perceived as being a more fervent extremist than her husband.

In this instance, stages one and two were followed as construed. At stage three, F2 accepted the extremist tenets presented by F1. At stage four, F1 and F2 tried to travel to Syria to join a terrorist organisation. Stages five and six were not reached as the couple attempted to travel abroad at stage four.

BEST PRACTICES OF TERRORISM ARE EASILY PASSED TO OTHER MEMBERS OF A FAMILY

live together), cease communications with F2, attack F2 or pursue other actions. Alternatively, F2 may decide to follow the same path mentioned in this stage.

Jihadi-inspired brothers Tamerlan and Dzhokhar Tsarnaev detonated two pressure-cooker bombs at the finish line of the Boston Marathon in April 2013, killing three and injuring over 260 others. Tamerlan, the elder of the two, influenced his brother to take part in the plot. Dzhokhar mistakenly ran over and killed Tamerlan while police pursued the pair in the days following the attack. In April 2015, a jury found Dzhokhar guilty on 30 criminal counts, including using a weapon of mass destruction that resulted in death. A month later, Dzhokhar was sentenced to death.

Applying the model to the Tsarnaev brothers, Tamerlan is viewed as F1, who radicalises his brother, Dzhokhar, F2. The two (F1 and F2) conducted the Boston Marathon bombings and subsequent mayhem in the Boston area. There is reporting that the Tsarnaev brothers' parents at some point held anti-American

UNDERCOVER STING

Hasan Edmonds (F1) and his cousin Jonas Edmonds (F2) appear to have been equally committed to travelling abroad to join ISIS. If both could not make the trip, then F2 would stay and conduct a terror attack in Illinois. While F1 made initial communications with an FBI undercover employee discussing his and his cousin's interest in travelling to Syria to join the Islamic State (and possibly carry out an attack in the United States), F2 frequently interacted with additional FBI undercover agent. The cousins ultimately met in person with another undercover FBI employee. The pair was convicted of ISIS-related activities, among others. F1 and F2 received 30 years and 21 years in prison, respectively.

In this case, stages one and two were followed as described. At stage three, F1 and F2 both shared jihadi ideologies. At stage four, F1 planned to travel to Syria and join ISIS, while F2 intended to carry out an attack in the United States. Stages five and six were not initiated as the cousins sought to put their plans into place at stage four.

The family affiliated radicalisation model is prone to some limitations. While 118 cases of families

FBI agents stand next to photographs of Tamerlan and Dzhokhar Tsarnaev, responsible for the 2013 Boston Marathon bombings

involved in terrorism were reviewed in crafting the model, the data set does not cover all circumstances of kin-connected influences. Consequently, the conclusions reached do not include insights that could arise from a larger data set. Also, there is sometimes incomplete information regarding how

THE TSARNAEV BROTHERS DETONATED TWO BOMBS AT THE FINISH LINE OF THE 2013 BOSTON MARATHON

an individual was radicalised. In other instances, individuals might not be influenced exclusively by a family member but rather simultaneously affected by other forces.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE FAMILY

The impetus for a person to become a terrorist can be multi-dimensional. As such, to characterise family links over other factors may overstate the potency of the former over other variables that attract someone to radicalism. Still, the model does not argue that family is the sole factor affecting radicalisation. Rather, it tries to establish a typology for this phenomenon of extremism and a framework by which to understand this threat. Future research focusing on right-wing, left-wing family, secular,

and single-issue aligned terror networks would aid in gaining a better appreciation of kin-connected extremism associated with those ideologies. Also, more case studies could address similarities and differences within family-associated terrorism that follows distinct extremist doctrines. Furthermore, examining which family relationships correlate more readily to the execution of successful kinetic attacks versus those that do not would be beneficial.

FAMILY LEVERAGE

Family terror networks are likely to remain prevalent for various reasons. Belief systems advocating political violence exist in some family units. It is natural to share enthusiasm about newly found ideology, including extremist tenets, with easily swayed family members. The ability of family members to pressure others to support extremism remains strong. The leverage is that much stronger when exerted by a parent or sibling. The enticement of following in the footsteps of a family member will likely continue in earnest.

The ability to attract multiple family members to terrorism will cause terror groups to continue to exploit this subset of group membership. Best practices of terrorism are easily passed to other members of a family. Ideas percolating within a family rubric are deemed more legitimate than outside concepts. These conditions make it difficult to dislodge kin from radicalism. External and competing ideas often have a hard time penetrating a family setting ●

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The path of family terror networks follows six stages

