

# THE PSYCHOLOGY OF TERRORISM AND RADICALISATION

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# **STAR WARS**

**THE STORY OF AN ORPHANED BOY WHO BECOMES RADICALIZED AFTER A MILITARY STRIKE KILLS HIS FAMILY. HE IS INDOCTRINATED INTO AN ANCIENT RELIGION, JOINS A BAND OF REBEL INSURGENTS, AND CARRIES OUT A TERRORIST ATTACK KILLING 300,000 PEOPLE.**











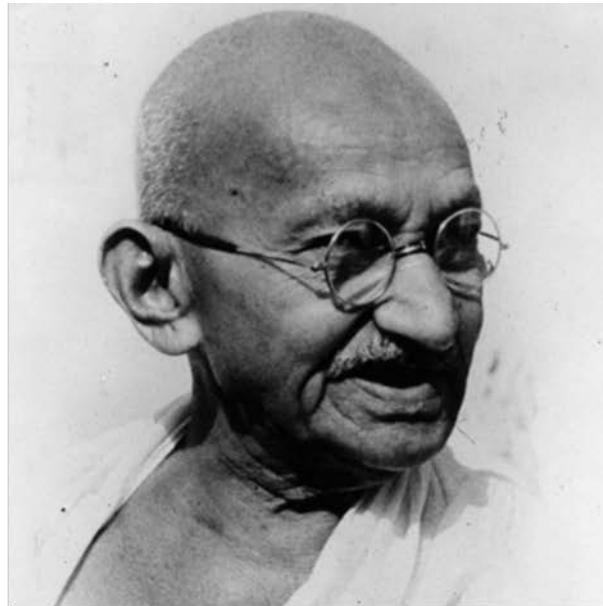








**BUT....**



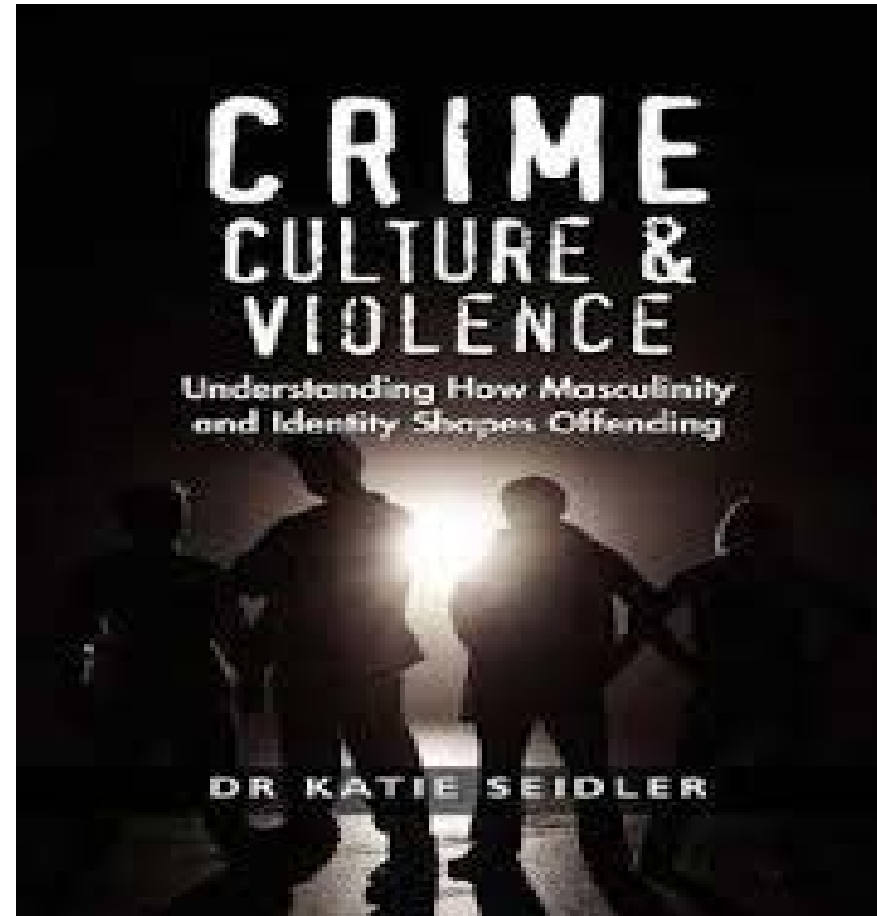
# OVERVIEW

- Setting the Context
- My interest in the area
- The History of Terrorism
- 21st Century Terrorism
- Definition of Terrorism
- Role of ideology
- Radicalisation
- Extremism
- Relationship with Mental Illness/Health
- Psychological theories of Terrorism
- Group vs lone Wolves
- Difference from Violent Crime
- Risk assessment
- Way forward - deradicalisation vs desistance vs inclusion
- Notes for legal practitioners
- Case Study (if time)

# SETTING THE CONTEXT



MY INTEREST...





# THE HISTORY OF TERRORISM

- Terrorism is not new.
- The 10<sup>th</sup> century Hashashins.
- Crusades during the Middle Ages.
- The Reign of Terror following the French Revolution.



# 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY TERRORISM

- Initially post-colonial ethno-nationalist movements.
- Moved to religious terrorism.
- Focus on Islamic fundamentalism.
- Drives the fear of the “Other”.




# TERRORISM HAS CHANGED...

- More lethal,
- More destructive,
- Larger scale acts,
- Less planning and coordination,
- Role of the Internet,
- Communicated much more quickly.

# DEFINITION OF TERRORISM

- Core features:
  - Involves the use of violence or the threat of violence in the pursuit of political, religious, ideological or social objectives. To this end the violence is instrumental and communicative.
  - Can be committed by both State and non-State actors.
  - Is designed to have an impact beyond that suffered by the direct victims or targets of the violence.
  - Are considered to be both legally and morally wrong from the viewpoint of the society in general.



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- The goals of terrorism:
    - **Tactical**: relative success of an individual attack, or series of attacks.
    - **Organisational**: outcomes of violence impacting on the group and its constituency e.g. maintaining a support base or accruing finance.
    - **Strategic**: relative success of the wider impacts of terrorism at the social, economic, and political level.
    - **Ultimate**: the ideal end-state for the group.

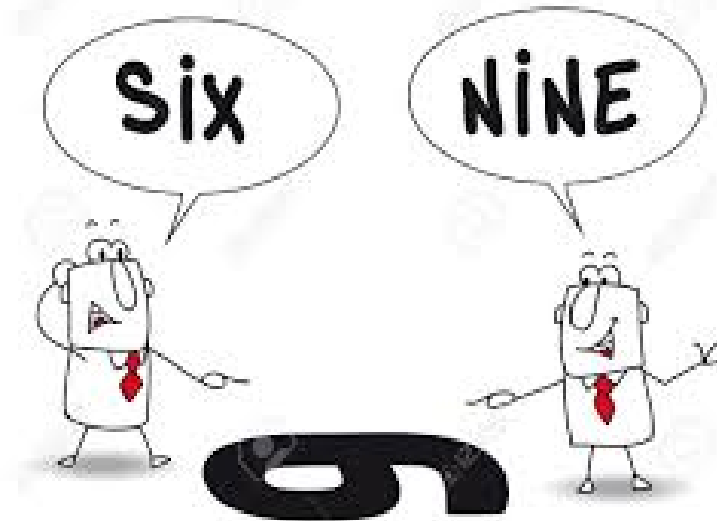
# THE ROLE OF IDEOLOGY

- An ideology is a reasonably coherent set of ideas that provide the basis for organised action.
- All ideologies:
  - a) offer an account of the existing order, usually in the form of a world view,
  - b) provide a model of a desired future, a vision of the 'good society,
  - c) outline how change can and should be brought about to create the desired future.



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Extreme ideology is defined from OUR viewpoint.



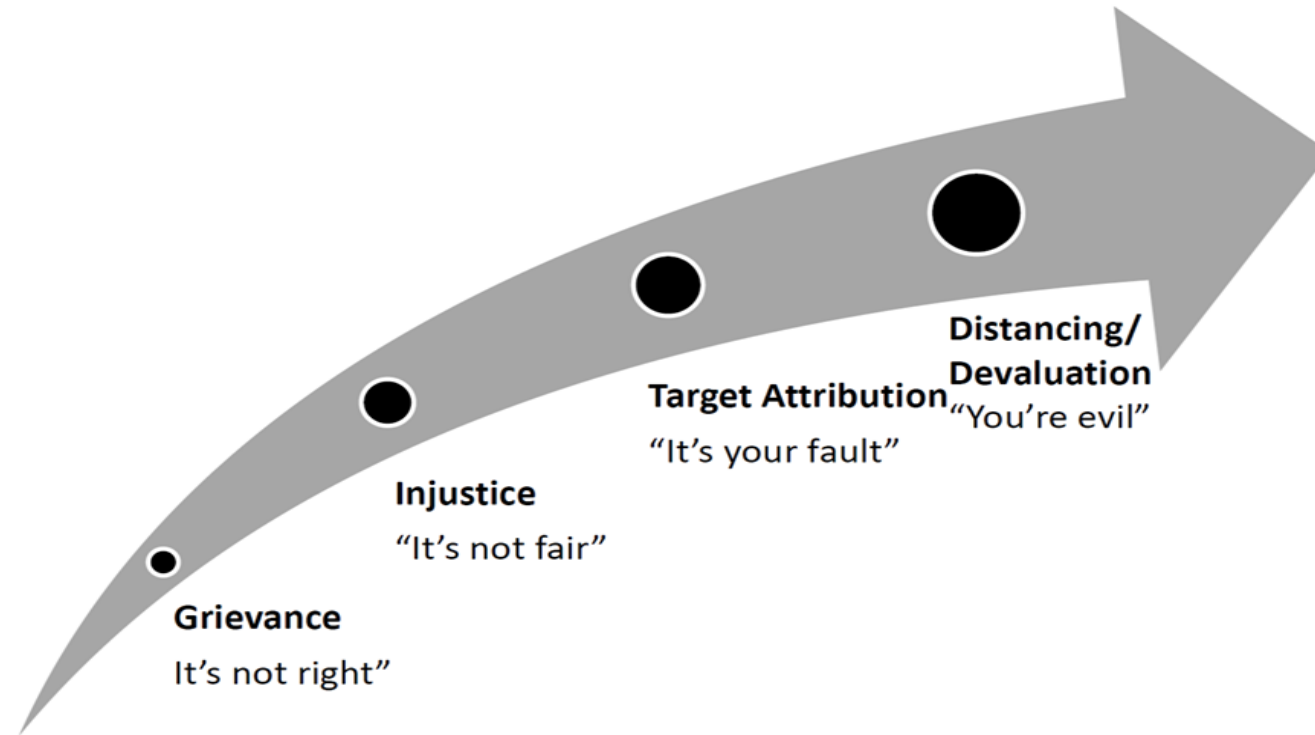


# RADICALISATION

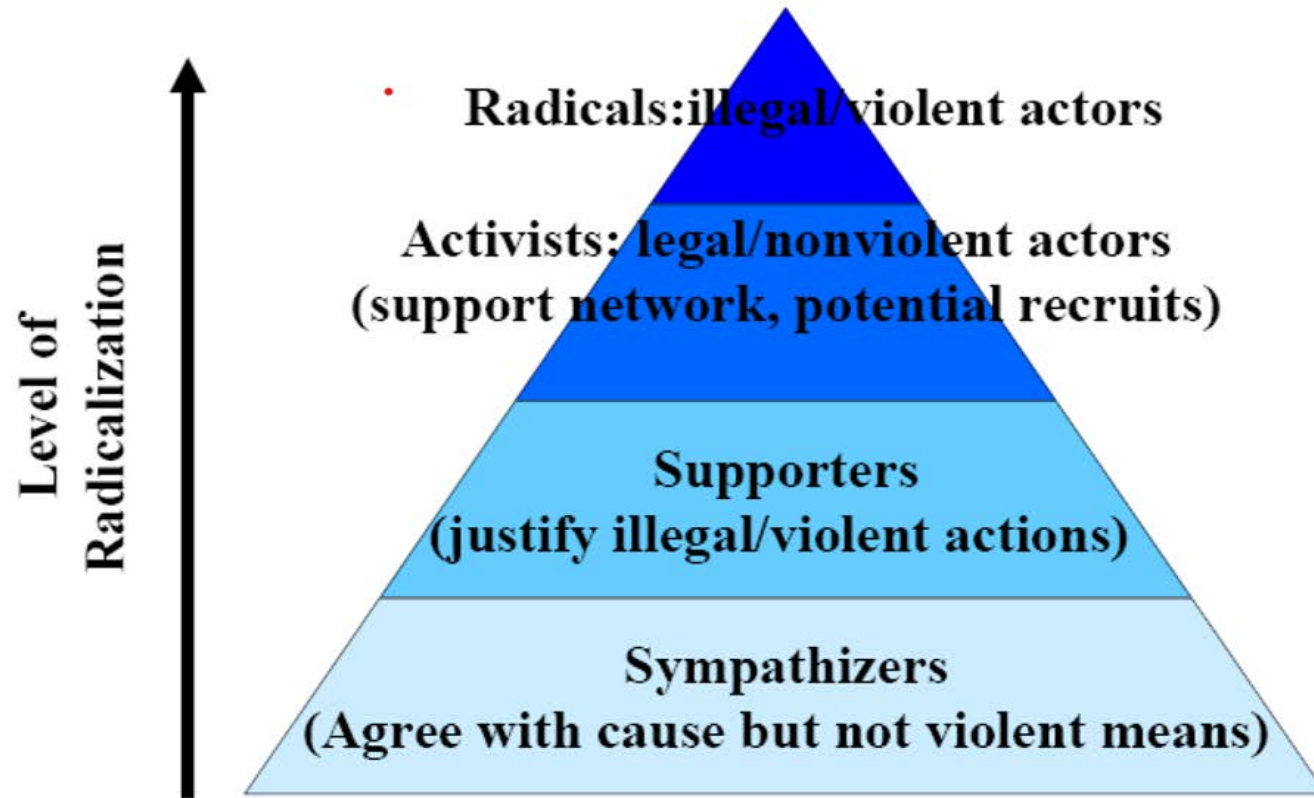
- The process of radicalisation is the psychological, social and cognitive process of taking on the ideology.
- It is the process whereby an individual is made ready to support a particular ideology.
- It can occur at an individual or group level.
- Is complex and context dependent.
- Provides a framework for living.
- Subsumes individual identity.

# Models of radicalisation

## FBI Four Phases (Borum, 2011)



# Pyramid (McCauley 2007)





# EXTREMISM

- A fundamental precursor to terrorism.
- Is defined in reference to the ordinary.
- The label and interpretation depends on the values, politics, morality and experiences of the observer, who is usually in a position of power in the mainstream.
- The definition changes as norms change.

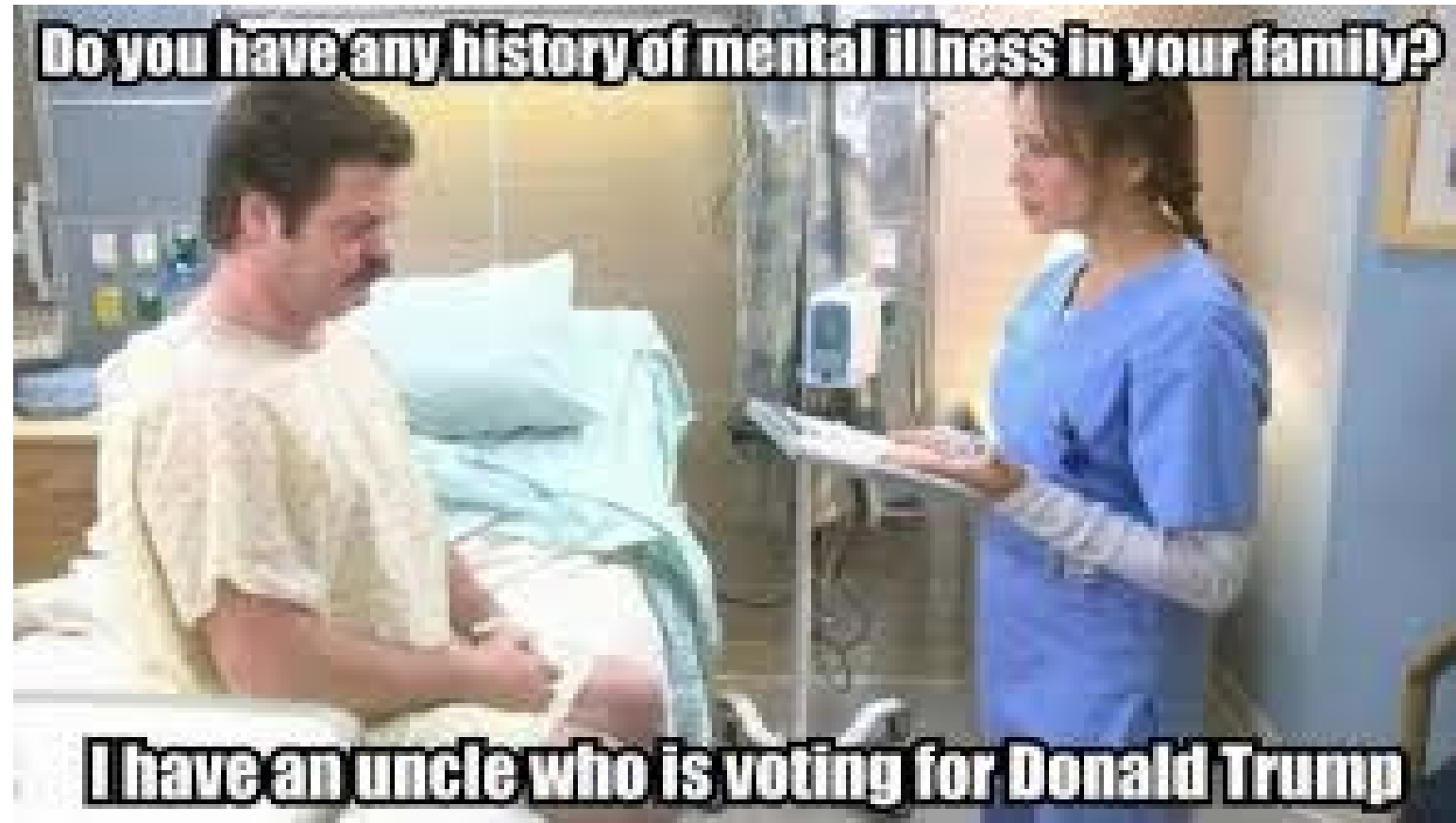




# RELIGIOUS EXTREMISM

- Has the following characteristics:
  - A claim to absolute truth,
  - Expected blind obedience to the word of God,
  - The belief that the end justifies the means,
  - The divine sanction of violence, and
  - Holy war and apocalyptic narratives.

# RELATIONSHIP TO MENTAL ILLNESS



# MONAGHAN PREDISPOSING FACTORS

- 1) Some emotional vulnerability,
- 2) Dissatisfaction with current life circumstances in sociopolitical terms with an associated perception that conventional means of protest don't work or are unavailable,
- 3) Identification with victims - either in real or perceived terms,
- 4) An ideology or belief structure that justifies the use of violence to achieve sociopolitical ends, which we have already discussed,
- 5) Some perceived sense of reward from the action,
- 6) Having kinship or close social ties within the broader terrorist network.

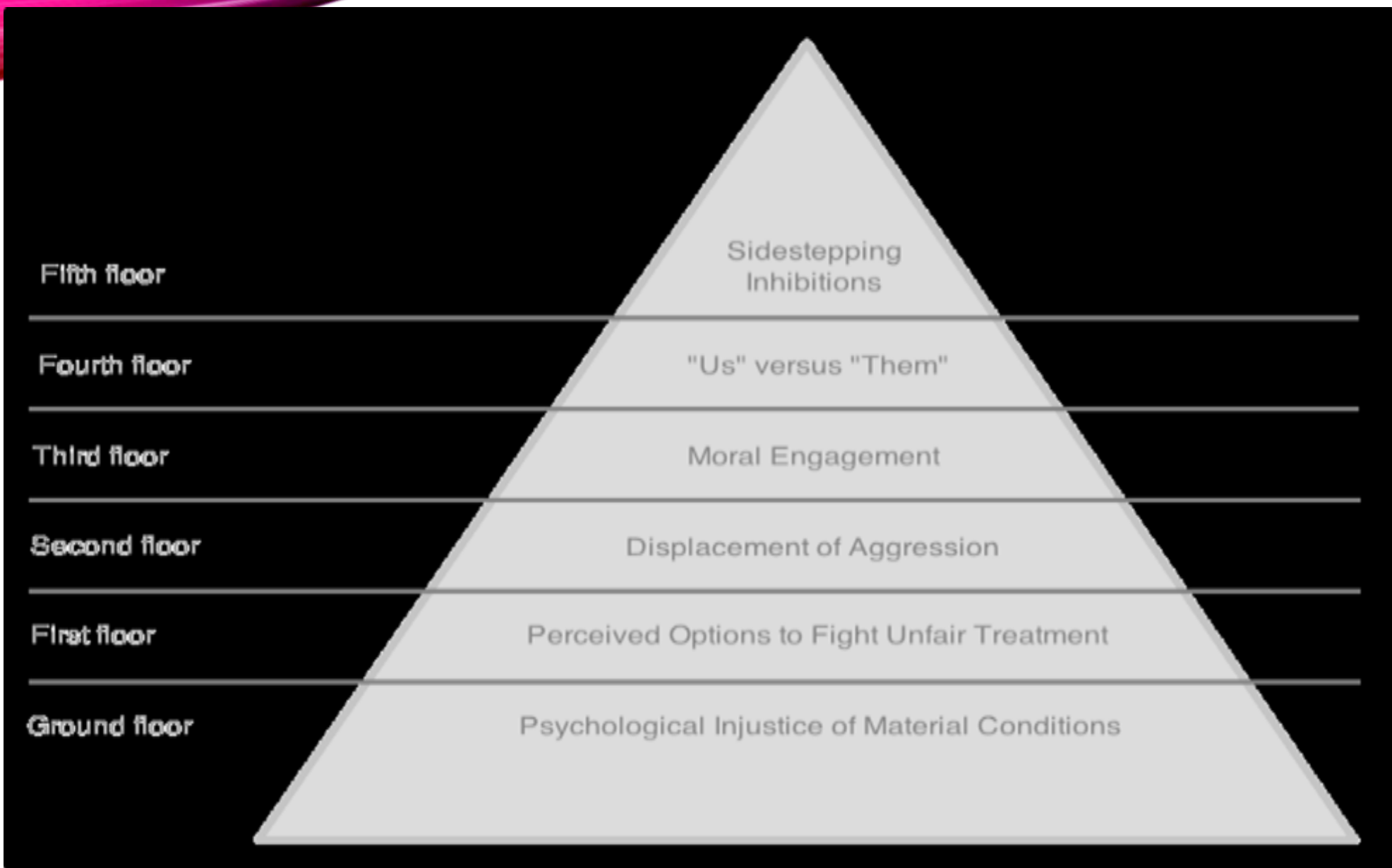
## VICTOROFF FOUR TRAITS:

- 1) They are particularly emotionally charged in relation to an ideological issue,
- 2) They have a perceived personal stake in this issue (e.g., glory, need for identity, etc),
- 3) They are people who are rigid and inflexible thinkers, who like things to be clear, ordered and logical,
- 4) They have the capacity to avoid instinctive and moral barriers associated with harming innocent people.

# PSYCHOLOGICAL THEORIES OF TERRORISM

## Moghaddam Staircase Theory

" a...staircase leading to the terrorist act at the top of a building. The staircase leads to higher and higher floors, and whether someone remains on a particular floor *depends on the doors and spaces the person imagines to be open to her or him on that floor.*" Moghaddam, F. (2005). *The Staircase to Terrorism*, p.161.



# BARTLETT AND MILLER...

Those who act....

- 1) Have a strong emotional pull to act in the face of injustice.
- 2) Have a strong sense of thrill, excitement and "coolness" associated with action.
- 3) Have a sense of status, along with an internal code of honour.
- 4) Have been affected by honour.

# GROUP BASED VS LONE WOLVES





# DIFFERENT FROM VIOLENT CRIME

- Violent offenders are not motivated by their ideological commitment.
- Terrorists are not antisocial in personality structure.
- Some violent offenders are attracted to violent groups because of the legitimacy of violence.
- There are real benefits for some for becoming involved in extremist groups.

# RISK ASSESSMENT

- Risk assessment is difficult due to a lack of consensus.
- This has mostly been explored by law enforcement personnel – e.g., the TRAP-18.

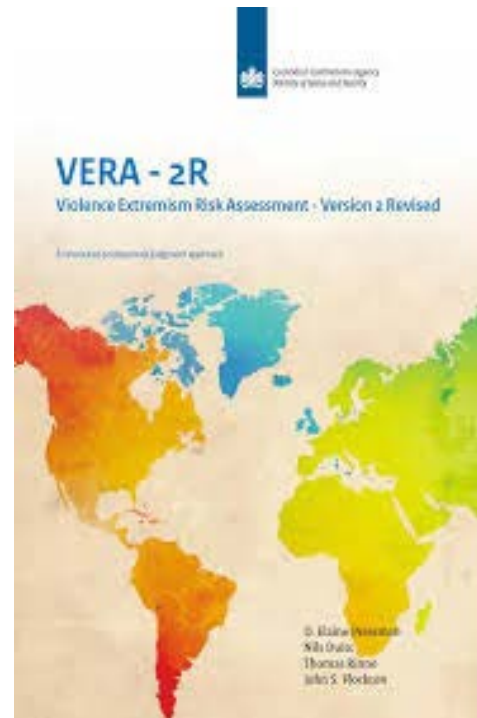


# VERA-2R

1) Beliefs, Attitudes and Ideology

2) Social Context and Intention

3) History, Action and Capacity



4) Commitment and Motivation

5) Protective/Risk Mitigating Factors

6) Additional Indicators

# WAY FORWARD

Deradicalisation involves changing the thinking



Is this appropriate ethically?

Move to desistance....  
This is about changing the identity.



# COMMUNITY INCLUSION IS THE ANSWER



# NOTES FOR LEGAL PRACTITIONERS...

- 1) Seek relevant advice – psychologists, intelligence operatives, religious advisors etc,
- 2) Do not assume people are the same and have the same motivations for the same behaviour even if their charges are the same,
- 3) Expect mistrust and skepticism,
- 4) Seek to understand and listen to their stories and understand the motivation to their actions,
- 5) Appreciate that this client group may be less willing to work with you than others,

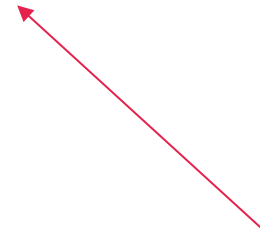
# CONTINUED...

- 6) Understand that there may be different cultural norms within some groups – e.g., not being willing to shake hands with a female,
- 7) Expect that there may be a disrespect for the Court and legal process,
- 8) Seek to get an understanding of the risk the person poses,
- 9) Try and distinguish whether you are working with an ideologue or a violent criminal who is attracted to violent ideology,
- 10) Appreciate that the individual may be motivated by the group needs and goals rather than those of the individual,
- 11) Appreciate there will probably be different world views and even language.



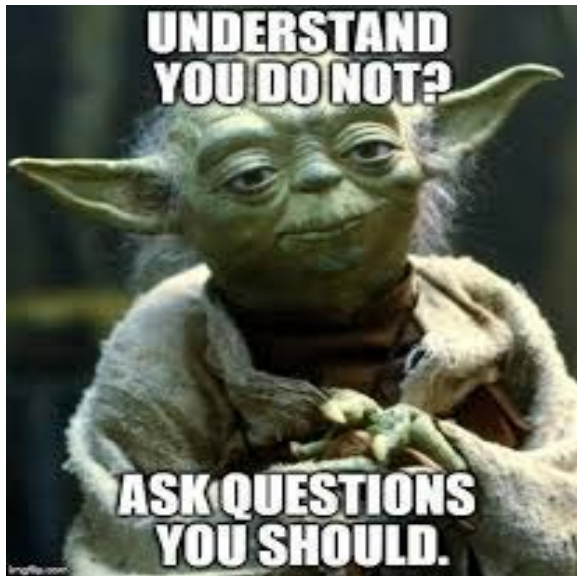
# CASE STUDY (IF TIME)

## Mr. Breaching Man



This is obviously not him...

QUESTIONS?



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