

PROBLEMS OF CONTEMPORARY SOCIETY: HOW TERRORISM SHAPED TODAY'S BRITAIN

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ABSTRACT: The transition period between the 20th and the 21st century in Great Britain was defined by the challenging duty of tackling the rising threat of terrorism. Terrorism in Great Britain has been a component of its history and also an outcome of internal conflicts throughout several historical periods. However, Britain's growing power and influence around the globe has gradually caught the attention of new opposing forces whose origins extend beyond its borders. The Britain of today is under threat of two conflicting ideologies: white supremacy and Islamic extremism. Although these two groups tend to employ similar strategies, their contrasting goals inevitably clash against one another and their interference in Britain's national security has resulted in multiple casualties and plunged the country into unwavering fear, flaring up nationalist ideals, media manipulation, political cynicism, and opportunism. The purpose of this academic paper is to analyze the modern definition of terrorism, the past and the present history of terrorist acts in Great Britain, the characteristics that distinguish and tie white supremacy and Islamic extremism together, the increasing popularity of far-right movements and conspiracy theories as well as the link to the rampant hate crimes and revenge attacks in Britain. The last section will explore how Brexit and the Irish border became once again the cause of uncertainty regarding the IRA in Northern Ireland.

KEY WORDS: *Great Britain, terrorism, white supremacy, islamic extremism, IRA*

RESUMO: O período de transição que ocorreu entre o século 20 e 21 no Reino Unido foi marcado pela árdua responsabilidade de combater a crescente ameaça de terrorismo. Terrorismo no Reino Unido é uma parte da sua história e também o resultado de conflitos internos ao longo de vários períodos da história, mas o gradual poder e influência do Reino Unido à escala global tem atraído ao longo dos tempos novos inimigos cujas origens se estendem para além da sua fronteira. O Reino Unido de hoje encontra-se ameaçado por novos inimigos que representam duas faces opostas do extremismo: supremacia branca e extremismo

islâmico. Apesar da tendência destes grupos em aplicarem estratégias semelhantes, a sua inevitável colisão levou ao crescimento forte de ideais nacionalistas, manipulação pela parte dos media, cinismo e oportunismo político.

O objetivo deste trabalho académico é analisar a definição moderna do terrorismo, o passado e o presente de atos terroristas no Reino Unido, as características que unem e distinguem a supremacia branca e fundamentalismo islâmico, a crescente popularidade de movimentos da extrema-direita e teorias da conspiração, assim como a sua ligação com a onda de crimes de ódio e ataques de vingança. A última secção irá explorar a forma como o *Brexit* e a fronteira Irlandesa se tornaram novamente a causa de incerteza no que toca ao grupo IRA e a Irlanda do Norte.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: *Reino Unido, terrorismo, supremacia branca, extremismo islâmico, IRA*

Introduction

From an outside perspective, Great Britain stands out as an important superpower that attracts people from all around the globe. Conversely, its imperialistic acts over the last centuries up until now have culminated into a series of terrorist attacks that are now jeopardizing the British society and Great Britain's national security at a large scale. The goal of this academic work is to provide an overview on how the fear of terrorism has transformed the Britain of today.

Firstly, this paper will begin by giving a general definition of what terrorism is in our modern times and its key features, such as how and where it might take place and what the main targets tend to be. This chapter will introduce another one concerning the history of terrorism in Great Britain, focusing on topics such as the IRA in Northern Ireland and Islamic extremism, and how the terrorist attacks in the past have evolved to those witnessed in nowadays Britain.

The following chapter will dive into how Islamic terrorism and the strategies used to carry out violent attacks in Britain fueled white supremacist ideals and the influence of Brexit in the growing popularity of far-right movements and distrust towards communities. The third subtopic will draw a comparison between Islamic extremism and the extreme far-right and how similar both ideologies are.

The fourth chapter is dedicated to the role of media personalities in the spreading of conspiracy theories and fake news through their discourse and around the internet. The fifth chapter will serve as an extension for the last one by examining how conspiracy theories and fear-mongering has contributed to the spurt of revenge attacks and hate crimes in Britain.

The last section of this academic work will present an ongoing issue in Britain that stems from the uncertainty of the future concerning the IRA's terrorist attacks and the possible post-Brexit hard border that could be reintroduced in Ireland and bring back the past terrorist attacks that took place in Ireland before the establishment of the Good Friday Agreement.

1. How can we define terrorism in modern times?

In recent years, incidences of terrorist attacks have hit the headlines endlessly and become a reoccurring nightmare. Terrorism can be considered as one of the dire outcomes of major events that took place over the last decades, such as the September 11 terrorist attacks, the consequent Iraq War (normally referred to as ‘War on Terror’), the Syrian Civil War, the Yemeni War and other similar armed conflicts that have shaken the entire world, claiming millions of lives in its path and creating a new generation afflicted by trauma and volatile hope for the future. World history is no stranger to acts of war and its devastating effects. War is a sensitive subject and not easy to dissect at all, as it might begin owing to several factors and it never officially ends when governments come to an agreement that the conflict is over and order their respective troops to withdraw. Realistically, the effects of war will lurk for an immeasurable amount of time. Every armed conflict leaves scars among the surviving civilians which can last for generations and lead to generational trauma, persisting economic ruin, hostility towards the outside world and social stigma.

Drawing the line of what is and is not considered terrorism is still risky, thus the definition of terrorism is yet to be solidified. However, this term has come to be used to refer to any act of violence carried out against a group of civilians whose intent can go from installing fear to causing death. Our modern definition of terrorism does not seem to be tied to a specific circumstance or space: acts of terrorism can take place both in a war zone and in a peaceful zone. This further proves the point that terrorism is not exclusive to a state of war, since the real targets of these acts of violence are oftentimes the government and not necessarily the civilians. Terrorism can be perpetrated not only by an individual against other individuals in their own country who normally belong to a minority but also carried out by one individual against a community in another country. Essentially, the main purpose behind acts of terrorism is to send a warning to higher institutions and it stems from a desire for revenge, feelings of resentment and sometimes religious or ideological idolatry from the perpetrators. Owing to the fact it is almost impossible to trace a credible path or calculate when or where the next terrorist attack will take place, several countries in different continents have reinforced their national security as an attempt to prevent attacks in their soil, each one with different rates of success.

2. The past and the present: terrorism in Great Britain

Bearing in mind the last decades it is safe to say that terrorist attacks in Europe are not a novelty. Europe in the 21st century, especially, has been the setting of succeeding terrorist attacks in several countries.

In respect to Great Britain, though, what is now considered terrorist activity can be traced back to four centuries ago. There is no written record that indicates when the very first terrorist attack in Britain happened. However, the 17th century was the setting of a rather impactful event that was later turned into an annual celebration: Guy Fawkes Night. In 1605, the infamous Guy Fawkes attempted to bomb the House of Lords (McQuade, 2017) on the 5th of November but his planned failed when he was arrested. Guy Fawkes' goal had been to overthrow king James I and impose a Catholic regime.

Two centuries later, the Great Famine that devastated Ireland from 1845 to 1849 and the overall treatment towards the Irish people at the hands of the British government inspired the foundation of the Irish Republican Army – IRA – in the early 20th century. This paramilitary organization sought to end the British rule over Ireland which was its closest overseas colony and establish an independent and united Ireland. The quest for an independent Ireland has not been achieved even after IRA's involvement in the Irish War of Independence (1919-1921). As a result, IRA carried out ‘bombings, assassinations and other terrorist attacks against British and Irish Unionist targets’ (Zalman, 2019) the following decades.

Similar to what happened throughout the previous centuries, the IRA conducted bombing attacks against important political figures. One of them was the UK's prime minister Margaret Thatcher, who became the IRA's target in 1984. The IRA's goal was to assassinate Margaret Thatcher. Patrick Magee planted a bomb in the Grand Hotel in Brighton, where a Conservative party conference was going to take place within 24 days. Upon the explosion, Margaret Thatcher survived but 5 people were killed and 34 were injured (Mann, 2017).

The Irish Republican Army ceased fire in 1997 which became the first step towards the Good Friday Agreement in 1998 whose purpose was ‘to get the two sides to work together in a group called the Northern Ireland Assembly. The Assembly would make some decisions that were previously made by the UK government in London’ (‘What was the Good Friday Agreement?’, 2018).

The reality of today's Great Britain is not that distant from past Great Britain. The reasons behind terrorist activity have remained consistent, laying heavily on religious or political disagreements. However, Great Britain's increasing international influence and its role

in intricate political affairs around the globe over the last years has changed the way society, and especially the British, approach the concept of terrorism. Great Britain's issue with terrorism is no longer confined to its old imperialistic phase in the British Isles. Today, it extends beyond its borders.

The history of terrorism in Great Britain can be divided in two parts: before and after the beginning of the 21st century. Whereas throughout the entirety of the 20th century Great Britain had been in a conflict with its closest neighbor Northern Ireland, from the year of 2001 onwards they began amassing new enemies from outside Europe (Pariona, 2017) due to their involvement in several conflicts in the Middle East such as the War on Terror, the Syrian Civil War, etc. These enemies are linked to the rise of Islamic extremism across the Middle East amid the violent conflicts that still ravage that region. The fear that spread among the British population during the last years did not subside and brought back in full force something that was thought to be buried in the past: the threat of Islamic terrorism gave rise once again to white supremacist groups in Britain.

3. Islamic extremism and white supremacy

Britain is a melting pot, so it goes without saying that the rising of Islamic terrorism not only has brought fear and uncertainty to the British population but also a generalized feeling of anger and distrust between communities of different backgrounds. This has been fueled as well by the current trend in the western world which is to assume immediately who the offenders are since the media delivers the news in a way that associates terrorism mostly with Muslim or people of Arab origin. In other instances where terrorist attacks are carried out by non-Muslims, the word "terrorist" is mostly avoided. By way of illustration, Waterson (2019), claimed that "violent Islamist extremists are three times more likely than far-right attackers to be described as terrorists in the media". This increases the chances of the audience "filling in the blank" when information concerning the ethnicity of the terrorist is missing.

2017 was a rather deadly year for the UK. It was on that same year that the deadliest terrorist attack in British soil since 2005 happened, taking place in the Manchester Arena around the end of singer Ariana Grande's concert on the 22nd of May. The offender was a man of Libyan origin named Salman Ramadan Abedi. As a result, "twenty-two people were killed in the explosion, including an eight-year-old girl" ("Manchester Arena attack: Eyewitnesses describe blast horror", 2017).

Lately, a new reason for concern has arisen pertaining how terrorist attacks are evolving. Up until recently they were associated with the use of firearms and bombs, but the incidents throughout 2017 revealed other tactics that are just as fatal as fire weapons. On the 3rd June of 2017, the London Bridge and the Borough Market - about 500 meters away - became the stage of another violent terrorist act. A van rammed into a group of pedestrians as they were crossing the bridge and killed a total of 8 people. After that, the offenders ran into the Borough Market and started deliberately stabbing people running in their direction while yelling “This is for Allah” (“London Bridge attack: What happened”, 2019). The three offenders were eventually shot by the police, but this was not enough to lessen the blow. All of these incidents combined culminated into a new problem that is now plaguing an increasingly fearful Great Britain.

As the world was focused on the danger of Islamic extremism and coming up with measures to counter it, the danger of white supremacy and domestic terrorism remained under the radar. Without a doubt, the fear of Islamic terrorism in Britain carries more weight in the country than meets the eye. An obvious example of that is Brexit and how its implementation could tighten immigration laws, therefore making it more difficult, or impossible, for refugees and immigrants to enter the country. Following this perspective, Britain would “rid the country of Muslim migrants, and with them, of the risk of terrorism” (Perra, 2019).

White nationalism has slowly made its way into conversations about Brexit that has been used as a cover up to a sinister mindset fueled by propaganda that is spreading among the British media. As of now, Brexit is not only about dismantling economic ties with Europe. It is about “reclaiming” the country from those they perceive as enemies and that includes anyone who is not typically white and British. Discrimination of this kind can go from blaming EU nationals to third country nationals living in the UK for the problems affecting Britain. Surprisingly, before the referendum, the British rarely thought about Europe as a problem. In any case, this phenomenon could be attributed to the fact this “took place almost entirely within what we can call the emotional public sphere, the mood and preoccupations of a national public, which is often heavily shaped by dominant media agendas and messages” (Richards, 2019). To put it another way, the Brexit referendum happened during a time of “crisis” when people were more vulnerable to messages that challenged their worldviews at the same time they were seeking answers to the problems affecting their daily lives.

3.1 Islamic extremism and extreme far-right: two sides of the same coin?

First and foremost, despite being a reaction to one another, Islamic extremism and the extreme far-right differ very little in their features. If it was not for the context where they emerged the two would be practically undistinguishable. They mirror each other in the sense that both seek dominance and expansion through violent means.

Online platforms are an important medium for terrorist groups to communicate with each other, mobilize and recruit gullible young people and to share their material. Due to the fact the internet allows for people to interact anonymously, it is often difficult to track the whereabouts of these individuals. People involved in terrorist units such as neo-Nazis and jihadists have an interest in graphic imagery that fulfills their idea of what the ideal world is. This fact is not new, though. For the past years, people with social media accounts have come across images and videos circulating online that contained gruesome content such as beheadings and hangings carried out by masked people whose identities are yet to be discovered. These acts are clearly deliberate since their objective is to expose people to acts of extreme violence until they become desensitized and accept that what they see is ‘human nature’ and inevitable (Gardner, 2019). Young people especially tend to be more vulnerable to this line of thinking when they interact in online spheres, which is why it is crucial that social media starts managing content more efficiently.

4. Far-right conspiracy theories

In addition to Islamic extremism, the British society and the government have now on their hands the duty to stop the rise of neo-Nazism and far-right ideology. The connection between far-right ideology and politics in Britain is steadily growing. Conspiracy theories and fake news are becoming dangerously widespread on social media and the lack of regulation towards this kind of content is creating a new generation of radicalized youth in Britain.

4.1 How media fueled conspiracy theories and fake news

English media personality Katie Hopkins is well-known for the controversial and rather questionable commentary she posts on her Twitter account from time to time, even when there is no concrete evidence to back up those claims. Note that Katie Hopkins’ number of followers on her account surpasses one million and these people are exposed to baseless information on a daily basis. A few examples of Hopkins’ dubious observations include her comments on the disturbing case of the lorry container in Essex. On the 23rd of October 2019, 39 bodies were found inside a lorry container in Essex. The victims are believed to be of Asian origin – specifically Vietnamese – and it is likely that they were victims of human trafficking

(Middleton, 2019). Hopkin's (2019) twitter post read "39 people found dead in a lorry in Essex. Trafficked human flesh, now carcasses rotting by the side of the road. This is the end result of 'rescue boats' across the Med. These are the casualties of open borders and 'refugees welcome'. These are the invisible souls of #Grenfell". Katie Hopkins claimed that this incident was the result of the open borders policy that the UK is part of, even though there is no correlation between this incident and the refugees crossing the Mediterranean and much less the Grenfell Tower fires. Hopkins' statement is dishonest at best, aimed to perpetuate a false narrative about a "dangerous outsider" by weaponizing the fatal outcome of these victims that died in different tragic circumstances and twisting the context of their deaths. Besides, Great Britain does not have an open border agreement with Vietnam. On the contrary, an open border policy would decrease the likelihood of this incident happening in the first place because these victims would not have to suffer through grievous conditions to be allowed to enter the country legally.

Although celebrities spreading conspiracy theories might seem harmless since they do not hold as much influence as politicians, things take a dangerous turn when politicians start to co-opt conspiracy theories and fake news to further their personal agenda. That was the case of Nigel Farage, who was the leader of the UKIP and had ties with the controversial website InfoWars that is known for spreading misleading information. Nigel Farage's ties with InfoWars and its owner Alex Jones presents a danger to British democracy and stability since as Farage is a political leader that many citizens look up to. Note that Alex Jones is known for disseminating falsehoods concerning major incidents which prompted harassment towards the victims involved in the past: upon the 2012 Sandy Hook shooting which resulted in 28 deaths, Jones claimed that incident had been a hoax (Murdock, 2019). Moreover, Nigel Farage appeared at least six times on InfoWars and did not challenge Alex Jones on his ideas. Farage has come up as well with his own conspiracy theories that reflected his Euroscepticism and included statements such as "EU is part of a wider plot to usher in world government" and the claim that "left-wingers were in league with radical Islam to end the nation state and 'replace it with the globalist project" (Walker, 2019) during a chat with Alex Jones in 2018. In a political context, the term "globalist" holds an entirely different meaning which might not seem apparent at first. It has been used frequently in political discourse as a dog-whistle for "Jew" and this was no exception. No matter the key elements of each incident that takes place in Europe or Britain, most conspiracy theories in Britain come down to the assertion that Britain is being invaded, the population replaced and that war against the "other" is imminent.

Another case of a well-known figure supporting false information is Paul Golding, a British far-right activist and leader of Britain First. Golding recently appeared on Russia 24 channel defending the reality of the ‘great replacement’, a well-known racist conspiracy theory that alleges that the white people of western nations such as Europe and the USA are being replaced by non-white people, such as Arabs and Muslims. Golding also mentioned that the goal of the European Union was ‘to “eradicate” national cultures’ (Dearden, 2019).

5. Far-right radicalization and the rise of violent crime

The dissemination of conspiracy theories and fearmongering in British media and society and the valorization of cynicism over truth became the breeding ground for the rise of criminal acts in Britain, such as hate crimes and revenge attacks.

The difference between hate crime and terrorism might seem obvious in people’s mind but describing explicitly how these two differ can be challenging. That is because the criteria for each of these concepts is vague: both concepts entail that an individual will be harmed by someone else whose goal is to install fear. However, what indicates that an occurrence is a hate crime is that hate crimes ‘stem from irrational hatreds and often flow from very disturbed, even psychotic, minds. Often the motivation is parochial and sometimes personal’ (Strozier, 2018). Besides, hate crimes do not carry a large-scale political objective behind albeit this does not make them any less serious and reprehensible as terrorist attacks. Thereby, hate crimes are not normally applied to a state of war. They happen more frequently in places unaffected by armed conflicts where people of different backgrounds, that is ethnicity, political ideology, etc. live. Hate crimes are rooted in stereotypes and the target tends to be a minority.

Great Britain is a melting pot of cultures and ethnicities concentrated mostly in the metropolitan area of London. Despite the huge number of immigrants in London, they are still considered a minority in general and are bound to be targets of hate crimes.

In 2017 a revenge attack against a group of Muslims revealed a grim reality behind far-right ideology. On 19th June 2017, a vehicle rammed into a crowd of Muslims as they were aiding a man who had fainted at a bus stop. Due to this attack, 10 people were injured, and 1 person died. The driver named Darren Osborne was held down until the police arrived at the scene and he was arrested. Upon his arrest and examination of devices found in his house, it was discovered that weeks prior to the attack Osborne had looked up online information on topics such as Britain First, the previously mentioned far-right organization, InfoWars, the conspiracy and fake news website, and the English Defence League (EDL) which is also a far-

right organization very similar to Britain First. Osborne went as far as searching which political party at that moment was planning to bring the death penalty back. He had also allegedly read posts written by Tommy Robinson, the leader of the EDL and an anti-Muslimism figure (Tidy, 2018).

On 21st June 2017, Resham Khan was sitting in her car with her cousin Jameel Muhktar when a man passing by threw corrosive acid at them. The two were left with permanent burns after this attack. The acid was so corrosive that not only burned their skin but also melted their clothes and parts of their car. The offender's name was John Tomlin, and he was sentenced to 16 years in jail (Dearden, 2018). The metropolitan police later treated this assault as a hate crime since it was unprovoked and the period of time it occurred coincided with other instances of violent acts against Muslims, such as the Finsbury Park attack. This crime also highlighted England's history with acid attacks and the fact there are no legal restrictions in England when it comes to buying corrosive chemicals that people can find at a store for a cheap price.

A year before the attack referred before, on 16th June 2016, the murder of a British MP shocked Great Britain. Jo Cox, member of the Labor Party, was on her way to Birstall when a man named Thomas Mair approached her, shot her 3 times and stabbed her 15 times while shouting "Britain first". This happened a week before the EU referendum. Mair's acts a few days prior to the murder of Jo Cox revealed that he had gone to public libraries and used the computers there to search not only for information on Jo Cox but also Nazis, Ku Klux Klan material and the question "Is a .22 round deadly enough to kill with one shot to a human's head?" (Rayner, 2016). Mair was jailed for life.

The murder of Jo Cox stands out from the previously mentioned cases in the sense that it did not involve the murder or harm of a person at the hands of someone from a different ethnicity. Both Jo Cox and Mair were white British individuals. This highlights a serious underlying problem in British politics and uncovers the old "cracks" that are part of this particular society. Considering how stratified the British society is and the problems that social hierarchy drags behind, these incidents are not at all unexpected even if this does not justify violent crime. People often view politics as a black and white subject and insert those extremist views into two categories - conservatism and progressivism. Nowadays, the most prominent feature that distinguishes both is that progressivism tends to be more focused on the struggles of the working class with little to no regard to the workers' nationality, whereas conservatism is more restrict in valuing and upholding the traditional national identity. In this case, identity

and ideology have broken out of the “restraints” of race and caught up with the “conservative vs. progressive” worldview. Radicalized individuals might see political leaders of their own ethnicity as enemies, going as far as murdering them.

Far-right terrorism was considered the fastest growing threat in Britain in 2017. This came upon a series of arrests that concluded that most individuals were linked to far-right ideology, some of them as young as 14 years of age (Johnson, 2019). The fact teenagers are coerced into this kind of thinking reveals how vulnerable they are to media messages and moral panic, and how society as a whole failed in protecting and providing them with education and awareness on social matters.

6. The future: will Britain once again face the threat of the IRA?

The EU referendum of 2016 that caught Europe by surprise and whose intention was to find out the public opinion on the possibility of the United Kingdom leaving or remaining in the European Union was seen by many Brexit supporters as the first step to a more independent Britain no longer bound to European Union laws. On the other hand, it brought back a ghost from the past and the uncertainty of a future conflict around the corner with the old and silent IRA.

The Irish border is a delicate matter in Northern Ireland and a reminder of a chaotic and convoluted past that led to a modern divided Ireland. The integration of Great Britain in the European Union helped to establish peace in Ireland since the European Union regulations “softened” the border between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland, strengthening the economic relations between both areas and allowing the citizens from both regions to move freely from one place to the other. The same laws applied to services and circulation of goods. The UK’s membership in the European Union also provided a sense of unity in the whole Ireland which makes this one of the European Union’s greatest achievements in the last decades.

The Brexit proposal was welcomed by many across the United Kingdom, but it raised a few questions such as what would happen to the Irish border if the United Kingdom left the European Union and would Brexit be the final push for the IRA to return in full force, making the Good Friday Agreement obsolete. Contrary to what it seems, the IRA never ceased to exist after the Good Friday Agreement, even though the following period was relatively peaceful and a breath of fresh air after the years of violent conflicts.

One of Ireland's biggest concerns now in relation to the Brexit negotiations is whether or not Britain's departure from the European Union will affect the border and fuel violent armed conflicts. One thing is clear, though. If Brexit does happen, the current 'soft' Irish border will not be the same anymore, but this does not necessarily mean it will become what it used to be prior to the UK's integration in the EU. However, the UK is struggling to come up with a Brexit deal that is solid enough to be accepted by the European Union and likely to be successful.

As mentioned throughout this paper, the IRA and Britain have a long history of violent conflicts and interests. The IRA is essentially a paramilitary nationalist terrorist organization that seeks to join Northern Ireland with the Republic of Ireland therefore creating a fully united Ireland. Evidently, the Irish border presents itself as the IRA's main obstacle. Recent talks with the IRA showed that the wish to eliminate any trace of British presence on Irish land is just as fierce as it was in the past. On a recent interview with an IRA masked member, the man implied that the IRA was ready to intervene again anytime, claiming that "any border infrastructure in Northern Ireland would be a "legitimate target" for an attack" and justified this claim by stating "IRA is an army and as an army we are committed to armed struggle for political and social change in Ireland" (Glaze, 2019). These words show that the image of the old IRA that the Irish and the British have in mind is not so different from the current IRA, as their goals and methods have not changed since they ceased fire.

Brexit could bring about the hard border that was diminished after the Good Friday Agreement. In other words, in case of a no-deal Brexit, any kind of trade between the Republic of Ireland and the United Kingdom would have to follow the international norms established by the World Trade Organization. This case is a lot more complicated given that this would also apply to Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland which share the same island. There is another discussion surrounding what a hard border would look like since the term is so broad even when politicians discuss it. As of now, there is no confirmation of what a hard border would be like, but a few hypothetical situations have been presented such as traffic cameras, fences, walls, border checks, etc. (Williams, 2019). This is not likely to be the case, though.

Throughout 2019, a series of incidents in the city of Derry in Northern Ireland have sparked fear among civilians but it also brought to light one particular principle that makes up the concept of the IRA. The IRA's method seems to follow an almost nihilistic praxis: the fundamental part of their ideology is the cause and not who died for it or because of it. An

assassination that took place in April 2019 illustrates the previous point clearly. On 18th April, 29-year-old journalist Lyra McKee was shot in the head by an IRA member as she reported the riots taking place in Derry (‘Lyra McKee: ‘New IRA’ admits killing of journalist’, 2019). Her death shocked Britain, as McKee was neither a member of the IRA nor involved in the riots. However, the general indignation towards her death did not subside even after the response from an IRA member that offered their apologies to her partner, family, and friends in ‘behalf of IRA’ (Quinn, 2019). That is because the tone of this apology implied that McKee’s death was just another casualty amid a terrorist attack, similar to how death was perceived back during The Troubles.

These small-scale violent clashes are unlikely to be any different on the aftermath of the old hard border being imposed once again. The IRA refers to the Irish border not as something created by the Irish but as a British border – symbol of an invasion - imposed on their land that needs to be erased. Peace in Northern Ireland has never been fully established so the fact that the UK gets to decide what happens might flare up a new wave of violence incited by the IRA (Kirka, 2019). The IRA will take as a threat any major decision on Northern Ireland made by the British government. Since the situation around Brexit carries a great deal of historical and political baggage, no one knows for sure how long violence would last in Northern Ireland. In a worst-case scenario, it could escalate to something more brutal than it was in the past. As referred before, IRA’s regard towards human life is very limited and this includes the lives of their own people – the Irish. Will Brexit incite IRA to terrorize again? Will Brexit be the cataclysm for the formation of a new wave of refugees from Northern Ireland? How would the United Kingdom, Republic of Ireland and Europe deal with that crisis? Although this might seem exaggerated for now, the future is unclear, thus it is the responsibility of all institutions and politicians involved to make sure stability in both sides is maintained to stop any of the previous scenarios from becoming reality.

Conclusion

Great Britain is now one of the countries in Europe most affected by terrorist attacks. This most difficult part about tackling and countering terrorism is the fact that there is rarely any sign that will indicate an upcoming attack and not all of the individuals involved look or behave suspiciously. In relation to large-scale Islamic extremism, the average British citizen cannot be blamed for the terrorist attacks that take place in Britain since this is a result of Great Britain's military intervention and history of neo-colonialism around the world. Despite this, the average British citizen is extremely likely to be a victim of Islamic terrorism. In what concerns far-right terrorism, the victims are often minorities whose appearance seems to indicate they belong to the same ethnic group as Islamic terrorists - which is not always the case - even though the victims are not connected in any way to those terrorists.

The terror crisis looming over Britain is only going to escalate if measures are not implemented to counter these violent acts. Change should begin at home and one of the first priorities should be addressing the way British media delivers the news. The news should be presented as factual, clear and impartial as possible to prevent unnecessary fearmongering. When it comes to the Internet, fake news and conspiracy theories that are shared as factual information should be reported as soon as possible especially when the person behind it is a celebrity that people look up to. Individuals with large platforms should make use of their audience to combat cynicism and to promote dialogue, truth, fairness and to set an example on how reporting any sort of falsehood they spot online might save lives. On the other hand, combating propaganda should not be a gateway to unfair censorship.

The main priority of the British leaders and the higher institutions should be safeguarding the population not only from outside forces but also from the increasing domestic terrorism. This includes being aware that any kind of impactful intervention in foreign soil will have a domino effect: it will not only impact them but the population as well, whose trust is what draws the line between a failing and a successful leader. The ongoing Brexit negotiations that opened old wounds and might "revive" the IRA's old deeds is the new challenge that the British government cannot turn its back on. Firm commitment to solve this is more crucial now than ever.

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