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Original Citation

Busher, Joel and Macklin, Graham (2013) Interpreting “Cumulative Extremism”: A framework for enhanced conceptual clarity. In: Society for Terrorism Research 7th Annual Conference, 27th - 28th June 2013, London, UK. (Unpublished)

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Interpreting “Cumulative Extremism”

A framework for enhanced conceptual clarity

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27 June 2013

“Cumulative Extremism”

- CE: “the way in which one form of extremism can feed off and magnify other forms” (Eatwell 2006)
- CE: “is more threatening to the liberal democratic order than attacks from lone wolf extreme right-wingers or even al-Qaida-inspired spectacular bombings” (Eatwell and Goodwin 2010, 243)
- Dewsbury EDL bombing, if successful, was “bound to draw a response in revenge from its target and those who sympathise with the EDL” and “would most likely led to a tit-for-tat spiral of violence and terror.” (Bobbie Cheema QC, BBC News, 6 June 2013).



Definitions and Limitations

- Useful addition to literature but under-theorised:
 - What are precisely are we talking about?
 - Why only *sometimes* result in escalating violence?
- Social movement & historical literature can help gain more nuanced understanding.



Clarifying the 'outcomes' of CE

- Radicalisation of beliefs or actions?
 - What are being used as the indicators of CE?
- Who is becoming more 'extreme'?
 - 'spirals of violence', 'communal polarisation', both?
 - Case specific relationship between core processes and 'communal polarisation'
 - Which specific populations are cited as *evidence* of CE?
 - Movement heterogeneity
 - 'Lone' actors
 - Generating vs sustaining mobilisation?
- The wavelengths of CE
 - The 'day of anger' and the 'day of revenge'*

*McCauley, C. & S. Moskalenko 2011. *Friction*, OUP

Clarifying the core processes of CE:

The causal pathways of movement/countermovement influence

- 'Direct' & 'indirect' influence*
- From 'tit-for-tat' to 'co-evolution'**
- Key aspects of the environment in which co-evolution takes place
 - Open vs. closed policy issues
 - Cultural resonance of framing context
 - Legislative & policing context
 - Extant protest cultures and repertoires



*Meyer, David S., and Suzanne Staggenborg. 1996. Movements, Countermovements, and the Structure of Political Opportunity. *American Journal of Sociology* 101 (6):1628-1660.

**Oliver, P. E., and D. J. Myers. 2002. The Coevolution of Social Movements. *Mobilization* 8 (1):1-24.

Clarifying the core processes of CE:

Movement/countermovement 'coupling'

- 'Tight', 'loose'* and asymmetric coupling
- What shapes patterns of coupling and how these change over time?
 - Opposing movements' position within political opportunity structures
 - Variations in opposing movements' resources and capabilities
 - Variations in protest cultures within which opposing groups are socially and politically embedded
 - Opposing movements' positions within their respective movement cycles
 - The socio-political position of the groups' supporters
- The issue of *functional equivalence* – can opposing groups really be conceived of as 'two sides of the same coin'?

*Zald, M. N., and B. Useem. 1982. Movement and Countermovement: Loosely coupled conflict. In *CRSO Working Paper No. 276*. Ann Arbor: Centre for Research on Social Organization.

Conclusions

- 5 questions to encourage more detailed and nuanced analyses of possible processes of CE:
 1. What does 'extreme' refer to - beliefs or actions?
 2. Who is claimed to be effected by the process?
 3. What wavelengths of 'CE' are being described – what timescales are we looking at?
 4. What are the causal pathways of mutual impact at the core of CE?
 5. How and to what degree are the opposing movements 'coupled'?

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