

STOCHASTIC TERRORISM

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Stochastic Terrorism

Most initial thoughts about terrorism involve envisioning - at least for individuals in the developed world - a small cell of mostly foreign individuals collaborating with masterminds in a chaotic or war-torn country to plan large scale, ghastly attacks on civilian populations. Those not envisioning such images, likely think of local radicalized groups planning attacks against a government or civilian target (e.g., right-wing militias or anarchist groups). Such terrorism strategies - i.e., the distributed cell model - have been responsible for horrendous attacks; a perfect example would be the September 11th attacks which involved cells of Al Qaeda receiving inspiration and support from Al Qaeda's then headquarters in Afghanistan.

This structure of terrorism is, indeed, effective; however, as NATO countries and their allies have increased efforts - since the September 11th attacks - to disable, defund, and disarm distributed cells, terrorist organizations and other supporters of politically driven violence have sought out other methods to further their agendas. The Islamic State or ISIS - for example - initially sought to create their own political entity and use the resources of a state - albeit an unrecognized one - to further their ambitions internationally. With their more-or-less defeat since the fall of their capital Raqqa, ISIS and other groups - both international Islamic fundamentalist groups and local right-wing groups (e.g., some members of the Alt-Right in the United States and supporters of racial nationalist groups/causes) - have sought to encourage politically inspired violence through even more disparate means. By completely severing any ties between a central group and various cells, groups promoting violence or, at a minimum, normalizing the idea of and execution of politically motivated violence have a degree of plausible deniability for their role and, in many cases, groups that limit their activities to such can operate freely in many developed countries and take part in the regular political process.

Many recent attacks - e.g., the attack by Dylann Roof who committed a massacre at a primarily African-American church in Charleston South Carolina and the recent attack on The Tree of Life synagogue in Pittsburgh Pennsylvania - were considered lone wolf attacks not associated with any overarching nationalist or racist group. Rather, the attackers were inspired largely online - by content generated by extremists who, while operating largely on the fringes of political discourse, are, in fact, operating within the confines of the law in many developed countries. Such attacks are classified as stochastic terrorism as opposed to the forms described above.

Stochastic terrorist acts are acts where one can reasonably predict the probability or likelihood of them occurring; nevertheless, one cannot predict when will occur. For example, experts can infer that because of the increase in heated rhetoric, societal division, economic disengagement, etc. that attacks will occur; however, one cannot reason the where or what sort of attack will occur. The best analogy for it is the act of scattering hundreds or thousands of plant seeds knowing that most will not grow, yet, there is an extremely

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good chance that at least one or two seeds will flower into a fully-grown plant. This is extremely dangerous as it weaponizes both mass communication methods such as social media and the economic disenchantment many individuals have experienced because of the decline of industrial jobs and the increase in inequality within the developed world. Many believe such incidents will continue to occur until a significant number of the disaffected in developed societies are fully reintegrated into the social and economic life of their countries.

Stochastic Terrorism: 1. The use of mass communication to incite random actors to carry out violent or terrorist acts that are statistically predictable but individually unpredictable. 2. Remote-control murder by lone wolf

http://stochasticterrorism.blogspot.com/

Soundbite analytics

- In 2017, there were, in the US, three major attacks that could be considered stochastic terrorist attacks – the deaths of Srinivas Kuchibhotla, Timothy Caughman, and the dual murder of Ricky John Best and Taliesin Namkai-Meche.
- Hate crimes in the largest 10 cities increased by 12 percent in 2016.
- The largest increase was in San Jose, California where 44 crimes were reported (a 132 percent increase).
- African Americans are the most targeted group – representing 23 percent of all hate crimes.

SOURCES

1 https://qz.com/1436267/trump-stochastic-terror-and-the-hate-that-ends-in-violence/
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