



**Center for Research
on Extremism**



POLITIHØGSKOLEN

Counter-Terrorism as Crime Prevention: A Holistic Approach

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Counter-terrorism as crime prevention

- ▼ What does a counter-terrorism look like if we base it on a holistic crime prevention approach?
- ▼ The goal of CT is primarily to prevent *future* acts of terrorism - in other words, crime prevention
- ▼ There is a need for a broader and more holistic approach to crime prevention and counter-terrorism, integrating both "soft" and repressive measures
- ▼ Goal: to show how different strategies and different preventive actors may complement and support rather than compete and undermine each other
- ▼ Apply *preventive mechanism* as the basic principle for developing a set of coherent strategies

Starting point:

There are several competing models of crime prevention which (apparently) are incompatible, theoretically and practically.

- ▼ **The criminal justice model of crime prevention (general and individual prevention)**
- ▼ **The social model of crime prevention**
- ▼ **The situational crime prevention model**

Each of these models are too narrow and do not incorporate the other perspectives but tend to see them as competing strategies. Result: An ideological debate on which strategy is "better", "more effective" or "evidence-based".

An alternative approach: Develop a more holistic model based on the principle of *preventive mechanisms*.

A general model for crime prevention

- ▼ **Establishing and maintaining moral (normative) barriers** against committing criminal acts
- ▼ **Reducing recruitment** to criminal social environments and activities by eliminating or reducing the social and individual root causes and processes that lead to criminality
- ▼ **Deterrence**: Getting potential perpetrators to refrain from criminal acts through the threat of punishment or other negative consequences
- ▼ **Disruption** by stopping criminal acts before they are carried out
- ▼ **Incapacitation** (or neutralisation) by denying perpetrators the ability (capacity) to carry out new criminal acts
- ▼ **Protecting vulnerable targets** against criminal acts, reduce opportunities
- ▼ **Reducing the harmful consequences** of criminal acts
- ▼ **Reducing the rewards** from criminal acts
- ▼ **Rehabilitation**: Helping people who have been involved in or punished for crime to settle back into a normal life

This general model needs to be specified for specific crime types to become a preventive strategy!

Some basic concepts

- ▼ *Measures* = the specific means or methods implemented to reduce terrorism/crime
- ▼ *Preventive mechanism* = *how* a measure is reducing terrorism / crime
- ▼ A measure is *what* we do, a mechanism is *how* it works
- ▼ Some mechanisms are mental, others are physical
- ▼ A measure may activate several different mechanisms, including unintended side-effects
- ▼ Different measures may activate the same mechanism

Analytical approach for specifying preventive strategies:

- ▼ Describing each of the preventive mechanisms: *how* does it reduce (future) acts of terrorism (or other forms of crime)?
- ▼ **Measures** used to activate these mechanisms
- ▼ **Actors** possessing the relevant measures
- ▼ **Target group(s)** to be influenced by the measures
- ▼ **Strengths and benefits** of the measures
- ▼ **Limitations, costs and negative side-effects** of the measures

Norm setting against terrorism

- ▼ **Mechanism:** Reinforce objections and moral barriers against the use of violence and terrorism; reducing radicalisation
- ▼ **Actors:** Political, ideological or religious leaders, opinion-makers, media, education, family members, peers, victims.
- ▼ **Measures:** Socialisation, law-making, public statements and debate, public diplomacy and campaigns to influence public opinion, demonstrations, etc.
- ▼ **Target groups:** Entire populations and risk groups
- ▼ **Advantages:** Measures are non-repressive and not controversial. Low costs in economic and human terms.
- ▼ **Limitations and side effects:** Norms are weak barriers; easily overcome by strong leaders and group processes, or by shocking 'trigger events'.
Hard core activists are difficult to reach and influence; easier to win over their constituencies.

Social and political prevention to reduce emergence of terrorism and engagement in violence

- ▼ **Mechanism:** Reduce motivation for terrorism by removing causes, grievances and frustrations leading to radicalisation and engagement.
- ▼ **Actors:** Governments, political activists, NGOs, youth workers, etc.
- ▼ **Measures:** Conflict resolution, political processes, social development, non-discrimination, rule of law, etc.
- ▼ **Target groups:** Entire populations and/or specific groups at risk for radicalising into violence
- ▼ **Advantages:**
 - ▼ Addresses the “roots” of the problem, not merely the symptoms
 - ▼ May have long-term effects if successful
 - ▼ May have positive effects other social and political problems than terrorism alone.
- ▼ **Limitations and negative side effects:**
 - ▼ There is no single root cause of terrorism; but many and complex
 - ▼ Many root causes are difficult to solve or remove
 - ▼ Measures will often take a long time before they make an impact
 - ▼ Effects are difficult to measure
 - ▼ Terrorism is frequently sustained by other reasons than those which gave rise to the terrorist campaign initially

Deterrence

- ▼ **Mechanism:** Increasing the costs of terrorism by (threat of) punishment / retaliation to reduce motivation
- ▼ **Actors:** Police, criminal justice system, military force
- ▼ **Target groups:** Individuals, groups or states involved in terrorism or considering it
- ▼ **Measures:** Repression, violent force, punishment, media attention, economic and diplomatic sanctions
- ▼ **Advantages:**
 - ▼ May be particularly effective towards state sponsors of terrorism
 - ▼ Popular! May increase public support of the government
- ▼ **Limitations and negative side effects:**
 - ▼ Deterrence is generally not effective against terrorists
 - ▼ Limited effects towards highly motivated (e.g. suicide) terrorists and fragmented or decentralised groups
 - ▼ Difficult to impact actors who can not be located
 - ▼ May easily hit innocent third parties (“collateral damage”),
 - ▼ May turn the state into a mirror image of the terrorists
 - ▼ May reinforce the spiral of violence without addressing root causes
 - ▼ May play into the hands of terrorists, making governments respond in ways where they weaken and undermine themselves

Disruption of terrorist attacks

- ▼ **Mechanism:** Preventing terrorists from carrying through prepared attacks by detecting and stopping them in advance
- ▼ **Actors:** Security services, police, security guards, the public, media
- ▼ **Target groups:** individuals and groups already radicalised and involved in militant activities
- ▼ **Measures:**
 - ▼ Intelligence, surveillance, security controls
 - ▼ Intercepting and apprehending terrorist before they attack
 - ▼ Early intervention with warnings, dialogue with radicalised youths
 - ▼ Information sharing between agencies and to the public
- ▼ **Advantages:**
 - ▼ Targeted and concrete, saving lives, reducing suffering
 - ▼ High legitimacy, reinforcing confidence in the police and government
 - ▼ May break a potential cycle and escalation of violence
- ▼ **Limitations and negative side effects:**
 - ▼ Innocent people may become targets of surveillance and arrests
 - ▼ Danger of stigmatising ethnic and religious minorities
 - ▼ Risk of striking too early for conviction or too late to prevent disaster
 - ▼ Some prepared actions may slip through

Incapacitation

- ▼ **Mechanism:** Removing the capacity of violent actors to carry out (more) attacks and cause harm
- ▼ **Actors:** Police, courts, prison services, control regimes, military
- ▼ **Target groups:** Individuals or groups involved in terrorism
- ▼ **Measures:** Detention, "kill or capture", (violent) force, but also reducing access to economic funding, weapons or bomb precursors
- ▼ **Advantages:**
 - ▼ Effective when taking out key activists or groups with limited membership
 - ▼ Governments usually possess relevant capacities
- ▼ **Limitations and negative side effects:**
 - ▼ Limited effects on groups with a high recruitment and a strong social basis
 - ▼ May reinforce recruitment and extremism
 - ▼ Repression may undermine human rights and the moral legitimacy of the government

Protecting vulnerable targets

▼ Mechanisms:

- ▼ Identify and remove opportunities for specific types of terrorist action, making it more difficult to carry through attacks.
- ▼ Increase the efforts needed to carry through a specific attack
- ▼ Increase the risks for detection

▼ Measures: Large spectre of possible means

▼ Actors: Many! (Security guards, control agencies, various authorities, place owners, the public, etc.)

▼ Target groups: in principle active and potential terrorists, but measures tend to impact everyone

▼ Advantages: Often immediate and measurable effects on specific problems.

▼ Limitations and side effects:

- ▼ May displace attacks from hardened targets to “softer” targets
- ▼ Increased security measures may create a ‘Big Brother’ society

Reducing harmful consequences of attacks

- ▼ **Mechanism:** Reducing harmful consequence through interventions which are planned, prepared and trained *before* an attack takes place
- ▼ **Actors:** Police, fire brigade, medical emergency units, various authorities, NGOs, place owners, citizens
- ▼ **Target group:** Victims of terrorism - individuals, groups, institutions and society in general
- ▼ **Measures:** Crisis management, immediate relief, psychological assistance, restoring critical infrastructure, communication, impact reduction.
- ▼ **Advantages:** Reducing suffering, restoring a sense of safety and confidence in authorities
- ▼ **Limitations and side effects:** Expensive, resource intensive; deficient crisis management will undermine confidence and perceived security

Reducing rewards for carrying out acts of terrorism

- ▼ **Mechanism:** Make use of violence less attractive by reducing rewards; thereby reducing motivation.
Basic question: 'What do the terrorists try to achieve?'
- ▼ **Actors:** Political authorities, business, news media, hostage negotiators etc.
- ▼ **Target group:** Terrorist actors and those considering to make use of terrorist means
- ▼ **Means:** Not acting as terrorists wish
- ▼ **Advantages:** May reduce future acts of terrorism and reinforce governmental legitimacy
- ▼ **Limitations and side effects:** Difficult dilemmas, hostages might be killed, "patriotic journalism"

Disengagement from terrorism

- ▼ **Mechanisms:** Make active terrorists quit their participation in terrorism, individually or collectively, voluntarily or involuntarily.
- ▼ **Actors:** Governments, criminal justice system, NGOs
- ▼ **Target groups:** Those involved in terrorism
- ▼ **Measures:** ‘Stick and carrot’, amnesty and witness (protection) programmes, resocialisation and deradicalisation programmes, negotiations, political processes, alternatives to violence.
- ▼ **Advantages:**
 - ▼ May bring an end to terrorist campaigns
 - ▼ May reduce violence and suffering
 - ▼ May reduce the size of terrorist groups and prevent recruitment
 - ▼ May provide vital intelligence and witnesses in court cases
- ▼ **Limitations and negative side effects:**
 - ▼ Amnesty programmes may easily be abused; risk of recidivism
 - ▼ Amnesty may be difficult to accept by the victims of terrorism
 - ▼ May undermine principles of the rule of law and sense of justice

Main strategies for preventing terrorism:

▼ Short-term preventive strategies

- ▼ Deterrence by threat of retaliation or punishment
- ▼ Pre-emptive disruption of planned terrorist attacks
- ▼ Incapacitation
- ▼ Protecting vulnerable targets

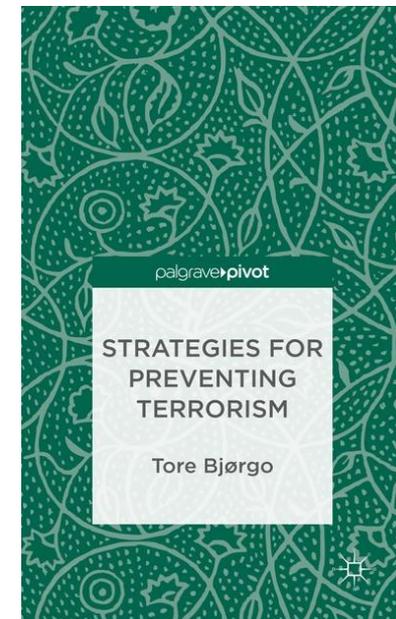
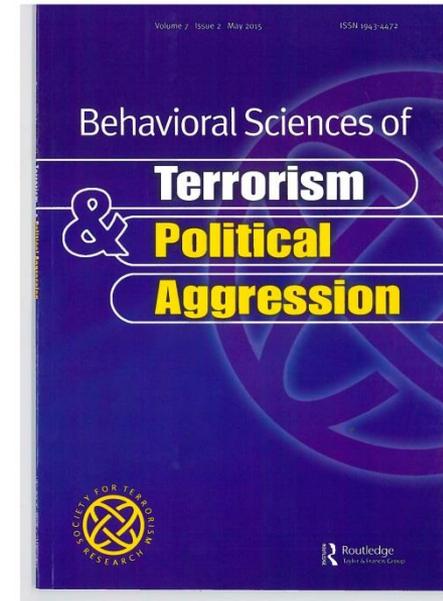
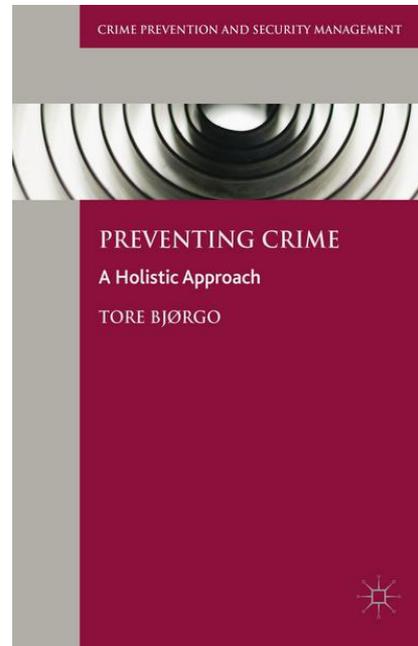
▼ Long-term preventive strategies

- ▼ Reducing harm from terrorist attacks
- ▼ Reducing rewards from terrorism
- ▼ Norm setting to delegitimize terrorism
- ▼ Social and political prevention by reducing root causes and motivations for violent radicalisation and recruitment
- ▼ Disengagement from terrorism - making individuals and groups discontinue their involvement in terrorism

▼ Main challenge: To make short-term and long-term strategies support rather than undermine each other

You have seen the
movie...
now read the article in ...

... and the books!



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