

**IT COULD BE YOU...  
COUNTERING ISLAMIC  
RADICALISATION**

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### David Rubens Associates

David Rubens Associates is a specialist corporate security consultancy offering strategic security services to individuals and organisations across the world.

DRA has worked with government agencies, NGO's, international conglomerates and major global events, and brings a mixture of strategic vision, operational experience and academic research to all of its projects, however large or small.

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## It could be you...Countering Islamic Radicalisation

There is a widely held belief that by the time that a government comes to accept something as true, it has usually become so widely acknowledged as to have become almost self-evident, or, in more colloquial language, 'the statement of the bleedin' obvious'! Whether it is the fact that children need more exercise, that poverty is linked to poor health or that large corporations are basically in existence to rip the rest of us off, governments seem to need fancy committees to tell them what to everybody seems perfectly clear and simple.

An article in the Guardian last month publicised that MI5 has concluded that there are no easy ways to identify radical Muslims, and that rather than being members of some SMERSH-like international organisation dedicated to the overthrow of western civilisation, Islamic radicals are 'home-grown' or 'grass root' terrorists who do not carry out acts of terrorism because of some rabid jihadist belief or because they truly believe that by dying a martyr they are guaranteed seventy-two virgins in Paradise, but rather because of the effects on their lives of their own governments, whether it is through oppressive laws targeting Muslims in this country or the actions of the UK and US governments in Iraq, Afghanistan and the Palestinian Territories. Now, this may seem reasonable to most of us, but it was only a few years ago that Tony Blair was denying any possible link between those UK government policies and the radicalisation of Islamic youth in the UK.

The first credible organisation to make these claims was the Royal Institute of International Affairs (also known as Chatham House), who claimed in a 2005 report that UK participation in the war in Iraq had proven an ideal recruitment campaign for Al Qaeda, had put the UK public at risk and had increased the likelihood of Islamic terrorist attacks against UK citizens and interests. Given that this conclusion was completely unacceptable on political grounds, even if it was correct on every other ground, Tony Blair immediately responded with the claim that the attacks on London (the 7/7/2005 suicide bombings on three tubes and one bus, causing 51 deaths), was the work of fanatics who subscribed to an 'evil ideology', and that it would be a "misunderstanding of a catastrophic order" to think that if we changed our behaviour they would change theirs".

The recent MI5 report makes it clear that there is no single profile of a radicalised Muslim, and that the reasons that people who do choose a path of terrorism cannot be simplified down into an 'evil ideology'. Those who become terrorists are as likely to be university educated as to have left school with no qualifications, are as likely to be married with children as to be sexually frustrated youths seeking martyrship in order to sublimate sexual urges (which was one theory that for a time was quite popular!), and are as likely to be non-

religious people who use alcohol, drugs and have a non-married sexual life as to be religious fanatics cocooned in an Islamic life-style. In fact, the MI5 report goes as far as to say that there is evidence that a well-established religious identity actually protects against violent radicalisation.

So what does this mean for us, both in the short term and long term? One of the clearest messages that this report sends out is that it is not only wrong but counter-productive to speak about a single unified form of Islamic radicalisation, and even more to consider UK Islamic community as one single unified group. There is a growing understanding that the answer to Islamic radicalisation lies within the community itself, allowing a wide-range of voices and counter-voices to be heard, and trusting that the lure of Islamic radicalisation will recede as the society in which those potential jihadi's live becomes more open, accepting and even welcoming. What certainly will not solve the problem of radicalisation is increased monitoring and disruption of the lives of the vast majority of Muslims who are not only not involved in radical Islamic ideology, but who are, according to some reports, likely to have a higher level and trust and belief in the British police force than the rest of the general population around them.

It may not be what politicians want to hear, but when even security chiefs are telling them that the answer to Islamic radicalisation is not increased police powers but rather an increase in the social freedoms and equality that our society is supposed to be based on, then perhaps it is time that they started listening.

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