

First, 'illegitimate' attacks reinforce the behaviour they target: psychological research shows there is a strong human motive to resist coercion, particularly at the group level. The terror attack on cartoonists will *increase* the uptake of cartooning in France. The use of murder to challenge the cartoon depiction of Mohammed has already, predictably, *increased* the prevalence of such depictions. So too militarist violence and repression against terrorists may *increase* terror. Of relevance to the campaign against ISIS/ISIL in particular, it seems clear that as long as innocent parties continue to be killed and non-violent Muslims continue to be repressed in the name of anti-terror campaigns, then anti-terror campaigns are not only not likely to reduce terror, they are likely to spread it.

Second, the national and world leaders who are building an arsenal of anti-terror choices must collectively address the desired alternative behaviour for their political opponents, and reinforce that alternative. Psychology tells us that one of the reasons why a particular collective action is chosen is if other behaviours are perceived not to work. This understanding can be used to assess recent political events that have involved Muslim groups or individuals. For example, if non-violent Muslim leaders win power democratically (as happened in Egypt), and their overthrow in a coup is tolerated or even funded, it sends a negative signal about the utility of pursuing social change in the Middle East through the democratic process. In addition, funding repressive regimes which kill and imprison innocents, while decrying such practices, also leads to being seen as hypocritical. The longstanding toleration of torture, prisoner abuse, and detention without trial in Guantanamo Bay and elsewhere undermines the credibility of advice to work within the rule of law. In short, even though the motive for supporting political repression, militarist violence, or abuse of the legal process may be a genuine desire to protect against terror, the psychology of group conflict tells us that these approaches sow the seeds of future violence, creating a dysfunctional longer-term dynamic.

We are at pains to say that there is no quid pro quo. All terror attacks are wrong and all victims' murders abhorrent. The victims of *Charlie Hebdo*, the people of France, and the world deserve the opportunity for collective grieving, and they deserve the acknowledgement and condemnation of their attackers' barbarism. There is no moral calculus in which a lack of attention to the deaths

of some justifies the murderous attack on others, or one country's support of murder here justifies attacking civilians there.

There are also Yemeni, Pakistani, or Nigerian victims of terror; there are Indonesians, and Australians in the Bali bombing; there are Syrian and Iraqi victims. Their deaths deserve grieving and their lives deserve celebrating too. There is a moral issue, as well as a clear psychological feedback loop which is arguably reinforcing future terror: on either account, the moral and

human rights abuses in the Middle East and elsewhere must be resisted. Militarist violence that props up one abusive power to hold down another must give way to other mechanisms of dispute resolution. Funding for state agents of terror must be withdrawn. Consistent accountability to international law and to war crimes tribunals must be established. These of course

are political statements, but they are also recommendations for counter-terrorism policy – recommendations which have an evidence basis in psychological research.

Conclusion

National and world leaders are strenuously engaged in developing counter-terrorism responses to protect their citizens in the aftermath of the *Charlie Hebdo* massacre and as the momentum of the ISIS/ISIL threat increases. Cool heads and considered responses are essential, and here psychology can contribute some important research-based perspectives on group conflict and dispute resolution. Other areas of psychology also have relevant understandings to offer on how to prevent young people joining the terrorist cause. We must find ways to ensure psychology's thoughtful and research-based contribution is considered in the development of effective and just counter-terrorism policies and actions. ■

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The reading list referred to in the text can be found in the online version of the article (www.psychology.org.au/inpsych/2015/february/louis).

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An earlier abridged version of this article appeared online at the In Mind blog, www.in-mind.org/blog/post/empowering-cartoonists-detering-killers-protecting-bystanders-can-psychology-contribute.

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