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Paradox and the concept of proportionality

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We wish to avoid another Bataclan. We cannot pick out an Islamist extremist from amongst the mass of humanity migrating across porous borders. Migrants bring their own cultural values which may be democratically naïve. Personal vulnerabilities like avenging the killing of a family member, disengagement, poverty, mental illness, illiteracy and imprisonment are fertile conditions for extremist recruitment. Ofstead has informed us of illegal madrassahs. Even intelligent teenagers become jihadi brides and school governors, parents and preachers may facilitate this by behaving as the “enemy within”.

Citizens in destination nations will riot or favour nationalism if they have no say over their own lives, locality or how society distributes resources. The rules of Schengen and the Dublin Treaty have been ripped up by Angela Merkel, which appears undemocratic. The European Union has divergent views on political unity and economic power, the latter which is now concentrated in the hands of a few central bankers. Further oil and financial resources are being hijacked by extremist organisations like Daesh.

Both security service and terrorist activity are by their very nature hidden. We therefore do not know if security activity is reasonable. You cannot be happy or free in a repressive police state or if you are a civilian in a conflict zone. Extremists will overrun weak governments. Strong government with intelligence is a deterrent against violent extremists and power ought to always rest with the former otherwise your state has failed. But people will vote in terrorist organisations like Hezbollah and even Nazis, as history has shown.

At the end of the day responses must be proportionate and that depends on the gathering of intelligence and weighing on the scales of judgment. There must be checks and balances on the powers of security services. How do you measure who is working for good when one man's terrorist is another's freedom fighter? We must uphold Western democratic values particularly women's rights. Yet large organisations which are bureaucratic are opaque and disfavour our holding them to account either fiscally or in terms of governance. One example is the NHS; another is the EU.

There is no substitute for arms, computer know-how and strong legitimate government as a deterrent. Even a strong UK government only lasts five years. It is necessary to formulate national strategy over the longer term so those responsible for this will not be elected. The situation shifts over time. The world differs from the picture portrayed by mainstream journalists. The military cannot tell us their secrets or sacrifice the element of surprise. The Military and Defence companies excel at Operations Research but those of us at civilian universities cannot know this. If we were privy to more intelligence we might have a fuller debate. Spies need to extract information from suspects and may have to handle them roughly or intern them but should kill them only in 'war' and extrajudicial killings have been performed by drones so up to date technological capability is essential. Proportionality and expert consultation rather than distorted popular sentiment should guide us in matters of cyber security. It is a matter of results outcome analysis and judgment. Security services could usefully make greater effort to demonstrate to the general public that they are trustworthy; this is quite difficult since they are secret.