



Introduction to CSTPV

by Alex P. Schmid, Director CSTPV

There are scores of research centres, think tanks and programmes that address terrorism worldwide. The Centre for the Study of Terrorism and Political Violence (CSTPV) is one of the oldest. It is part of the School of International Relations of the University of St. Andrews. In the fall of 2006 CSTPV moved into new premises, occupying now the whole second floor of the West-wing of the New Arts Building in the Library Park on The Scores. The move was preceded by a change in leadership. CSTPV was founded in 1994 by Prof. Paul Wilkinson. He became its first Chairman and Dr. Bruce Hoffman became its first Director. After 1998, Paul Wilkinson combined the two roles until Dr. Magnus Ranstorp was appointed Acting Director and then from 2005 to mid-2005 as Director. I came to St. Andrews in May 2006 after serving for several years on CSTPV's Advisory Council while working as Officer-in-Charge of the Terrorism Prevention Branch of the United Nations in Vienna.

Despite these changes in leadership, there are certain themes in CSTPV's research that have been maintained throughout its existence. The most important one is a focus on how a liberal state copes with terrorism without losing its character. That theme, pursued persistently by Paul Wilkinson, is more topical than ever, and not just for the United Kingdom. A new, revised edition of Paul's *Terrorism vs. Democracy: the Liberal States Response* was published in the summer of 2006. Paul Wilkinson and Dr. Anthony Richards have also evaluated, with a grant from the Economic and Social Research Council, and in collaboration with the University of Southampton, the United Kingdom's preparedness for future terrorist attacks. Some of the findings of their report *The Domestic Management of Terrorist Attacks in the United Kingdom* were very prescient in the light of the attack on the London Transport system on 7 July 2005. The full report *UK Homeland Security* (425 pp.) is in press and will be published in June 2007 by Routledge.

Another strand of research, understandably after Lockerbie, has been a focus on Aviation Security. In addition to that, CSTPV has also developed expertise in the emerging field of Maritime Security where our South East Asia specialist Dr. Peter Lehr, originally from Heidelberg University, is currently leading the research effort. Yet another strand of research has been a focus on Northern Ireland. Anthony Richards has been doing research on Northern Ireland's terrorist fronts and the peace process and its turbulences and so have two psychologists who joined CSTPV from Cork University, Prof. Max Taylor and Dr. John Horgan.

For much of 2006, CSTPV staff has been involved in the development of modules for the E-Learning project which provides a sophisticated introduction to transnational terrorism and offers a Certificate in Terrorism Studies to distant learners completing the course.

Where do we go from here? I think we should build on the strength that exists.

First, in line with the ESRC project which led to two book-length publications, we should continue to offer evaluations on the appropriateness and effectiveness of state responses to terrorism. There is a need for independent

outside evaluations of the impact of a whole range of counter-terrorist measures. After more than five years of a “Global War on Terror” there is still no agreement where we stand in this endeavour. The metrics of success for counter-terrorism and the success criteria held by the terrorists themselves might be quite different. Both deserve our attention. CSTPV has prepared a major project on this, which has been submitted to a potential funder who expressed a keen interest in the proposal.

Second, since we have two renowned psychologists, Max Taylor and John Horgan, among the staff of CSTPV, we will address questions where psychology has a comparative advantage over other disciplines. Questions like: “what attracts young people to terrorist organizations and how and why do they join them?”, as well as the question: “why do some of them leave terrorist organisations?” are both academically challenging and policy-relevant. The field of radicalisation studies is one of the fastest-growing in terrorism research and CSTPV is involved in it also in an advisory capacity since two staff members are serving on the European Commission’s Expert Group on Violent Radicalisation. John Horgan is collaborating and is co-investigator on a major research grant, with a Norwegian research institute on a study on how and why terrorists exit from their groups. Dr Horgan and Professor Taylor are also actively involved in research into terrorism in Africa (especially Sudan and Somalia) and two recent ESRC research proposals have addressed this.

CSTPV has maintained various databases over the years. These have primarily been used to train student interns in the systematic collection and analysis of open source information on terrorist incidents and groups. This work will continue although in different form since other players are active in this field with greater resources and more technical support staff and there is no point in duplicating efforts. We are sharing our data with the new Global Terrorism Database maintained by the Center for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START) at the University of Maryland.

We will continue the collection of data, both quantitative and qualitative, and are greatly helped by Mr. Joseph Easson, who joined us as Data Manager in September 2006. He is chiefly responsible for the collection of primary documents from terrorist and other extremist groups. This involves all sorts of statements from terrorists, so that we can analyse them and try to understand better the rationale underlying political violence. Much of the terrorist discourse takes place on the Internet. In order to study the communication aspects of terrorism, CSTPV has sponsored three new PhDs posts. One of them studies terrorist uses of the internet, another their uses of the mass media while the third looks at how radical rhetoric can instigate violent action as part of a larger study on violent radicalisation.

A major focus of our efforts is on E-Learning. CSTPV has developed a Certificate programme and is now proceeding to develop a Diploma and Master’s programme in terrorism studies under the leadership of Prof. Max Taylor. In March 2007, the Faculty of Arts agreed to the proposal for a Post Graduate Diploma in Terrorism Studies, which is now in process of development. In this we are being supported by some of the best minds in the field like the Sir David Veness, Under-Secretary-General for Safety and Security of the United Nations.

In the past year, CSTPV has also been working on energy security and organized, in cooperation with Eden Intelligence, a conference on this topic in June 2006 in London. In addition, CSTPV held its traditional annual conference in *Intelligence and International Terrorism* in London, also co-organized by Eden Intelligence. The growing success of these conferences has contributed to our decision to hold the next conference in mid-June 2007 in Washington, D.C., where some of the former alumni of CSTPV now hold official positions in the field of countering terrorism. The purpose of this is also to intensify the dialogue between Academia and the policy community – a dialogue that is sometimes difficult but one we should not avoid if we want to contribute to reducing the amount of terrorism and political violence in the world.

(Source: CSTPV Annual Report 2007)

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