Recruitment and Muslims against Crusaders (MAC) attractive: A Strain theory approach

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Abstract

Muslims Against Crusaders (MAC) was the last reincarnation of Al Muhajiroun. Some of its members travelled to Syria and joined ISIS and others have been arrested the British security services. Most research on Al Muhajiroun and its reincarnation tend to focus on socio-political and economic circumstances allied with Salafi/Wahhabi Islam, to explain the motivations to join extremist groups. However, such explanations fail to account for the role that collective strain, vicarious strain and linked fate have on individuals deciding to join MAC. This paper argues that the experience of collective strain, collective strain and linked fate by members of MAC contribute to them deciding to join the group.

Introduction

Muslims Against Crusaders (MAC) was set up in 2010 by Abu Assadullah, a British Muslim from London. The group was another reincarnation of Al Muhajiroun (Ilyas, 2014 and Klausen et al. 2012). The group gained international notoriety for burning national flags, Poppies on Remembrance Day and for chants like 'British soldiers burn in hell'. Theresa May banned the group in November 2011, when she was British Home Sectary (Taylor & Peachey, 2011). The group has not been replaced, which is mainly due to the British anti-terrorism legislation. Since the banning of the group, some of its members, such as Al-Britani and Abu Rumaysah have joined ISIS in Syria (Doyle, 2014 and Dearden, 2014) or engaged in homegrown terrorism, such as Khuram Shahzad Butt (Booth et al. 2017). In 2016, Anjem Choudary, who was closely connected to the group, was arrested and charged with supporting ISIS and sentenced to 5 years in prison but was released in 2018 (Quinn, 2018). What exists today of the group is a loose network of individuals, who continue to provide commentary on Islam and politics on social media, such as WhatsApp, Facebook, YouTube and Twitter (Small, 2017 and Baraa, 2017).

Since the banning of MAC in 2011 and the emergence of ISIS, the group has somewhat become irrelevant. However, Hope not Hate, an anti-racism organisation has claimed that Al Muhajiroun activists (Al Muhajiroun and AMC are the group) have regrouped and are active on the streets of London, Luton and Derby, Birmingham, Leicester and Slough (Dearden, 2019). This situation, coupled with the fact that the socio-political conditions and international conflicts that motivated people to join MAC still remain could mean that the group re-emerges (Hewitt, 2017).

Al Mhiajiroun and its reincarnations have been the subject of much research (Baxter, 2005; Pargeter, 2008; Klausen et al. 2012; Kenny, 2012, 2018; Kylie, 2006; Clément, 2014; Wiktorowicz, 2005). Most of these studies tend to focus on local political and economic circumstances allied with Salafi/Wahhabi Islam, to explain the motivations to join extremist groups Al Muhajiroun and its

successor groups (Kundnani, 2014). However, such a focus underplays the impact that the suffering experienced by Muslims living in conflict zones (Syria, Iraq, Palestine, Central African Republic, Kashmir and Burma) has on Muslims living in non-conflict zones like the UK. In extreme cases, the impact has led to some British Muslims to foreign fighters or engage in terrorism on home soil. In other cases, as will be argued in this paper, it has resulted in some British Muslims joining MAC.

The paper contributes to the existing body of literature on extremism in a novel way by employing strain theory and its accompanying concepts such as 'collective strain, vicarious strain and linked fate'. In doing so, the paper argues that the impact of suffering (herein referred to as strain) experienced by Muslims living in conflict zones has on Muslims living in non-conflict zones like the UK can lead some to join extremist groups like MAC. Although the collective strain, vicarious strain and linked fate are discussed separately, in reality, they occur simultaneously and are deeply connected. Hence, collective strain occurs first, but because of social media, it is instantly globalised. This means that other members of the community that live outside the conflict zone experience the strain instantly and vicariously because the victims of the strain are identifiable and relatable. Vicarious strain, in most cases, especially for those living outside the conflict zone, is experienced through social media platforms by watching videos uploaded by the victims or by those who witnessed the strain. Multiple viewings of the videos not only reinforce the idea of a linked fate relationship between the strained and non-strained and amplify the negative feelings but also solidify the in-group and out-group distinction and engender obligations and responsibilities to alleviate the strain in some way.

This paper is broken down into a number of sections. The first section discusses the methodological approach taken to conduct the research. The second section briefly details the history of Al Muhajiroun and MAC. The third section argues that the members of MAC joined the group because the experienced a combination of collective strain, vicarious strain and linked fate, which engendered feelings of obligation and responsibility in them that necessitated the need to alleviate the strain experienced by their Muslim brethren living in conflict zones. The paper concludes by suggesting that if the British government is to avoid groups like MAC from emerging, it needs to take seriously the British Muslim communities concerns connected Islamophobia and conflicts involving Muslims.

Methodology

The methodological approach that was adopted for the research is qualitative because the paper is interested in understanding the motivations of individuals who joined MAC, which involves identifying attitudes, beliefs, feelings, behaviours and interpretations. Such an interest leads to methodological choices, which, in the case of this paper resulted in employing a qualitative methodology and allied methods to collect and analyse the data (Hakim (2000).

To gain access to members of MAC, snowball sampling was used because the group was hard-to-reach because it was deemed as an extremist group by the British government and mainstream Muslims. It was deemed such because the group adopted a literalist understanding of Islam, an aggressive politics based around re-establishing the Caliphate, and often engaged in activism that engendered moral outrage. As such, the group and its members were under constant surveillance by the British security services. Consequently, members of the group were very suspicious of researchers and journalists, and they often deemed them as informants for the security services (MAC, male interview 1, 2011 and Gilbert, 2001). Such obstacles for most researchers can prove to be challenging to overcome. However, the author overcame these obstacles by employing his informal network of contacts that were gatekeepers, sympathisers and members of MAC (Malthaner and Waldmann, 2014). Utilising informal network does not always mean that members of a given a group will want to take part in research. In the case of this paper, some members of MAC declined to be interviewed, citing mistrust of the author. The mistrust of researchers and journalists is not only held by MAC and other Islamist groups, like Hizb ut Tahrir but also by some sections of the British Muslim community because they accuse the government of

spying on Muslims (Choudhury and Fenwick, 2011; Shanaah and Lindekilde, 2019; Alam and Husband, 2013; BBC, 2017). However, one way to circumvent issues about mistrust could have been to do covert research, but this approach engenders risk to personal safety and raises a range of ethical and legal issues that would have compromised the research. Moreover, professional organisations such as the British Sociological Association (BSA) and British Criminology Society (BSC) do not encourage academics to do undercover research.

The research involved conducting semi-structured interviews with seven members of MAC. The interview method is the most suitable method to use if the research aim is to understand the personal narratives of the interviewees and how they construct and understand their world. The advantage of using interviews over other methods is that they allow for:

> The identification of patterns of associations between factors on the ground. Interviews can also clarify the reasons for the discrepancy between stated attitudes and behaviour (Hakim 2000: 36).

In total, two female and five male members of MAC were interviewed. All the interviews apart from one took place in cafes in London and lasted between 1 to 2 hours. The decision to use cafes to conduct the interviews was due to the preference of the interviewees. The interviewees chose cafes in East and West London that were densely populated by Muslims, such as Whitechapel. This choice was due to their comfort and personal safety. The interview that was not conducted in a cafe took place in a building that the group rented to hold talks and meetings. The reason behind this decision was the availability of the interviewee. To interview female members of the group, a female colleague was always present because the group employed strict gender norms, where male and female members did not mix during talks or protests.

Goldsmiths College University of London granted ethical approval, and informed consent was gained by asking the interviewees to complete a consent form before the interview started.

The history of Al-Muhajiroun groups

In this section, the history of Al Muhajiorun and its successor groups is discussed. Islamist groups have operated in the UK since the 1980s, which led to the French Secret Service calling London 'Londonistan' (Kampfner, 2002). Omar Bakri Mohammed first set up Al-Muhajiroun in 1983, while he was a student at The Islamic School of al-Saltiyah in Mecca/Saudi Arabia, after a dispute with Hizb ut Tahrir (HT) (Connor, 2005). After moving to England, he set up the UK branch of HT, but after another dispute with HT, he left the group and set up Al-Muhajiroun (Taji-Farouki, 2000). The progenitor members of Al-Muhajiroun were former members of HT and left the group at the same time as Bakri. The group rapidly grew in popularity and even had an online presence from the early 2000s. According to the group, it had established branches in Saudi Arabia, Lebanon, Pakistan, Malaysia, Indonesia and France (Taji-Farouki, 2000 and IPAC, 2014).

The groups understood the world through the lens of Muslim suffering and clash of civilization narrative (Connor, 2005). Conflicts such as the 1980s Afghan war, the 1990s Bosnian war, the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, the first Gulf war in 1991, 9/11 attacks, the Afghanistan invasion in 2001, the Iraq invasion in 2003, 7/7 attacks (London), and the rise of Islamophobia in Europe played a significant role in the politics of the group.

The history of Al-Muhajiroun and its successors is one of precariousness because members had a tightrope existence because of their high-risk activism, such as engaging in hate speech. Consequently, the British government regarded them as a security threat. According to the British government's 2011 Prevent document, about 15% of people convicted for terrorism-related offences between 1999 and 2009 had been connected to Al-Muhajiroun (Prevent, 2011, 20). Al-Muhajiroun was disbanded in 2004 (Johnston, 2004). In 2005 it was replaced by the 'Saved Sect', which in turn was banned in 2006 (Travis, 2006). During the same period 'Al Ghurabaa' was established, and it was also proscribed in 2006 (BBC, 2006). Al Ghurabaa was replaced, firstly by Islam4UK and then by MAC, with latter being banned in 2011. Al-Muhajiroun and its successors

have also influenced similar groups in several European countries, such as Holland, France, Denmark, Norway, Germany, and Belgium (Klausen et al. 2012).

Strain theory

This section will briefly discuss General Strain Theory (GST) and some of the concepts connected to the theory, which will be used in this paper. Strain theory proposes that the experience of strain can result in an individual using legitimate or illegitimate coping strategies to address the strain that he or she is experiencing (Agnew et al. 2002; Baron, 2009 and Eitle and Turner, 2002). The theory is a modification of an older strain theory. The modifications of GST include categories such as the loss of positive stimuli, such as relationship breakup or death of a family member. The theory also includes negative stimuli, which could be caused by physical assaults or verbal insults and goal blockage or failure to achieve goals (Agnew et al. 2002). Such stimuli are likely to result in various responses and will differ depending on the individual and the situation.

Agnew (2002 and 2010) also notes that it is challenging to define strain because there are numerous types and, in some cases, can overlap, such as objective strain experienced in a subjective way. For example, objective strain refers to an event or socio-political conditions that are disliked by most members of the community, which can include poverty. In contrast, subjective strain refers to the strain that is experienced directly by the individual and could include the loss of a loved one, loss of a job, physical or verbal altercations with civilians or security services. A vicarious strain refers to the strain that is experienced by others around the strained individuals. These others could be members of his or her family, his or her ethnic or religious community or nation. Such strain is experienced by those living in non-conflict zones through social media. A collective strain refers to the strain experienced by racial, ethnic and religious communities, which is caused by natural and human-made events such as earthquakes, violence and wars. Depending on the situation, the response to the strains mentioned above can vary and include no response, protest, joining a political or extremist group or even violence. From the strains mentioned above, all the interviewees experienced collective strain because they are part of the broader Muslim community and vicarious strain through social media platforms.

Experiencing strain and MAC

In the previous section, it was mentioned that all the interviewees experienced collective and vicarious strain. This section will detail how collective strain impacted the interviewees, which contributed to the decision to join the MAC. Agnew (2010: 36) contends that collective strains (racial, ethnic, religious, class, political or nation) that are high in magnitude, with civilian victims, is unjust, is caused by a powerful other and with whom members of the strained community have weak ties can lead to terrorist violence. Although British Muslims did not directly experience collective strain, but they are affected by it because they are part of the global Muslim community and can identify and relata to the victims of the strain. However, the response to collective strain may not always come from those directly impacted but those indirectly impacted by the strain. The response to collective strain among the non-strained in the community can vary from no-action, charity, lobbying, protest to violence in the form of political violence and terrorism depending on the situation. Sageman (2008) and Borum (2011) argue on similar lines to Agnew (2010) and claim that that moral outrage engendered by injustices can lead an individual to carry out acts of violence. However, Agnew (2010) stresses that only a small percentage of those who endure collective strain engage in terrorism. Sageman (2017: 90) similarly argues:

> Many people have so-called extremist ideas, but very few people act on them… Talking of using violence does not necessarily lead to violence. Very few people talking about violence go onto use it.

In the case of MAC members that were interviewed, collective strain fostered conditions that contributed to the interviewees deciding to join the group. During the interviews, members of MAC discussed a range of conflicts that affected them, such as the ongoing Palestinian and Israel conflict, the ongoing Kashmiri conflict, the 1990s Bosnian war, the 2004 Iraq invasion, the Arab Spring and global Islamophobia fostered by Western countries. One male MAC member of Pakistani heritage from London mentioned that:

> I cannot put my finger on one reason. Instead, it is a combination of reasons, one is the occupation of Muslim lands, what is happening in Iraq and Afghanistan, what happens on an everyday basis in Palestine, the arrest of Muslims (UK), 9/11 and 7/7…. What opened my eyes to political scenarios, political situation of the Muslims, this occurred due to those reasons, I am saying, due to those events taking place in Iraq, Afghanistan, Palestine, 9/11 and 7/7. (MAC, male interview 4, 2011).

A second male member of the same heritage explained how the foreign policies of the British and American governments and his treatment at the hands of the British security services pushed him to join MAC. Consequently, the interviewee was not only affected by collective strain but also subjective strain. He stated that:

> I and many other Muslims have been harassed by the security services, they suspect, that is the only reason, they come and harass our families. Then they ask us why are we so against the government, why are we so radical, they should look at the roots of what caused radicalism, it is their foreign policy of this land, it is the foreign policy of the Americans… It has been over two and a half years since they have been harassing me… At that point, I was not associated with the people that I am associated with today… When they feel like they come to my house and harass my family and me, they do not come with a warrant. They have been threatening me, they have offered me a job indirectly. Obviously, I refused to work for them because I am not a sell-out, I don't work against Muslims…. (MAC, male interview 5, 2011).

A third male member of the same heritage from London explains how MAC facilitated him and others to respond to the strain experienced by fellow Muslims. He states:

> Something needs to happen about Muslim suffering. Whilst having this in my head there were people like Anjem Choudary, saying that Muslims need to come out and speak and raise their voice, that is the least that they can do, so he organizes demonstrations, protests, leafleting and conferences. All this was an avenue to release some of the hopelessness of not being able to support your Muslim brothers and sisters… This was a way that we tried to make Muslims aware of what was happing to Muslims and call Muslims to join us. (MAC, male interview 4, 2011).

A female member of MAC from Luton of Pakistani heritage explained that she joined the group after learning about all the conflicts where Muslims were suffering:

> I first came across the group during a dawah stall that they held in my town. The sisters spoke to me about conflicts where Muslims are suffering, which really upset me, and solutions to the conflicts, what is authentic Islam, what is Muslim identity and the role and responsibility of Muslim women. (MAC, female interview 1, 2011).

The interviews with members of MAC indicate that the conditions fostered by collective and subjective strain led them to decide to join the group. In the case of interview 4, he mentioned that joining the group also helped him to act on his hopelessness that he felt from not being able to help his Muslim brethren. Collective strain in itself has no power to trigger other members of the community, such as those living outside the conflict zone to act if members of the strained community are not identifiable and relatable in some way. Therefore, identity registers such as religion, ethnicity, race, nationality and politics make the strained community identifiable and relatable. However, such identification and relatability can only act as a trigger for those that are living outside the conflict zones to act in various ways. This could mean acting to support or defend the strained community because the idea of linked fate has been activated, which is discussed later in the paper. However, the intersection of identity registers will differ depending on the ethnicity, politics, nationality and the religion of the strained community living inside the conflict zone and the non-strained community living outside of the conflict zone. For example, MAC members of South Asian, white British and Afro-Caribbean heritage identified with the Palestinian and Israeli conflict through the registers of Islam and politics and not ethnicity because they are not of Arab/Palestinian heritage. In the case of the Kashmir conflict, MAC members of Pakistani heritage identified with the Kashmiris through registers of ethnicity, Islam and politics whereas other members of the group identified with the Kashmiris through Islamic and political registers.

As mentioned in the previous section collective strain is experienced by members of racial, ethnic, religious, class, political or national communities that are being treated unjustly by a powerful other, even those that are not directly experiencing the collective strain. In most cases the non-strained part of the community living outside the conflict zone becomes affected because they have witnessed the collective strain experienced by the strained community that is living in a conflict zone. Members of MAC that were interviewed living in the UK only became aware and were impacted by the collective strain experienced by fellow Muslims vicariously, through social media platforms. As one female member of the group explained, while talking about Arab Spring, "we have contacts with Muslims in countries where Muslims are suffering" (MAC, female interview 2, 2011). Although the interviewee did not mention the individual or group but it very likely the interviewees contacts are Facebook friends living in conflict zones.

Watching or hearing about traumatic events such as violence, where the victims are identifiable and relatable can engender what Agnew (2001) calls vicarious strain. Agnew (2001: 603-604) defines vicarious strain as:

> The real-life strain experienced by others around the individual, especially close others like family members, friends, and (possibly) community residents. The individual may directly witness the strain experienced by these others (e.g., such as an assault), may hear these others experience strain (e.g., gunshots, screams), or may hear about the strain of these others (e.g., from victims or in the media). (Agnew 2001: 603-604).

As mentioned earlier, those who experience strain vicariously have in fact experienced vicarious strain. In the case of members of MAC, the identity registers that connected them to Muslims that were experiencing strain in a conflict zones are Islam, ethnicity and politics. As Agnew (2010: 12) notes, shared "identity amplifies the experience of vicarious strain since we care more about those we closely identify with", which was the case for members of MAC that were interviewed, as discussed below.

The experience of vicarious strain is not restricted to social media and new media platforms but can also be experienced through volunteering as an aid worker in conflict-zones or by directly witnessing violence. Scholars such as Sageman (2008), Khosrokhavar (2005), Speckhard (2012) Merari (2010) have discussed by using terms like vicarious trauma and humiliation to explain how such experiences can make individuals more receptive to ideas espoused extremist group and use violence. An excellent example of this is 7/7 the attackers. Other academics have documented the

impact of watching traumatic material that details the suffering of people that are identifiable and relatable. Asraf and Nassar (2018), in their study on American Muslims, suggested that consuming traumatic material regularly where the victims are identifiable and relatable can engender vicarious trauma. Ben-Zur et al. (2012) study on Israeli students concluded that terror through the media increases the likelihood of secondary trauma. Khalily et al. (2017) study on Pakistani students concluded that increased exposure to media outlets reporting on terror could engender vicarious trauma among viewers.

Like the studies mentioned above, members of MAC experienced vicarious strain through social media platforms, which engendered a range of emotions, ranging from empathy, hate and revenge. One male member of MAC of Pakistani heritage from London explained that:

> When you switch on the television, when you look at what happens in Palestine, when you look at what happens in Iraq and Afghanistan, this does not do anything but make more questions in your head, is that, why are people always being killed in Palestine, people being killed in Iraq and Afghanistan, these plays on someone's mind…. Over time these questions become heavier in the heart of the Muslim. (MAC, male interview 2, 2011).

The above extract indicates the impact that watching videos detailing the suffering of fellow Muslims had on the interviewee. The interviewee suggests that watching such videos over a period of time starts to have a mental and emotional impact, in terms of raising questions about why Muslims are experiencing collective strain and visceral feeling of sadness and grief. The response to vicarious strain is not only the internalization of negative feelings but as Agnew (2001) mentions, having a shared identity amplifies the experience of the strain because of the relationship between strained and non-strain communities. Hence, in this situation, negative events and connected to negative feelings can amplify and strengthen community unity. However, like collective strain, vicarious strain in itself does not have the power to trigger other members of the community to act if members of the strained community are not identifiable and relatable in some way. However, even if such identification and relatability was present it can only act as trigger to support or defend the strained community if the idea of linked fate is present and activated.

The previous section discussed how collective and vicarious strain could foster conditions that led members of MAC to join the group. The reason why members of the non-strained community respond to the strain experienced by the strained community is because of the idea of a linked fate relationship, which exists between the communities. The linked fate relationship is activated because members of the non-strained community become aware of the suffering experienced by the strained community, often through social media platforms. Linked fate is a type of relationship between members of a group or a community, which could be religious, ethnic, national or political, which is activated when the community feels threatened or is experiencing injustice or violence from the other. The activation of linked-fate strengthens the relationship between members of the group or community, which is often mediated by a vocabulary that expresses a biological family-type relationship. Aside from strengthening the relationship between group or community members and solidifying in-group and out-group distinctions, linked fate also apologies and responsibilizes the non-strained community to act to alleviate the strain. It is this part of linked fate that contributed to members of MAC deciding to join the group. Agnew defines linked fate as:

> Linked fate', or an 'acute sense of awareness (or recognition) that what happens to the group will also affect the individual member'… And it creates a sense of obligation to protect others in the collectivity, at least among those traditionally cast in the protector role. This collective orientation helps explain the terrorism of those who have not personally experienced severe strain. Such individuals strongly identify with others in the collectivity and, through this identification, they vicariously experience, feel personally threatened by, and feel responsible for alleviating the strain experienced by these others. (Agnew 2010: 142)

The idea of linked fate is central to the narratives and discourses that MAC developed and disseminated. Linked fate is not only relevant because it engenders feelings of togetherness based on identity registers but also makes members of the group or community recognize what happens to other members of the community will also impact them and engenders a responsibility to act. In the case of members of MAC, it contributed to MAC members to join the group.

During the interviews, MAC members connected what was happening to fellow Muslims in conflict zones to Muslims living in the UK. The aim was to make Muslims in the UK aware that they have an obligation and responsibility to alleviate collective strain experienced by their Muslim brethren in conflict zones because they are part of one big family. The interviews express linked fate by using Islamic vocabulary. Terms such as ummah, brother, *akhi* and sister were employed to foster togetherness, create awareness of Muslim suffering and impart obligations and responsibility to alleviate collective strain experienced by fellow Muslims. The following interview extract from a male member of MAC from Luton of Bengali heritage captures how MAC understand and employ the idea of linked fate. He states:

> Muslims are one, and it does not matter where they are from, nationalism, the country and their flag, none of this matter. You realize that these are like your brothers; these people are like your sisters, so we must have some allegiance with them, support them. So obviously with the knowledge of Islam creates the change in the person, so that the more he finds out, 'look those are my brothers that are being oppressed in Palestine, I need to support them'. The Prophet's hadith says the ummah is like a body, if one body hurts if one part hurts the rest of the body feels it (MAC, male Interview 2, 2011).

From the interview extract, it is clear that the interviewee has experienced vicarious strain and identifies with the Palestinians through the registers of Islam and politics and indicates that he has a family-like relationship with them by using the term brother. He supports his feelings and his obligation and responsibility to act by referencing a hadith from Prophet Mohammed. The hadith is a clear indication of a linked-fate and family-type relationship between Muslims. The recognition of the family-like relationship rendered by linked-fate obliges a response to alleviate the collective strain, which the interviewee mentions by stating, 'look those are my brothers that are being oppressed in Palestine, I need to support them'. Other members of MAC, such as one female that was interviewed, mentioned that she joined the group after learning about Muslims suffering in conflict zones and solutions to the suffering through here interactions with members of MAC during a dawah stall (MAC, female interview 1, 2011). A male member of a MAC that was interviewed mentioned that his reasons for joining was the occupation of Muslim lands such as Iraq and Afghanistan, Palestine and the arrest of Muslims in the UK led him (MAC, male interview 4, 2011). A second male member of MAC joined the group because it helped him to release some of the hopelessness engendered by not being able to help his brethren. (MAC, male interview 4, 2011). What we see in the above examples is that members of MAC have been affected by conflicts involving Muslims, which in turn has engendered a sense of obligation to act and protect their Muslim brethren, which in the case of MAC members was to join the group.

Conclusion

The article has employed collective and vicarious strain connected to the idea of linked fate to explain why members of MAC joined the group. The strength of these concepts is that they capture how strain impacts people who can identify with the strained community through identity registers. From the interviewees, it is clear that conflicts that resulted in Muslims experiencing collective strain such as the Palestine and Israeli conflict and invasion of Iraq acted as triggers that led MAC members deciding to join the group. MAC members experienced vicarious strain through watching videos detailing Muslims enduring violence at the hands of the powerful other such as the

Israeli military, the militaries of the US and its allies and the Syrian regime and its allies. What triggered MAC members to act on the collective and vicarious strain was the linked fate. They felt that they had a special family-like relationship with their Muslim brethren. The power of the linked fate is that it engenders obligations and responsibilities among individuals, communities, or groups (political and extremist) that feel that they have a special relationship with the strained community through various identity registers. These obligations and responsibilities can materialize in different ways. In the case of MAC members that were interviewed, it was to join the group, but in other cases, it could be to use violence.

If the UK government is to avoid groups such as MAC from emerging in the future, three things must happen. Firstly, allow Muslims to express their political concerns and be heard by the government without being labelled extremists or seen as security threats. Secondly, to make honest efforts to resolve conflicts such as the Palestinian and Israeli conflict and have an ethical foreign policy because such conflicts and policies are often act as reasons for individuals to join extremist groups like MAC. Not doing so will increase the potential of extremist groups like MAC to emerge in the future and be more sophisticated and resilient to government interventions. Finally, conduct more criminological research to identify the impact of collective and vicarious strain and linked fate to identify the tipping point of when one decides to join an extremist group or engage in terrorist violence.

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