Twitter Thread by John McFarland



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As the United States deals with insurgent forces at home, security professionals should look to the Middle East for insight on how this threat may evolve:

There are a lot of parallels between right-wing US extremism, and post-colonial Islamic extremism.

The most prominent, I feel, is the one between the @newtgingrich era GOP and the Muslim Brotherhood. The Muslim Brotherhood, like most early Islamic terrorism, was a reaction to European colonialism in the Middle East.

What starts as a political movement interested in social change becomes an insurgent group engaged in violent extremism.

The same radicalization factors can be identified. It's disenfranchisement and cultural erosion all the way down.

Both groups want a return to "tradition" to strengthen a culture they feel they've lost because of modernity. Both groups feel they've been economically and culturally disenfranchised by a foreign oppressor. You can see roots of this same problem in the Confederacy.

In our case at home, this is because of the inherent cultural divide between conservatives and liberals. Many conservatives do not feel that liberals are real Americans. This is an important factor for later.

You can also see the roots of this in who their philosophical forefathers are. Domestic right wing extremists and Foreign Sunni extremists look to Julius Evola and Sayyid Qutb respectively.

Both men identified the decadence of the modern world as the root cause of moral decline, and wrote heavily about the need to reclaim tradition.

Both men felt that struggle was ultimate fulfillment of spirit as reflected through their religious beliefs (Evola with western secularism, Qutb with Islam).

Evola brings this up in ‘Metaphysics of War’, and ‘The Mystery of the Grail’, and Qutb comments on the importance of Jihad across most of his writings. For both, this struggle is fundamental in building a traditional society.

So when we look at the growing insurgent narratives at home, we can pull wisdom from the century of engagement we’ve had with Middle Eastern extremism. Fascism at home takes the worst parts of Julius Evola’s opinion on Modernity and ignores his criticisms of Ethnonationalism.

Due to America’s troubled history with race, American Fascists cherry pick the parts about a strong Western tradition and reject the post-ethnic nationalism of the Romans.

There is a lot of commentary to deconstruct here that I feel many observers miss when considering groups like the Proud Boys, but this isn’t the place for it.

Now, the post Gingrich GOP reacted to the election of Barack Obama.

The tea-party movement was largely a vocal announcement that their radicalization was here to stay as part of their mainstream politics. This manifested in the election of Donald Trump and the rise of right wing militias that look eerily similar to Islamic insurgent groups.

Extremist voices domestically have been following the Abu Musab al-Zarqawi playbook for sectarian radicalization from the beginning of the Obama era. Narratives about him being Islamic, or being foreign born were all attempts to delegitimize his authority.

By saying that the liberal President was a foreign born, Islamic worshipper, radicals on the right managed to ‘Other’ him and make their own constituents feel as though they were no longer represented.

In Iraq, al-Zarqawi did the same thing with Sunnis during the post-Saddam elections. By convincing them to abstain from the process, a majority Shia government was elected.

That government then cracked down on Sunni extremism, engaged in retribution, and disenfranchised the Sunni even more. This further radicalized them.

We see that happening in the US right now with extremist voices on the right claiming that the 2020 election was fraudulent, or telling Trump supporters to boycott the Georgia run-off. This is going to further radicalize them.

It plays into their narrative of needing to fight back against a foreign aggressor.

So where does that leave us? Well consider what happened when insurgent groups in the Middle East lacked the military force to challenge who they considered to be oppressors.

They turned to asymmetric warfare through suicide bombings, shootings, and then eventually, cyber activity.

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While ISIS never successfully engaged in a destructive cyber attack, they found success in using digital tools for radicalization, and by decentralizing their base they were able to project force to places far outside of their physical territory.