

Jack the Terrorist

Terrorism is to some extent like a Jack-in-the-box (the toy where there is a puppet on a spring that can be pushed down into a box, and released by opening the lid). The more it is pushed down, the greater energy it has to spring up. The more energy that is exerted in putting it down, the more energy it retains to explode back up.

What is more, this jack-in-the-box has some extra special features:

1. Reinforced Fist - Instead of a puppet it contains a solid boxing glove in the form of a fist.
2. Special Spring Generation - Whenever it is pushed down, it not only retains the energy expended on its suppression, but it generates more, all by itself – it uses the energy given by the other to generate more of its own - exponentially. So when it is in its box, invisible to the unknowing eye, it is all the time generating greater energy – the very act of suppression triggers this power generation. The spiral spring strenghtens and tenses.
3. Self-release - The build-up will continue, until one day someone pushes the button opening the box and releasing the fist, or until the day when the lid can no longer contain the built-up energy of the spring, and it explodes out into the face of the nearest innocent bystander.

Tactics for dealing with this new version jack-in-the-box have shown remarkable ignorance of its basic mechanisms. The most common one is just to force it back into its box. It is clear that this is only a short-term solution, but given the short-term perspective of today's leaders, that doesn't seem to matter. Next time it is someone else's problem.

Some people try putting a stronger lock on the box, but with this model, that just produces an even more powerful explosion when the Jack does eventually break out – due to its power for exponential energy generation. The thing with this feature, is that it is very hard to predict when Jack will break out. For one moment, it will be at half explosion capacity, but in the nature of exponential growth, the next moment it will be there in your face. One thing is for sure – you can never suppress the Jack forever.

A more drastic approach, normally adopted when the fist has caused unexpected and surprising amounts of damage, it not to stop at squashing it back into its box, but also to destroy the boxing-glove fist itself. The fist is, after all, the most visible part of the jack-in-the-box. This brings us onto the next special feature:

4. Self-regenerating – in case someone thinks they have finally wiped out the dastardly threat in the form of the fist, secretly in the darkness of its box, the Jack regenerates a new form to top the spring. What is more, it is likely to be even more deadly and unexpected than the last.

What of course people have so far failed to look at is what actually drives the fist to explode in the first place – the secret of the Jack-in-the-box – the spring. And until they do, we can be sure that Jack will continue to shock and surprise us for many years to come.

Terrorism cannot be destroyed or “wiped out”. More than that, terrorism feeds on the very powers of destruction and oppression. Starving terrorism means changing the way we relate and respond to it.

Peter Merry, 30.09.01