

Caleb Salmon – 2217676 – BMPL6018- Assignment 1.

“Conduct a literature review that critically examines academic and policy-based perspectives on key UK counter-terrorism legislation and concepts. Use a real-life event such as Manchester Arena bombing or the 7/7 London bombings as a case study to explore how these frameworks have been applied in practice.”

1.Introduction

The aspect of public protection in the context of policing terrorism is extremely important within recent times, due to shifting socio-political tensions and attitudes, a new generation of ideologies has given rise to an increasing number of terror attacks and plots which the UK government has to defend against. On the 22nd of May 2017 a terror attack occurred within Manchester Arena during an Ariana Grande concert; in which “a suicide bomber detonated an improvised explosive device (IED) in the foyer of the arena” (Miles, et al 2024) killing 22 and changing the lives of countless others. The policies and legislation surrounding counter terrorism within the United Kingdom are rarely put into practice, due to legislation and concepts which prevent this such as the CONTEST programme (which feature an early engagement concept to mitigate radicalisation), or the more invasive Counter Terrorism and Security Act of 2015 (which focuses on present time safeguarding of people involved in terror and its victims with methods such as “placing temporary restrictions on travel where a person is suspected of involvement in terrorism” (Counter Terrorism and Security Act 2015). These concepts and laws do mitigate and prevent the majority of terror acts within the United Kingdom, however, they are not without their downfalls which will be examined alongside their

efficiencies in the context of the Manchester Arena bombing within this literature review.

1.1 Aims and Objectives

AIM – To critically examine legislative and policy-based perspectives surrounding UK counterterrorism involved within the 2017 Manchester Arena bombing.

Objective 1-Examine framework and policies which were in place at the time of the attack to identify actions and policies which were used at the time of the attack.

Objective 2-Evaluate the effectiveness of the legislation and policies that were used at the 2017 Manchester Arena bombing.

Objective 3-Examine public responses to the legislations used and assess how they have been modified to today's time (2025).

1.2 Objective 1

Within the 2010s, counterterrorism legislation was seen to be in the aftermath of a “shift from temporary emergency response to permanent policy practice” (Fisher 2011) with introductions of permanent legislations such as the Terrorism Act of 2000 which saw a more exact definition given of terrorism and acts that constitute this. More importantly the inclusion of the Counter Terrorism and Security Act occurred, it was

created and placed into law in 2015, just two years before the attack itself. The CTSA of 2015 included more individualised sanctions such as the use of travel bans and data collection on individuals. However, as this act is proactive in nature and focuses primarily on the prevention of terrorism within the UK, the sudden and brutal nature of the attack in Manchester called for a more reactive response by agencies and a reliance on the effective use of “multi-agency Integrated Emergency Management” (Deeming 2018) . The interoperability of these agencies (Greater Manchester Police, Health Service and British Transport Police) was governed under the Civil Contingencies Act of 2004 and allowed for roles and responsibilities to be set out when an emergency occurs, however this act does not account for the effectiveness of the people who were active within the Manchester Arena Attack and can only allow for the cooperation of the agencies to be formulated.

The actions that were undertaken at the time of the attack varied due to the services that were involved, with the Manchester health service and paramedics on seen undertaking primarily medical care to those who needed it alongside being transported to hospital. However, throughout this incident Greater Manchester Police undertook actions consistent alongside legislation seen in the CTSA 2015. These actions; which included the bombers accomplices' phone being “seized and its data forensically recovered” (Scheerhout 2025) enabled police services to fully develop the investigation. On the other hand, the civil contingencies act of 2004 was used primarily in the present moments of the attack, with the use of “43 hospitals (19 in the Northwest area and 24 others beyond)” (St Johns Ambulance 2023) being used to vacillate those who were affected by the attack with the transport to those hospitals being facilitated by Greater Manchester Police who aided in road closures and logistics.

1.3 Objective 2

The effectiveness of the previously mentioned legislation is a contested topic when discussing the methods behind how the Manchester Arena attack was policed and what methods were implemented in the attempt to thwart this attack from occurring. Firstly, the methods previously mentioned in section 1.2 were analysed in later reports and described as a “significant missed opportunity to take action that might have prevented the attack” (Dearden 2023) due to methods being used but not effectively enough against the scale of the attack. The Norris Inquiry which was created by the fire and rescue services used in the attack, is a direct examination of the 2004 civil contingencies act; this report describes several recommendations for the use of interoperability including increased use of “preparing, training and exercising” (Norris 2022). With the attack resulting in 22 fatalities, any examination and report will put forward changes to what occurred that night, due to the loss of life. However, due to sudden nature of the attack the effectiveness of the frameworks and legislation, specifically in place within the civil contingencies act 2004 to manage the attack, were insufficient in their effectiveness. This was primarily due to a lack of communication and resources; with Greater Manchester Police attributing “The effect of austerity cuts”

(Saunders 2022) costing them valuable training within their planning units and policy compliance units.

When the Counter Terrorism Security Act 2015 was used within the management of the Arena bombing, the introduction of the newly formed CONTEST framework by the UK government allowed for a four-pronged approach for combatting terrorism. Formed of Prepare, Prevent, Pursue and Protect. The key strands used within the policing of this attack were pursue and protect due to the marauding characteristics of the event.

Within this case, the prevent and prepare act were neglected as a “significant opportunity to take action that might have prevented the attack” (McCallum 2023) was missed in the early (Prevent) investigation of the bomber who was known to police and intelligence services.

So, in conclusion the policies that were implemented in response and preparation of the Manchester arena attack were used but to a poor ability. As previously mentioned, the distinct lack of communication and lack of early prevention from police and intelligence services did contribute to the success of the attack and loss of life. Several inquiries, such as the Kerslake and Greater Manchester Police report, include frequent recommendations and recognition of their short comings.

1.4 Objective 3

In the aftermath of the attack, due to the 22 fatalities that occurred and many lives affected, public tensions were high, which led to blame placed on emergency services for their lack of efficiency in the prevention and protection of the attack. With “More

than 200 people affected by the Manchester Arena bombing taking legal action” (Glass 2024), this public discourse and need for compensation does reflect the shortcomings of the security and emergency services which were present before, during and after the attack. The Roach report, a study which analysed public perception surrounding the Manchester and London bridge terror attack, created a survey including 461 members of the public – in this, “14.80%” (Roach et al 2019) of participants showed increased feelings of anger because of the event; and a further “78.9%” (Roach et al 2019) showed an increased or the same amount of mistrust in security and emergency services. This change in trust towards police attitude is a reflection in the application of the legislation and not the legislation itself, with further recommendations and alterations to law being created because of the attack and loss of life.

The recommendations put forward from the several prominent reports made famous by the public and governing bodies have allowed for not just alterations in training and law, but also have allowed for the development and creation of legislation; within the context of the Manchester Arena attack the implementation of the Terrorist Act of 2025 or more commonly known as Martyn's law was created. This law “will improve protective security and organisational preparedness across the UK” (Home Office 2025) and develops on the protect measure featured within the CONTEST framework by creating “proportionate measures that improve public safety by creating a preparedness plan specific to each venue” (ML consultancy 2025). This was a key element overseen in the 2017 Manchester attacks and has been implemented to scrutinise and develop venue safety and access within emergency situations.

1.5 Conclusion

In conclusion, the Manchester attacks were catalysed by the efficiency of the Police Service, yet the framework in place was more than capable to have mitigated the extreme loss of life within the attack on the 22nd of May 2017. The policy-based perspectives described as a “catalogue of failings at every level” (Scorer 2024) were a poor reflection on not just the police service of Greater Manchester but of the UK Government as a whole, exploiting several elements of communication and response which were exposed to be a cause of primarily economic constraints. So as the negative aspects of the framework used that night majorly outweigh the positives, some positives can be found in the aftermath. Firstly, the use of emergency service provisions was effective, for example the use of the previously mentioned 43 hospitals within the Greater Manchester area in response to the attack to aid the victims. Secondly, the development of community-based groups used for “community reassurance and coordinating support” (Worral 2017), these groups are a direct result of the Civil Contingencies Act as they were multi-agency led. An example of this is “The Greater Manchester Resilience Hub which was set up within 7 weeks following the attack with staff from all four Greater Manchester Emergency service branches” (NHS Pennine 2023).

The response of not just the public but also government and emergency services, whether it was positive or negative in nature did allow for growth. Which effectively has seen to be undertaken, with the development of social groups such as the TGMHRH which aids in mental and emotional well-being, the framework surrounding counterterrorism has also been altered to be more efficient. With more accountability and assessments being put on Police services to ensure their responses are quicker and more efficient in the “Protect” phase. This has also allowed for the “Prevent” aspect of legislation and framework to be developed to a level higher than what it was in 2017. So, in finale, the legislation and framework available that day, did manage the event of a terrorist attack in theory, but failed to anticipate the marauding and brutal nature of the attack, which as a result prompted emergency services and government sectors to anticipate the cruelty of such events, allowing them to change for the better.

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