Domestic Terrorism and Extremist Groups

[Name of the Writer]

[Name of the Institution]

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**Response 1**

The term extremism is primarily used in the context of political and religious sense. It refers to the ideology outside the mainstream attitudes that people in society possess. Typically, a person who holds extreme views regarding politics or religion as compared to the other people of the society is labeled as extremist. However, classifying an act as a part of extremism is a matter of conflict as it depends upon people's perspective. Extremism is often associated with violence although the preference for violence is different among various extremist groups based on their beliefs.

Specifically, talking about the USA, extremism can be of different categories such as right-wing extremism, left-wing extremism, politico-religious extremism, and single-issue extremism. The right-wing extremism is associated with hostility towards minorities, immigrants and state authorities. While the left-wing includes people who use violence to advocate their cause. Their focus is on the transformation of the political system and other anti-capitalist demands. The politico-religious extremism is associated with violence regarding the political interpretation of religion that includes social debates and conflict regarding foreign policy. The single-issue extremism is solely based on an individual’s perception. For instance, mass murderers, or people against abortion and anti-gay people, etc. fall in this category. These people use violence to advocate their perspective. All these extremist groups pose a great threat to not only US but the whole world (Knight & Lancaster, 2017).

Extremism has always been the root cause of most of the problems that are prevailing in our society. As America is also known as the great melting pot, the extremism in the US is ideologically diverse. Due to social inequalities, religious factors and social media the level of extremism is very high. People are less tolerant due to which they use violence to advocate their cause. After 9/11 the issue of extremism was highlighted worldwide along with many extremist groups that were unveiled. Although this issue was prevailing before this incident happened. Throughout history white nationalists terrorism was on point due to which many people that were suppressed by these terrorist groups also formed their own extremist groups leading toward the tragedy of 9/11. Whether it be Islamic jihadist or white nationalist, people are facing severe consequences. According to the Global Terrorism Database, almost two-thirds of the terror attacks that happened in America were all linked to the right-wing extremism while the remaining attacks were by Islamic extremists and single-issue extremist groups. Most of these attacks were tied to anti-Muslims, racist and anti-government. It is therefore important that the government should make certain policies such as gun control acts so that people can be saved from the extremists' groups.

In the US there are three types of domestic organizations that are ethnic separatists, left-wing radicals, and right-wing radicals. Previously, ethnic groups were the most violent. However, recently left and right-wing extremist groups are engaging more in terrorist’s activities such as symbolic bombings so that more people can fear them and more attention can be drawn towards them. Specifically, right-wing extremists are more violent and always favor anti-gay or anti-abortion movements etc. They also consider themselves as a part of GOD’s army because they justify their violence under the cover of religion. It is also a matter of concern that US government is more focused on terrorist movements rather than its causes that helped in the generation of terrorist groups. Recently, cases like mass murders and racism movements are at their peak. According to the gun violence archive the US had over 255 mass shootings incidents only in the month of august in 2019 which is indeed a huge threat to the security of the people. The reason for these shootings was mostly done by the people that have extreme views against immigrants, minorities, and ethnicity. Although the US is not immune to international terrorist organizations yet the emergence of these groups represent significant trends in domestic terrorism. The continuation of terrorists’ incidents and the affiliation of local street gangs with the foreign governments to spread terror in the country the terrorism in the US cannot be discounted.

**Response 2**

Owing to the diversity among people in the US people have different views and opinions regarding politics. Hence the country is not immune to the political extremists' groups who use violence to advocate their views and are constantly criticizing government by leading hate march against certain government officials. Political extremists are the people whose views and beliefs regarding politics and polices made by the government falls outside the mainstream societal values. Specifically, in the US political extremists are motivated by several reasons such as fear, anger, and hatred towards government and minorities. However, some of them are motivated by specific issues and government policies regarding social issues such as abortion, legalizing gay marriages, animal rights, and environment-related issues (Fernbach & Sloman, 2013). There is another reason that is often neglected by the people is an economic factor that leads to social inequalities due to which people are prone to become political extremists (Remmer, 1991).

In the US many political extremists consider themselves exempted by the law of US. These people are often involved in civil disobedience acts so that they can draw attention to their ideology and political views. These people are also known as sovereign citizens. Another type of political extremist includes animal rights extremists and environmental extremists. These two types are often linked together as their mode of operation is similar to each other. According to animal rights, extremists’ animals are not objects that can be owned yet they are also entitled to basic rights as humans do. Hence, they propose amendments in the US constitution and demanded a ban on the exploitation of the animals. Although their cause seems ethical yet the way they address this cause is filled with violence. For instance, in 2006 an animal protection extremist was convicted for orchestrating bombing campaigns in the homes of animal researchers. Similarly, many environmental extremists have targeted several construction and mining companies as these companies are posing great threat to the environment. They used several techniques such as “monkeywrenching and “tree spiking” to sabotage the organizations that are potential threat towards the environment. Another group of political extremists is known as anti-abortion extremists that are in opposition to the government’s policies regarding abortion. Most of these extremists bring religion as a basis on which they are protesting. The violence done by this group spiked in 1999 and later in 2015 and 2016 these groups rise again. They are involved in at least 11 homicides and several bombing incidents.

After the second amendment in the constitution, another political extremist group has risen known as Militias. Unlike other extremist groups, they are heavily armed with weapons and are against the government policies regarding possession of weapons. Due to this, they are involved in illegal buying and selling of weapons and often manufacture explosive devices. They are a huge threat to the entire USA as they often join hands with foreign countries and are orchestrating the terrorist attacks that cause millions of people losing their lives. Similarly, another group known as the white supremacists are against the government policies regarding immigrants and refugees. They believe that immigrants are refugees who are posing threat to their race due to which they should not be allowed to enter the US. Most of these groups are involved in a mass shooting against specific religious groups and minorities as well (Smith, 2017).

Despite many political groups within the country that are posing threats many groups such as Islamic Jihadists and other international organizations are also a great threat to the US as these groups are against the foreign policy of the US due to which they are involved in orchestrating several suicide bombing attacks in the country.

**Response 3**

Radicalization can be defined as the process in which people are highly motivated to use violence against members of any group based on their ethnicity, culture, religion and political views (Doosje & Feddes, 2016). Most of the extremist groups target young people that can be brainwashed easily and use them to achieve their motives. However, many people become part of the extremist groups based on social inequalities, and constant suppression from the government authorities. While discussing the radicalization process the Islamic Jihadist groups have a specific “tried and tested model” to contact people online through different social media platforms and online messaging. They target vulnerable individuals and manipulate them by using twisted religious beliefs and make them their accomplices in violent activities (Liebman, 1983). However, these groups also used people that have a history of violent crimes such as jailed extremists to carry out terror attacks. However, many people who are converted to Islam are the most vulnerable than the people born into this faith.

Typically, radical right-wing terrorism is also motivated by various ideologies. They target people of their race and make them believe that their race is threatened by minorities and immigrants due to which they should not be allowed to live in the country (Mandel, 2009). According to the Anti-Defamation League, most of the white supremacists' extremist groups recruit people around college campuses thus targeting youth. They also attract people by violent ritual and house parties etc. to target the vulnerable people. They also trap people especially youth that are looking for the solution to their problems. Additionally, another method these extremists use to trap people is extremist music as parents and authorities are less likely to monitor the music preferences of young people. However, dysfunctional families and childhood abuse are also a risk factor that makes people more vulnerable (Leistedt, 2016).

There are several reasons based on which people are trapped in the violent motives of extremists groups. However, religion is so far the most important reason that can make people vulnerable. Every religion in the world whether it be Christianity, Islam or Buddhism, etc has taught its followers to maintain peace yet extremists groups twist the teachings of the religion to achieve their agenda. For instance, in Christianity and Islam, there is no concept of gay marriage yet the government has legalized gay marriages. This causes a huge stir among the people who are devout Christian and Muslims leading them to create extremists groups that use violence so that more people can join their cause. As religion is the weakness of people and by using this weakness one can achieve several violent motives. Not only gay marriages many other issues such as abortion or gay rights etc are also a topic of debate where people use religion to justify their violent acts and movements against the above-mentioned issues. Similarly, many members of the far-right group consider themselves under attack by the law enforcement officials by calling them the evil that is unleashed by Satan upon them. Due to which they justify their violent acts as a defensive response against Satan.

Historically it is evident that people ha use religion to justify their violent act however linking religion as a primary cause of violence is still a topic of debate. As religion can be used as a force for good yet unfortunately many people twist teachings of the religion and usually misuse it that leads to the disastrous consequences. Since many gay people are coming out of the closet and express their sexuality openly while many people of color are also stepping out to fight for their rights and several feminists movements, the hate crimes are growing significantly (Iganski, 2001). However, people use religion as a cover to hide their hate against these movements and justify their violent acts by using religious teachings.

**Response 4**

Social media platforms are one of the largest platforms that connect people all around the world regardless of the distance. People can communicate as well as share their opinions regarding different methods online using various social media sites. Social media no doubt has a great impact on people of different age groups. Despite many benefits social does have several disadvantages. Many people use it for the purpose to achieve their violent agenda. Even several terrorist organization uses this platform to recruit vulnerable individuals by trapping them. The disinformation spread on social media is a leading factor that propels violence against people.

Criminals, extremists, and several terrorists’ organizations see social media as an open door that is full of opportunities to achieve their violent motives. Youth specifically less-educated people who are not aware of the hazards of social media are more vulnerable to social media manipulation become the target of several extremist groups. As social media applications are mostly free and easily accessible many terrorists and extremists group use this platform to engage people in their groups as they can spread their message easily to the intended audience and can interact with them easily. Many organizations such as al-Qaeda and ISIS use social media to achieve their motives although it is believed that al-Qaeda was the first terrorist organization that exploited social media. They usually post their messages and videos of violence on several websites to generate fear among people. One point that is often neglected here is that these organizations use religious justifications to justify their criminal act that attracts the youth who are the most vulnerable population that uses social media (Awan, 2017).

Despite terrorist groups, many domestic extremist groups also use social media to spread their ideologies and hate messages among other people of society. Also, traditional media such as news channels report the incidents and hate messages that these organizations spread on other social media platforms causing more fear among society members. These reports also draw attention towards the criminal motives of these organizations as they use this attention to spread their message and can take down the government by manipulating people. Although it is the job of news channels to report any incident yet extremists groups use this as a platform to seek attention. However, it is a matter of concern that many politicians use these reports to achieve political gains by exploiting people’s fear and prejudices. This is another reason that more people are involved in hate crimes. The constant need of people to be informed about all the threats that terrorist organization is posing, media outlets are constantly focusing on getting more information faster than their competitor’s networks. This constant need makes them vulnerable to many terrorists and extremists group personal motives for spreading prejudice and fear among members of society.

As in the United States according to the constitution, every citizen is entitled to free speech people often misuse this freedom by posting hateful messages online. Many extremists groups use these sites to organize several extremists’ movements such as anti-gay and anti-abortion movements. These groups manipulate people emotionally and religiously so that more people can take part in their agenda. Also, not only domestic extremists many terrorists groups such as ISIS make documentaries that show their member feeding poor people or visiting hospitals and praying thus changing people’s perception about them. These tactics used by extremists groups have severe adverse effects on the younger population as b seeing these messages, unaware of the consequences they join these groups. Although the government is trying hard to urge social media companies to ban hate speech and broadcasting of violent videos yet there still are many other sites that these organizations use to lure people to become the part of their group (Weimann, 2014).

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