A Comparative Analysis of the Nature and Evolution of the Domestic Jihadist Threat to Australia and Canada (2000–2020)

by Shandon Harris-Hogan, Lorne L. Dawson and Amarnath Amarasingam

Abstract

This article traces the evolution of the jihadist threat to Australia and Canada across the first 20 years of this century. First, this study examines and compares the incidents of jihadist terrorist violence that have occurred. Second, it analyses disrupted and failed terrorist plots that occurred during this period, documenting the full scale of the threat to each country. Finally, it examines and compares the characteristics of all jihadists arrested for, or killed committing, domestic terrorism offenses. Findings reveal a marked similarity in the numbers of incidents, disrupted plots, and characteristics of the individuals arrested across Canada and Australia, but also some key differences with important implications for understanding the diverse local manifestations of the global threat, even in highly similar societal contexts. The identification of these patterns has implications for theorizing about the factors influencing the process of radicalization leading to violence in each national context and generally, as well as the local adaptation of strategies for countering violent extremism.

Keywords: Australia, Canada, jihadism, terrorist incidents

Introduction

Previous studies of the jihadist threat to Australia and Canada have documented lower rates of terrorism than has occurred in Western Europe, the United Kingdom, and the United States. Yet, they have also stressed that each country still faces significant challenges, ones often in line with global trends.[1] Accordingly, the governments of Australia and Canada have made substantial investments into improving their counter terrorism capabilities, and have developed specialised programs intended to counter and prevent violent extremism. Operating within the "five eyes" relationship for sharing intelligence (a long-standing strategic arrangement between the United Kingdom, the United States, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand), much of these efforts have been coordinated. However, the level of threat, and the policies and practices required to respond to that threat, differ in small, but significant ways according to local circumstances. While the media has called attention to the nature of this threat, and how it has evolved across time, this information is episodic, scattered, and sometimes unreliable. More nuanced analysis regarding jihadist activity in Australia and Canada is available in a handful of published academic studies. However, most of these studies are case specific,[2] while only a few provide empirical data on the overall nature of the threat in Australia and Canada.[3] Many of these studies also are restricted in scope, and conflate data on foreign fighters with those involved in domestic acts of terrorism. Importantly, studies that do provide an overview are now almost a decade old. As such, they largely document the turn from the threat of international terrorism posed by al Qaeda and its affiliates, to that posed by the more autonomous local networks of jihadists characteristic of "homegrown terrorism".[4] Consequently, most do not take into consideration the dramatic escalation in the jihadist threat that occurred with the rise of the Islamic State in Syria and Iraq (ISIS).[5] Of the three specific studies that do touch on this emerging threat,[6] each only calls on very preliminary data, and in most instances, provides only a discussion regarding future possibilities.

The following collects and organises contemporary data on jihadist attacks and plots, and their perpetrators, to update the information publicly available and further examine the evolving nature of the threat to Australia and Canada across the last 20 years. It builds upon previous studies documenting local activities by studying domestic jihadists, including those inspired by the Islamic State, and the ways they have posed a threat to Australians and Canadians.

Between 2012 and 2018, foreign fighters became an ever-expanding segment of jihadist networks in Australia and Canada, and in some instances of domestic jihadist terrorism there are significant links with these foreign fighters.[7] Some Australian and Canadian foreign fighters have played a role in encouraging, or even helping to orchestrate, domestic plots and attacks. Other individuals prevented from traveling have reverted to domestic actions, and some returnees, whether successful in reaching a conflict zone or not, have been prosecuted for terrorism offenses.[8] However, there are potentially significant differences between the backgrounds and motivations of domestic jihadists and foreign fighters.[9] Creating a dataset including foreign fighters involves considering a number of alternative variables (e.g., details on their departure, travel, involvement in the foreign conflict, and ultimate fate or post-conflict status). Therefore, this analysis focuses exclusively on developing a comprehensive picture of the domestic jihadist threat.[10] Australian and Canadian foreign fighters, and their connections to domestic jihadist networks, will be the focus of a second comparative study, aimed at detecting any appreciable differences and their possible significance.

Too often in the global effort to counter jihadism, actions are taken before sufficient information is available to make considered and informed decisions. Much the same holds true for the explanatory efforts of academics as they seek to support measures to counter violent extremism (CVE).[11] The influence of the "hermeneutic of crisis management"[12] on the field is understandable, if regrettable. As we are starting to learn, even in the West there appear to be significant regional and national variations in the manifestations of jihadism.[13] Developing a more complete understanding of those jihadists committing domestic terrorism offenses in Australia and Canada will assist us to better grasp the real threat, enhance counter-terrorism policies and practices, and help to design more effective CVE programs.

There are five main parts to the following analysis. First, following a brief further discussion of the rationale for comparing jihadist terrorism in Australia and Canada, we delineate the methodology employed. Second, we examine and compare successful acts of domestic jihadist terrorism that have occurred in Australia and Canada between 2000 and the beginning of 2020. Third, we also examine and compare the disrupted and failed terrorist plots that have occurred during this period to document the full scale of the threat posed by jihadists in each country. Examining completed and failed plots allows us to investigate how a variety of factors, including attack modality and other localized tendencies, may have affected outcomes in these two countries, which has direct implications for counter-terrorism planning. Fourth, we examine and compare some characteristics of the jihadists killed or arrested for domestic terrorism offenses in each country. We also discuss arrests made for other kinds of terrorism offenses, rates of conviction and repeat offenders, and basic demographic factors. The demographic factors analysed are age, gender, education, region, family connections to extremism, and mental health issues. Fifth and finally, we reflect on the similarities between the jihadist threat faced by each nation, and a number of noteworthy differences. We consider the implications for understanding the evolution of the jihadist threat, the localization of global patterns, and consequent adaptation of counter-terrorism measures and efforts to counter and prevent violent extremism.

Methodology

As Sam Mullins concludes in his comprehensive analysis of Islamist terrorism in Australia:

> There is a great deal to be said for adopting an exhaustive chronological approach to understanding Islamist terrorism in any given country. It avoids relying on assumptions based on more general observations that do not take into account the unique context of the country in question. It enables analysis of changes over time. It allows comparison of particular contexts with general trends, and as more country case studies emerge will enable cross-comparison not only of emerging patterns of terrorist activity but of counter-terrorism efforts as well.[14]

The following extends this chronological analysis of jihadist terrorism in two countries, and initiates a cross-comparison of terrorism patterns and counter-terrorism outcomes. Many studies in the field of terrorism have

a comparative aspect, contrasting specific data from one sample or context with information from another, and there are numerous cross-national comparisons of the causes, characteristics, and consequences of terrorism based on large international datasets. Detailed comparisons of countries, based on comprehensive national datasets, however, are rare.[15]

But why compare Australia and Canada? The answer lies, in part, in the pragmatic desire for allies to understand their affinities better, especially relative to the more dominant partners in the "five eyes" network. While the situation in the United States and the United Kingdom has been the subject of exhaustive study, as indicated, the overall patterns of terrorist activity in Australia and Canada have received far less systematic attention. A comparison of such similar countries has other benefits as well. Some insight into the global spread of jihadism, and the relative resilience of societies to this threat, can be gleaned from the comparison of starkly contrasting situations, say between Russia and the United Kingdom, or France and the United States. However, such comparisons are burdened with many complexities rooted in the contrasting histories and cultures of these nations, differences that introduce an array of largely uncontrollable variables that skew the analyses in multiple ways. The comparison of similar societies facilitates a more controlled comparison of variables that are under at least the partial influence of their respective governments. In seeking to grasp the global-local dynamic in this context, identifying the similarities and differences between roughly comparable situations may prove more enlightening than merely substantiating the more obvious differences between disparate situations.

Australia and Canada share a common British colonial heritage, and their citizens have long felt a strong sense of cultural affinity. Their populations are very similar, in size and makeup, as are their economies. Both countries are multicultural liberal democracies. They share a strong and transparent commitment to the rule of law and nonauthoritarian policing, and they offer a wide array of social services to their citizens. The countries also share similar recent political histories, and as noted are members of the geo-strategically important "five eyes" intelligence-sharing network.[16] While both are strong allies of the United States, and both have participated in the "war on terror," neither is on the front line of that war. Both countries are culturally similar to the United States in many respects, but neither shares the American preoccupation with gun rights, or their tolerance for higher levels of general violence. Unlike the United Kingdom, both countries are geographically distant from Europe, and thus more disconnected from many of the larger international jihadist networks and groups. Both countries have a much larger population than New Zealand, and have experienced vastly higher levels of political violence. In terms of their response to terrorism, both Australia and Canada have emphasized the use of a mixture of hard and soft power, utilising broadly similar legal frameworks and policies. They have also actively fostered the emergence of a federally funded and overseen CVE capability, implemented in different ways across the states and provinces.[17] As such, Canada and Australia are uniquely comparable societies for studying the emergence, manifestation and evolution of jihadist terrorism in the twenty-first century.

The following identifies and analyzes Australian and Canadian jihadists issued arrest warrants for terrorism offenses committed domestically. Jihadists refers to those acting in the name of the Salafi–jihadi strand of Sunni Islamism,[18] with Islamism referring to "activism justified with primary reference to Islam."[19] More specifically, this study will analyse those arrested and charged with a terrorism offense committed in Australia or Canada between 1 January 2000 and 1 January 2020. Domestic terrorism offenses include acts in preparation to commit a terrorist attack, and other terrorism specific charges such as creating or disseminating propaganda, fundraising or being a member of a terrorist organization. Those who were arrested or killed while committing an act of jihadist terrorism have also been included.

In order to analyze the scale of the threat faced by Australia and Canada, we created a database containing the details of all arrested domestic jihadists, along with their terrorism related activities. In general, databases remain an underutilised resource in terrorism studies,[20] and such repositories have the potential to generate valuable insights by aggregating data and tracking trends across time. This is even more the case with nation-specific databases.[21] The information on 139 Australian and Canadian domestic actors was organised across four broad categories: personal information (age, education, mental health concerns, etc.), ideology (group affiliation, connections to other known jihadists, etc.), arrest details (charges, planned target, etc.), and incident details (date, number of casualties, etc.). Twenty-six variables were coded for each individual, though it was not

always possible to find the required information.

Traditionally, access to detailed information about counterterrorism investigations is very limited.[22] Fortunately, for 70% of the sample (97/139) we were able to draw much of the required information from primary sources, such as court documents or coronial inquest documents. These documents are considered more reliable and authoritative as they contain the testimony of law enforcement officials, the sentencing comments of judges, and even telephone intercepts and listening device transcripts presented in court. The data has also undergone the scrutiny of a well-regulated adversarial system. When information was not available in official sources, we extracted additional details from publicly available media. Whenever possible, we used and compared multiple media sources, to maximize the limited reliability of such sources.

Nevertheless, some limitations to the study should be acknowledged. As the database was built using open sources of information, this study may have missed some arrests and incidents altogether. While the high-profile nature of terrorism means this is unlikely, it is possible that individuals have been overlooked. Moreover, while court documents and other official sources are considered the 'gold standard' for information,[23] details regarding individuals, arrests and incidents may still be missing. This is an unfortunate limitation of analysing any illicit network. Moreover, while a number of the individuals included are now deceased or convicted of terrorism-related offenses, several cases remain before the Australian and Canadian judicial systems. As such, sentencing or coronial documents are not yet available. Consequently, sections of this study may require future revision as more detailed information becomes available. Finally, as noted, some details included in the dataset come from media sources, which are of a lower quality than the primary sources discussed. Media accounts of arrests or plots can often selectively exaggerate specific aspects of what happened, and such reports can differ significantly from the final, corroborated version of events found in court documents. Therefore, there may be mistakes in the database. As the following analysis has been created using such accounts, and the threshold for inclusion was that an individual was charged with an offense, this work should have absolutely no bearing on the guilt or innocence of any individuals. As such, all individuals who have not yet had their court cases heard, or who have been acquitted have been de-identified. Any conclusions drawn from this analysis should bear these limitations in mind.

Terrorist Incidents: Successful Attacks

Between 2000 and the beginning of 2020, 13 domestic jihadist-inspired acts of violence were perpetrated in Australia (7) and Canada (6). While recognising that 13 incidents is an extremely small sample, there is remarkable similarity between these Canadian and Australian incidents and offenders.

The Islamic State of Syria and Iraq (ISIS) inspired all 13 incidents, and all occurred within the same four-year period between late 2014 and late 2018. Specifically, all occurred in the months and years following the September 2014 call by the group's external operations emir instructing Western-based supporters of ISIS to carry out attacks in the West. Two months after the establishment of the 'Caliphate,' ISIS spokesperson Muhammad al-Adnani, in a speech entitled "Indeed Your Lord is Ever Watchful," stated: "If you can kill a disbelieving American or European – especially the spiteful and filthy French – or an Australian, or a Canadian … kill him in any manner or way however it may be. Do not ask for anyone's advice and do not seek anyone's verdict."[24] This message was repeated on least three subsequent occasions, each accompanied by increasingly specific instructions.[25] This declaration appears to have empowered unaffiliated ISIS sympathisers in Australia and Canada to act in the group's name, and to do so on their own. Indeed, lone actors subsequently perpetrated all 13 incidents. This shift in activity is comparable to the evolution noted in earlier studies, with the increase in homegrown terrorism in Australia and Canada following the American invasion of Iraq in 2003.[26]

Notably, Abu Musab al Suri had previously called upon jihadist movements to engage in "individual terrorism jihad" in the 1990s.[27] The current al Qaeda leader, Ayman al Zawahiri, also encouraged jihadists to undertake lone attacks as far back as 2001,[28] and in the late 2000s al Qaeda's affiliate in Yemen (al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula) led a campaign, through *Inspire* magazine, to encourage solo terrorism.[29] However, only ISIS has

thus far been effective in triggering successful lone-actor attacks in Australia and Canada.

Among the seven Australian lone actors, six were male and one was female. The Canadian group was remarkably similar, also with one female lone actor and five males. The average age also was almost identical, with the seven Australians averaging 27 years old and the Canadian group averaging 28. However, the Australian group did cover a wider spectrum of ages, with two teenagers (the youngest just 15) and one lone actor in his 50s. By contrast, each of the Canadian lone actors were aged between 24 and 32 when they committed their attacks.

While all 13 actors perpetrated their attacks alone, each had varying levels of engagement with domestic jihadist networks. Some, such as Abdul Numan Haider, emerged from well-established domestic jihadist networks, and Farhad Jabar Khalil Mohammed was even supported in the planning of his attack by at least four locally based jihadists. Other lone actors operated by themselves, but were related to jihadists who had perpetrated attacks internationally (Momena Shoma), or had attempted to commit an act domestically (Hassan Khalif Shire Ali). A small number of cases fit the stricter understanding of the so-called 'lone wolf', in that they appear to have radicalised alone (Ihsas Khan) or planned their attack alone (Man Haron Monis). Notably, while the ISIS message inspired all 13 lone actors, none had any known connection to ISIS command and control.

Calling on Hegghammer and Nesser's typology of ISIS attacks, these 13 plots fit the category of "sympathy, no contact" attacks, where "the attacker expresses ideological support for the group … but does not communicate bilaterally with anyone in the organization." [30] Unlike many of the ISIS-inspired lone-actor attacks in Europe, where the vast majority had direct connections to foreign fighters in Iraq and Syria,[31] these 13 lone actors appear to have had little or no contact with ISIS leadership in any form. Thus, it appears that ISIS has been uniquely successful, amongst international jihadist groups, in empowering unaffiliated sympathisers in Australia and Canada to act on their own.

The success that ISIS has had in mobilising unaffiliated Australian and Canadian sympathisers is attributable, at least partially, to the specific type of attacks the group has encouraged. Despite these 13 incidents occurring across a range of different Australian and Canadian locations, the overwhelming majority of attacks were simplistic, employed low resources, and were unambitious in their scope. While Aaron Driver stands out because of his 'success' in assembling homemade explosives,[32] the majority of lone actors (8) conducted their attacks primarily using only edged weapons (four also used low-caliber firearms). Moreover, no attacker had undertaken any form of prior training, and none had military backgrounds. The solitary nature, simple planning and basic weaponry used in these 13 attacks meant that (as with other international lone-actor incidents)[33] these acts were also extremely difficult for security services to detect and disrupt.

The trade-off was that these 13 unambitious attacks only resulted in a total of seven fatalities (excluding the perpetrators themselves). Interestingly, the target selected for each attack does not appear to have influenced the overall number of fatalities. Six lone actors chose military, police or government targets or personnel, while the remainder chose to randomly attack civilian targets with little symbolic value. Despite the fact that discriminate and random targeting was about equally common in this sample, the most fatalities ultimately achieved in any attack was two (excluding the perpetrator). Although 13 is a small sample, this finding supports Spaaj's analysis, which found relatively low lethality in 'lone wolf' attacks,[34] as well as Nesser's study of 'single actor' attacks in Europe, which found that perpetrators were limited in their ability to cause "destruction and fatalities".[35] ISIS consistently urged its followers to carry out attacks of any kind, even minimalist ones that would still carry symbolic weight. As such, many attackers chose edged weapons and low-caliber firearms and needed to get within a very close proximity of their intended targets. This, combined with the limited planning and the low capability of the attackers, means it is not surprising that eight of the 13 perpetrators were killed attempting to commit their attacks.

An additional factor often linked with discussions of lone-actor attacks is the prevalence of mental illness among perpetrators. This topic is discussed later in this analysis.

Terrorist Incidents: Disrupted and Failed Plots

Disrupted and failed plots were also included in this analysis in order to capture the total number of planned jihadist incidents (not just the number of attacks that happened to avoid police detection). A number of previous studies have largely overlooked foiled or failed attacks, leaving us often unable to answer seemingly basic questions about the actual scale and evolution of the jihadist phenomenon.[36] Including disrupted plots also allows for the comparison of successful and failed attacks in order to establish if there are broad correlations between particular operational choices and outcomes. However, as none of these plots ultimately came to fruition, conclusions regarding target selection, attack methodology and the number of planned attackers is based on less complete and concrete information than the above analysis.

Australia

Along with the seven lone-actor attacks detailed above, a further 21 jihadist plots were disrupted in Australia between 2000 and the beginning of 2020. Sixty-two individuals were subsequently charged with terrorism offenses in relation to these planned attacks. The following discussion distinguishes between plots that occurred prior to al-Adnani's declaration in September 2014, and those that occurred after September 2014.

Pre–September 2014

Prior to the al-Adnani declaration, five jihadist plots were disrupted in Australia, resulting in 30 arrests. Therefore, while the pre-2014 cohort accounts for almost half of the arrests related to the 21 disrupted Australian plots, these arrests only occurred across a small number of planned attacks. The first two plots involved small groups planning a series of attacks under the command and control of international jihadist organizations, including al Qaeda and Lashkar-e-Taiba. Both plots discussed attacking a range of civilian targets using explosives. Two subsequent homegrown plots (Operations Pendennis in 2005 and Operation Neath in 2009) accounted for the overwhelming majority of these pre-2014 arrests. While both plots involved large groups of potential attackers, the Pendennis group was investigating the use of explosives against civilian targets,[37] while the Neath group planned to procure firearms and attack Australian military personnel in a *fida'iyya* (self-sacrifice) style attack.[38] One lone actor also was arrested in relation to a plot targeting Australian government officials using a firearm.[39]

Post–September 2014

Post September 2014, Australia has seen a dramatic escalation in the number of jihadist plots. Along with the seven lone-actor attacks detailed above, there were 16 disrupted or failed jihadist plots.[40] Significantly, 100% of the jihadist plots that have occurred post–September 2014 have been linked to ISIS. While 14 of the 16 planned attacks involved unaffiliated sympathisers inspired by the group,[41] members of the remaining two plots were in communication with ISIS command, who oversaw the actions of those involved. This is what Hegghammer and Nesser categorize as "remote contact with directives." Here, those planning the attack communicate "remotely (typically by telephone, email, or social media) and bilaterally with cadres of the organization and receive personal instructions."[42]

While these 16 post-2014 plots were ultimately disrupted by law enforcement (and thus never finalised), these plots appear to be equally divided between eight lone actor and eight group actor planned attacks. There also was a relatively even mix of targets and attack methodologies. Fifty percent of the lone-actor plots planned to attack random civilian targets, while the other 50% intended to target police, military or government personnel. Four lone actors planned to conduct attacks primarily using edged weapons, three intended to use firearms and one explosives. By contrast, 75% of group actors planned to attack civilian targets (including one plot targeting airlines), while only 25% planned to attack police, military or government targets. This again involved a mix of primary attack methodologies, with four group actors planning to use firearms, three edged weapons, and one explosives. Overall, in the post-2014 period, ISIS has clearly been quite successful in encouraging both group and lone actors to attack a mix of civilian and military targets, using a wide range of attack methodologies. However, it is worth noting that these 16 plots resulted in only 33 arrests, making these plots substantially

smaller in size than those seen previously. Moreover, with the exception of Operation Silves (that targeted aircraft using explosives), each of these ISIS-inspired or -directed plots has been far less resource intensive and ambitious in scope than the non-ISIS plots disrupted pre-2014.

Overall

When these 21 disrupted plots are combined with the seven lone-actor attacks, 28 jihadist-planned or -perpetrated plots targeting Australia have been identified by this study. Sixty-four percent (18) targeted civilians (including one targeting aviation), while 36% (10) were more discriminate in their targeting, focusing on police, government or military targets. The overwhelming majority of Australian plots chose only basic weaponry. Forty-seven percent (13) planned to primarily use firearms and 39% (11) edged weapons. Only 14% (4) planned to use explosives, and no plots intended to use CBRN weapons. Notably, only one of the 21 ISIS-inspired attacks involving unaffiliated sympathisers, planned to use explosives as their primary weapon. This highlights that attacks involving limited planning and unsophisticated methodologies were a phenomenon facilitated by the emergence of ISIS.

Among these 28 Australian plots, there was not a significant difference between the overall number of lone-actor and group plots. While the lone actors were not more likely to choose one type of target over another, group actors targeted civilians at a much higher rate of three (civilian) to one (police/military/government). Regarding attack methodology, group actors were much more likely to plan coordinated attacks with explosives (three of 12) when compared to lone actors (one of 16). While group actors may prefer softer targets, they are clearly more ambitious in the style and scale of their attack plans. However, this more ambitious choice of attack methodology may have contributed to group actors being far less successful in carrying out their attacks. Indeed, every single group-based plot either failed or was disrupted by law enforcement. By contrast, lone actors were much more likely than group actors to use edged weapons, limiting the size and scale of their attacks. However, 44% (7) of lone-actor plots were ultimately 'successful' in executing their attacks. This finding supports previous studies noting that low-resource, unsophisticated attacks conducted by lone actors are much more difficult for security services to identify and disrupt.

The overwhelming majority of Australian plots (82%) have been either connected to, or inspired by, ISIS. While only 9% of these plots were overseen by ISIS command and control (with 91% involving homegrown, unaffiliated sympathisers), by contrast 40% of the non-ISIS plots were guided by international jihadist organizations such as al Qaeda or Lashkar-e-Taiba. An additional plot had extensive contact with al Shabaab (including training several group members and granting permission for the attack). Therefore, while ISIS has been able to guide a small number of highly ambitious group plots aimed at Australian targets, the group's real success has been its ability to inspire 21 separate plots by unaffiliated Australian sympathisers across a five-year period. Indeed, the most significant changes in jihadist activity witnessed in Australia over the last 20 years appear to stem directly from the 2014 call to action by the Islamic State.

Canada

Along with the six lone-actor attacks that occurred in Canada discussed above, between 2000 and the beginning of 2020, a further eight planned attacks were disrupted. Thirty individuals were subsequently charged with terrorism offenses in relation to these plots. Once again, the plots are divided between those occurring prior to Islamic State's declaration in September 2014 and after. Unfortunately, the court documents available for Canadian cases are far less detailed than those available for Australia, thus findings for the following Canadian plots rely on far less complete and specific information.

Pre–September 2014

Prior to 2014, five jihadist plots were disrupted in Canada, resulting in 25 arrests. Notably, 18 of these arrests came in late 2005 and early 2006 in association with the 'Toronto 18' plot. The Toronto 18 planned the first jihadist attack in Canada, and although some members had contact with a British recruiter for terrorist groups in Pakistan,[43] the group was quintessentially homegrown, involving young people born or raised in Canada.

Although the intentions of this group were somewhat diffuse, there was an "inner core of perhaps six or seven [individuals]… [who were] fully committed to the cause,"[44] and had begun preparations for two large truck bombs. Other disrupted group plots included the VIA Rail plot, in which two men planned to derail a passenger train operating between New York and Toronto,[45] and three jihadists arrested under Project Samossa, who were attempting to assemble improvised explosive devices. Two were also charged with conspiracy to "murder persons for the benefit or at the direction of a terrorist group."[46] They had placed several bombs on the grounds of the legislature of the province of British Columbia on Canada Day. One other lone actor planned to target a military base with explosive materials. Notably, with the exception of the VIA Rail plot (where the intended attack method is unclear), all these pre-2014 plots in Canada planned to use explosives and sought to cause mass casualties.

Post–September 2014

Post–September 2014, only three jihadist plots have been disrupted in Canada, resulting in the arrest of four individuals. Two teenagers were arrested for planning separate lone-actor attacks (in 2015 and 2019), while a couple was charged with "committing an offense for the benefit of a terrorist group" and "possessing an explosive substance with the intent to endanger life or cause damage."[47] As the two lone actors were juveniles, comparatively little information is available on these plots. Consequently, it is difficult to draw many firm conclusions regarding the plots. However, it is worth noting that these three plots do not appear to have any connection to ISIS command and control, with each seemingly undertaken by unaffiliated sympathisers inspired by ISIS.

Overall

When these eight disrupted plots are combined with the six lone-actor attacks detailed previously, we have 14 planned or perpetrated jihadist attacks in Canada. While these numbers are small, there are some notable trends in this sample. Almost double the number of plots emerged post-2014 (nine) compared to the years prior (five). There was also almost double the number of lone-actor attacks (nine) overall, compared to group attacks (five), with all lone-actor plots (excluding one) occurring post-2014. Of these 14 planned and perpetrated plots, only 21% (three) targeted civilians. This indicates a clear preference among Canadian jihadists for targeting the police, military or the government. Of the 11 plots where an attack methodology can be determined, 55% (six) planned to use explosives. Hence, the Canadian jihadists were particularly ambitious, both in terms of the targets selected and the comparatively sophisticated methodologies planned for the attacks.

Interestingly, the 2018 *Public Report on the Terrorism Threat to Canada* states: "more sophisticated tactics, such as the use of improvised explosive devices … are less common in Western attacks, including Canada."[48] This may be true for the jihadist attacks in Canada, where four used edged weapons, one a low-caliber firearm, and only one explosives. However, with more than half the 'plots' in Canada involving the use of explosives, the statement appears misleading. Finally, it is worth noting that every single Canadian plot involving the selection of edged weapons or firearms as the primary weapon was ultimately 'successful.' Therefore, when Canadian jihadists intended to cause mass casualties, using more sophisticated weaponry, their plots were always detected. However, Canadian security services were unable to disrupt any of the lone-actor attacks involving limited preparation.

Comparing Canada and Australia

Prior to September 2014, the size and scale of the jihadist threat to Australia and Canada was almost identical. Each country faced five plots between 2000 and 2014, arresting 25 and 30 jihadists respectively. Notably, the overwhelming majority of these arrests occurred because of just one plot in each country, with 22 individuals arrested in Operation Pendennis (Australia), and 18 jihadists arrested in the Toronto 18 plot (Canada). The security services disrupted both plots in late 2005/early 2006, following months of investigations, and both groups were at similar stages in their attack planning. The arrests in both cases were what Dawson and Amarasingam call "watershed moment[s]" for their respective societies, when Canadians and Australians first realized that homegrown jihadist terrorists posed a serious threat to them.[49]

Both countries also faced a series of very similar jihadist attacks post-2014, both in terms of the number of incidents and scale of the attacks. However, when analysing the overall jihadist threat faced by Australia and Canada post-2014, the first clear point of divergence emerges. Since that time, Australia has disrupted 16 separate jihadist plots (arresting 33 individuals), while Canadian security services intercepted only three plots (arresting only four jihadists). Clearly the Islamic State has had much more success motivating unaffiliated sympathisers in Australia (as well as at facilitating plots in Australia), than the organisation has had in Canada. As noted above, two of the post-2014 plots did have remote contact with, and directives given by, the Islamic State. However, none of the post-2014 ISIS-inspired or -directed plots in Australia or Canada involved returned foreign fighters. This is contrary to well-stoked fears of the inclinations and abilities of such fighters, but in line with recent research reviewed in the discussion and conclusions section of this article. Finally, the rise in the overall number of jihadists in Australia correlates with a difference in the two countries' counter-terrorism interception rates. In Australia, one in every four planned attacks has avoided detection and been carried out (seven successfully, 21 disrupted). By contrast, 43% of identified Canadian plots were carried out successfully, or close to one in every two planned attacks (6 successful, 8 disrupted). While the numbers are again small, this suggests that Australia has perhaps been more effective in building an increased counter-terrorism capacity and capability (in response to an increasing jihadist threat) across the past 5 years.

Combining Canada and Australia

Given the broad similarities between Canada and Australia, both in terms of their respective societies and the threat faced by jihadists, combining the two sets of findings may also provide further insights into the phenomenon of domestic jihadism. Looking across the full set of 42 planned or perpetrated domestic jihadist plots, they are divided almost equally between those targeting civilians (21) and those targeting police, military or government (18) – with three cases where we could not determine the target. There is also a relatively even distribution of primary attack methodologies, with 15 plots aiming to use edged weapons, 14 firearms, and 10 attempts to construct and detonate explosives. In three cases, the attack methodologies were again unclear, including the Canadian plot to derail a passenger train. Notably, this plot appears to be the only example of Australian or Canadian jihadists thinking 'outside the box' in their attack methodology.

Sixty percent of planned or perpetrated plots (25) involved lone actors, almost equally divided between the 52% (13) successfully carried out, and the 48% (12) disrupted. While the type of target selected for the attack made almost no difference to the plot's success, the attack methodology did. Plots using edged weapons were much more likely to be successful (8 of 15) than those intending to use firearms (4 of 14). Almost all of the plots attempting to use explosives were disrupted (9 of 10). Interestingly, no pre-2014 plots planned to use edged weapons. Thus, while the rise of ISIS has also seen a sharp rise in the overall success rate of plots, this increase is likely the result of the simultaneous decrease in the intended scale and sophistication of many of the planned attacks.

Seventeen group plots were also identified. Regardless of the target, the primary attack methodology, or whether the plotters had connections with an international terrorist organisation, every single group plot in Australia and Canada was disrupted by security services.

Australian and Canadian Jihadists

Arrests for other kinds of Terrorism Offenses

Australia

This study identified a total of 89 domestic actors in Australia since 2000. Eighty-two percent (73) were arrested or killed as part of the 28 plots detailed above. An additional 16 jihadists were arrested on a range of other terrorism charges. This included seven individuals charged with offenses related to funding and/or supporting a terrorist organisation, and four arrested for creating or disseminating jihadist propaganda. Three jihadists were charged with breaching control orders related to their suspected terrorist activities (or were placed on a

control order after more serious terrorism charges were dropped), while an additional two were also charged with being members of a terrorist organisation (both ISIS).[50]

Thirty-six percent of these Australian jihadists were arrested prior to the ISIS declaration, while 64% emerged in the five or so years post–September 2014. As noted above, this indicates a clear and significant upsurge in the number of Australian domestic jihadists in conjunction with the rise of ISIS. With the exception of Momena Shoma, who traveled to Australia from Bangladesh with the intention of carrying out a terrorist attack, it appears that 99% (88/89) of these identified jihadists radicalised in Australia. Therefore, regardless of where an individual was born, their cultural background, the citizenships they might have held, or where in the world they spent most of their life, the cohort of jihadists in Australia has been uniquely homegrown.

Canada

This study also identified 50 domestic jihadists in Canada since 2000.[51] Seventy-two percent (36) of these were arrested or killed in the 28 plots detailed above. An additional 14 jihadists also were arrested on a range of other terrorism charges. This includes four Canadians arrested in Canada for assisting or facilitating jihadist attacks internationally. Notably, all four of these arrests occurred prior to 2014. Two additional Canadians were arrested in the United States for assisting international jihadist plots. Tahawwur Hussain Rana was arrested, tried, and imprisoned in Chicago, and Abdulrahman el Bahnasawy was arrested, tried, and imprisoned in New York. Sayfildin Tahir Sharif, arrested in Edmonton in 2011 for facilitating a suicide attack in Iraq (that killed five US soldiers), was also extradited to the United States in January 2015.[52] These arrests for assisting international terrorist plots provide a clear point of divergence from Australian jihadists. Post–September 2014, four Canadian jihadists were also arrested on terrorism charges related to threats to harm or inciting fear, while another faced charges related to creating or disseminating jihadist propaganda.

The final three Canadians were included because they had signed Peace Bonds. Peace Bonds are "essentially restraining orders" which allow law enforcement to place certain restrictions on individuals who they fear, on reasonable grounds, may pose a risk to public safety. If the court is persuaded that an individual may pose a risk, the defendant is ordered to "enter into a recognizance…to keep the peace and be of good behaviour" for up to twelve months.[53] Twenty-four Peace Bonds were identified as being issued in Canada to jihadists since 2000. Ten were signed by individuals already included in the sample above, while 11 were excluded from this analysis because they related to foreign fighting activity. The final three cases all signed Peace Bonds between 2015 and 2016. Authorities had "reasonable and probable grounds to believe" that each of these individuals may go on to commit a terrorist offense.[54] Notably, one of these three individuals was communicating with the same British 14-year-old that was involved in the 2015 Anzac Day plot in Australia.[55] This appears to be the only direct connection between the Australian and Canadian domestic jihadist networks, and both were part of a thriving online ISIS-supporter network at the time.[56]

In total, 62% (31) of Canadian jihadists were arrested prior to the ISIS declaration, while 38% (19) emerged in the years post September 2014. As noted above, Canada has not seen the same significant increase in ISIS-inspired and -controlled plots post-2014 that Australia has witnessed. However, members of the domestic Canadian network have facilitated or assisted a number of significant international jihadist plots, a phenomenon not observed in Australia.

Conviction Rates and Repeat Offenders

Australia

Of the 89 Australian jihadists, 73% (65) have so far been convicted of domestic terrorism offenses and received prison sentences. Twelve percent (11) are still awaiting trial or retrial (the majority of whom were arrested post-2018), while 5% (5) were killed committing a terrorist act. Just 10% (9) have been acquitted of the terrorism charges brought against them.

Of the 65 individuals that have been imprisoned, 26% (17) were identified as having been released. Importantly, none of these 17 Australian jihadists have subsequently been arrested for other domestic terrorism related offenses. The only Australian jihadist to have potentially reoffended domestically is Yacqub Khayre. He was arrested as part of Operation Neath in August 2009, although he was ultimately acquitted of "conspiring to do acts in preparation of a terrorist act." However, in June 2017 Khayre was killed committing a lone-actor terrorist attack. Hence, in sections of this analysis, Khayre is counted for both his 2009 arrest and his 2017 lone-actor attack. Three other individuals (Milad Atai, Ahmed Mohamad, and Abdullah Chaarani) were also charged with separate terrorism offenses that occurred on different dates. Each was arrested for the first time in relation to a planned or perpetrated attack, and each was subsequently charged with a separate terrorism offense. However, each individual was arrested only once (because the second offense also occurred prior to their original arrest), and therefore they cannot be considered to have reoffended.[57] While the sample size is small (89), and many individuals are now serving long prison sentences that prevent their reoffending, it is significant that only one domestic jihadist could loosely be considered a "terrorist reoffender" in Australia.

Canada

Of the 50 Canadian jihadists, 54% (27) have been convicted, at this time, of terrorism offenses and received prison sentences. Twenty-eight percent (14) were acquitted of all terrorism charges, while 4% (2) are awaiting trial. Similarly to Australia, 6% (three) were killed in the commission of a terrorist offense. The final 8% of Canadians either signed a Peace Bond (three) or were held on a Security Certificate (one).[58]

Similar to the Australian situation, at this time no Canadian jihadists have been convicted of terrorism offenses, served a prison sentence, and then been subsequently rearrested for domestic terrorism offenses. As previously noted, 10 of the 24 known Canadian Peace Bonds were issued to individuals arrested on domestic terrorism charges.[59] Nine were issued to individuals after their charges were stayed or they were released from prison. However, lone actor Aaron Driver was under the conditions of a Peace Bond when he committed his August 2016 attack.[60] Similar to Yacqub Khayre, Driver is therefore the only Canadian that loosely could be considered to have potentially 'reoffended.'

To date, approximately three in every four jihadists arrested in Australia have been convicted and imprisoned. However, in Canada this number is closer to two in every four. On the other hand, one in 10 of those charged with terrorism offenses in Australia has been acquitted, compared to almost three in 10 in Canada. A series of factors have likely contributed to this difference. However, it is worth noting that the Canadian government plans to establish a new unit specialising in terrorism prosecutions to address what one former Canadian Security Intelligence Service analyst called "an inconsistent track record" of terrorism prosecutions in Canada.[61]

Demographic Factors

Age

The average age of Australian jihadists was 25.4. However, there were significant differences across the period studied. Looking at the 32 individuals arrested prior to 2014, the average age was over 28. However, among the 58 jihadists arrested or killed post–September 2014, the average age drops to just under 24. This finding supports the 2016 Australian Security Intelligence Organisation (ASIO) assessment that noted "a significant decrease in the age profile of those involved."[62] Most significantly, 31% (18) of jihadists that emerged in Australia post-2014 have been teenagers, compared to 0% prior to 2014.[63] Notably, each of these Australian teenage jihadists has been directly related to ISIS activity. This emergence of teenagers as a significant part of the Australian jihadist network has clear implications for the implementation of counter-terrorism policy and CVE programs.[64]

Among Canadian jihadists, the overall average age of known domestic actors was 26.6.[65] As with the Australian sample, the average age of jihadists dropped from 27.6 in the years pre-2014, to 24.9 following the

ISIS declaration. Although this decrease is not as sharp as among the Australian sample (which is also much larger), this drop in age is still noteworthy. Interestingly, the average age of domestic jihadists in Australia pre-2014 (28) and Canada (27.6) is almost identical to the average age of European jihadists between 2001 and 2010 (27.7).[66] When looking specifically at teenagers, Canada had eight teenagers arrested pre-2014, along with nine post-2014. Thus, unlike Australia, teenage jihadists have been consistently present in the Canadian context.

Gender

Among Australian jihadists, 6% of those arrested (five) were women, while 94% (84) were men. The Canadian jihadists had an identical gender breakdown, with 6% of those arrested (three) being women and 94% (47) men. There are also remarkable similarities between the women identified in both Australia and Canada. Two of these eight women (one from Australia and one from Canada) carried out a non-fatal lone-actor attack against a civilian target using an edged weapon. Notably, both appear completely disconnected from the wider jihadist networks in their respective countries. Five of the remaining six women were arrested for planning violent acts with, or supporting the violent actions of, their partner or another male family member. Two Australian women were also arrested for illicit fundraising activity, conducted to support family members fighting in Syria and Iraq. Finally, one Australian woman was charged with being a member of ISIS, although the judge noted that she was not a "terrorist in the sense of a person who is disposed to planning or committing acts of violence."[67] Overall, outside of a couple of extremely atypical and isolated examples, it would appear that females not already connected by blood or marriage to other jihadists have not presented a violent threat in either the Canadian or Australian context across the past twenty years.

Education

Unfortunately, information regarding educational attainment was only available for 78% of Canadian jihadists (39 of 50) and 58% of the Australian sample (52 of 89). Lack of information on this variable is quite common in studies of jihadists.[68] Of the 52 Australian jihadists where there is data, no individuals had completed or even attempted post-graduate study, and only 8% (four) individuals had completed an undergraduate degree or college course (with one individual also enrolled in university at the time he committed his attack). For 25% of the sample (13), the highest level of educational attainment achieved was high school. This meant that 67% of Australian jihadists did not even complete secondary level education.

By contrast, Canadian jihadists were significantly better educated. Three percent (one individual) had completed a PhD, while 54% (21) had either completed an undergraduate degree or at least enrolled at university. Fitting with previous studies, the overwhelming majority of jihadists studied in areas such as engineering, science, and medicine or computer science. When college is also included, 63% of Canadians had undertaken some form of further education, compared to just 8% in Australia. Almost identically, 26% of Canadian jihadists (and 25% Australian jihadists) had only finished high school. However, while 67% of Australians did not finish high school, just 12% of Canadians were high school dropouts. In summary, approximately two in every three Canadian jihadists had undertaken some form of education beyond high school, while approximately two in every three Australian jihadists did not even complete high school.

Region

Fifty of the 89 Australian jihadists emerged from the state of New South Wales (NSW), while 35 came from Victoria. This meant that 96% of Australian jihadists (85) were concentrated in the areas around Australia's two most populous cities (Sydney and Melbourne). Moreover, in the last three years analyzed, Australian arrests and incidents have overwhelmingly occurred in Victoria (with that State taking over from NSW as the main centre of domestic jihadist activity in Australia). Of the four Australians disconnected from these jihadist networks, two emerged from Queensland and two from South Australia.

In Canada, jihadists were more geographically dispersed. While 68% were arrested in Ontario (34 individuals), this number is significantly skewed by the arrest of 18 individuals in Toronto associated with just one plot. The

remaining 16 Ontarians were from a broad range of cities including Toronto, Ottawa, Waterloo, Kingston and Pembroke. Twelve percent of the remaining Canadian jihadists (six) were from Quebec, while 8% (four) were from British Columbia. These three provinces appear to be the main centres of jihadist activity in Canada. Two jihadists also were arrested in Alberta, one in Manitoba, and one in Prince Edward Island. As noted previously, two Canadian jihadists arrested in the United States were also included.

Family Connections

Among Australian jihadists, 30% (27 individuals) were related by either blood or marriage to at least one other member of the identified community of domestic jihadists (89 individuals). Hence, Australian jihadists form a highly interconnected domestic network, centred around a small number of key families whose involvement covers much of the period analyzed. This dense interconnectivity also helps explain the geographically centralised nature of the Australian sample. By contrast, none of the 50 Canadian jihadists were related by blood, and only four (8%) were related by marriage (two sets of brothers-in-law, who were arrested as part of the Toronto 18).[69] Along with the divergence in the number of disrupted plots post-2014, this contrast in the interconnectivity of the Canadian and Australian domestic networks is perhaps the biggest difference between the two extremely similar samples of jihadists. As some of the Canadian foreign fighters were siblings, however, it will be interesting to see if and to what degree this difference remains significant for the comparative data collected on the foreign fighters.

Mental Health

Despite decades of research into a potential link between mental illness and violence, studies have not found those who experience mental health problems to be more likely to commit serious criminal offenses.[70] While mental illness can be a risk factor for general violence, especially when combined with drug abuse,[71] research regarding a direct link between mental illness and serious crime remains inconclusive.[72] Despite this, many early terrorism studies attempted to identify specific psychological profiles or a prevalence of particular disorders among violent extremists.[73] The limited success in identifying such profiles led to a broad school of thought that terrorists were "surprisingly normal in terms of mental health."[74] However, these conclusions regarding the overall 'psychological normality' of terrorists were likely somewhat premature, with studies potentially underreporting or overlooking mental health issues due to methodological limitations or the absence of information.[75]

Recent research has added a degree of nuance to this field of enquiry. One emerging finding suggests that mental disorders may be more common among lone actors.[76] More specifically, three disorders have been found to have a substantially higher than expected prevalence among lone actors. These include schizophrenia, delusional disorders and autism spectrum disorders.[77] While the sample of Australian and Canadian lone actors is small, this group does appear to support these emerging findings, and given the high prevalence of ISIS-inspired lone-actor attacks in the post-2014 period, this is important.

Four of the 13 successful lone actors identified by this study were reported as suffering schizophrenia. In 2010 (five years prior to the Lindt café siege in Sydney) Man Haron Monis was diagnosed as a chronic schizophrenic, albeit high functioning.[78] He also had a severe and longstanding complex personality disorder, with antisocial and narcissistic features.[79] In Australia, Ihsas Khan was also diagnosed with schizophrenia.[80] In Canada, a psychiatrist determined that one of the male lone actors was suffering from schizophrenia,[81] while a Canadian judge concluded that Canada's only female lone actor's schizophrenia "played a central role in her crimes."[82]

Another four lone actors also appear to have faced a range of mental health challenges related to illicit drug use. From his teenage years, Yacqub Khayre seriously abused drugs and alcohol (completing multiple stints in Australian prisons for both violent and nonviolent offenses), and at the time of his attack Khayre had an addiction to crystal methamphetamine.[83] Canadian Martin Couture-Rouleau had also previously used cocaine, speed, magic mushrooms and acid, but unlike Khayre had stopped using hard drugs years before the attack.[84] He was reported, however, to be smoking up to 25 joints a day,[85] and had been in contact with

mental health workers approximately one year before his attack. Michael Zehaf-Bibeau, who died during an attack on Parliament Hill in Ottawa, was also convicted of a series of drug offenses, and had previously noted that he wanted to go to prison in order to overcome his cocaine addiction.[86] However, there were no drugs or alcohol in his system at the time of his attack.[87] Finally, it was reported that Hassan Khalif Shire Ali used drugs and may have suffered depression in the lead-up to his attack.[88] However, these reports remain unconfirmed, and Victoria Police held "no evidence … that Shire Ali was suffering from mental health issues."[89]

Along with the four lone actors reported as suffering schizophrenia, and the four noted as having substance abuse struggles, three of the five remaining lone actors also had potential mental health issues reported. The Coroner described Haider as "troubled",[90] and those around Jabar were concerned for his mental health prior to his attack.[91] As a preteen, Abdulahi Hasan Sharif was also "hospitalised and medicated for a mental disorder."[92] However, it is not possible to provide further insights into the mental health of these individuals due to the clinical restrictions and the nondisclosure of information for minors.

Whether mental health issues directly contributed towards any of these 13 lone actors deciding to undertake a terrorist attack is unclear, as is the potential impact of such conditions in limiting the social networks of these perpetrators. What is clear is that this sample of 13 Australians and Canadians presents a much higher than expected prevalence of mental disorders (specifically schizophrenia) and substance abuse issues. And while schizophrenia or drug abuse are clearly not "risk factors" for involvement in terrorism, our data suggests that jihadist sympathisers who have mental health or substance abuse issues may be more likely to undertake small scale lone-actor attacks. Overall, this Australian and Canadian group does appear to support emerging research into a link between particular mental health conditions, and lone-actor attacks, especially those inspired by ISIS post September 2014.

However, contrary to speculation that irrationality and spontaneity may be more heavily associated with lone-actor attacks,[93] the 13 lone actors studied overwhelmingly appear to display sufficient rationality to plan and execute an act of violence with clear ideological intent. Hence it is important to distinguish between clinical diagnoses of mental illness and legal judgments about whether individuals are not responsible for their actions,[94] because they were unable to "understand what [they were] doing and why, and to act on the basis of that understanding."[95]

For example, in Australia, Khan's defence claimed that he was "not criminally responsible for the offense" because at the time of the attack "he was suffering from a mental impairment."[96] Ultimately, the NSW Supreme court found Khan responsible for his actions, and sentenced him to 36 years imprisonment for committing a terrorist offense.[97][98] Likewise, a Coronial Inquest found Man Haron Monis was capable of choice and deliberation in his actions.[99] More specifically, findings noted that he "undertook the siege in a controlled, planned and quite methodical manner … and was not suffering from a diagnosable categorical psychiatric disorder that deprived him of the capacity to understand the nature of what he was doing."[100] Canada's female lone actor was also found responsible for committing a terrorist act, despite her mental health issues. However, she did receive a reduced sentence (seven years imprisonment) due to the impact of her illness.[101] To date, only one surviving lone actor has been found "not criminally responsible" for his actions. Here the judge noted that Canadians "would be best protected if he was detained and received psychiatric treatment."[102] While each case has its idiosyncratic aspects (and it should again be noted that the sample is small), there appear to be some differences in how the Australian and Canadian legal systems evaluate the relevance of diagnoses of mental illness in determining the capacity of these offenders to commit acts of terrorism.

Discussion and Conclusions

Given the strong similarities between Australian and Canadian societies, it is unsurprising that our analysis documents a broadly similar pattern of domestic jihadist attacks and plots across the past 20 years. Prior to the emergence of ISIS, these countries had an almost identical experience of jihadist terrorism, both in terms of the number of planned and perpetrated violent incidents, and the type of individuals arrested. As

previous research concluded, the development of jihadism in Australia and Canada during this period was "reflective of worldwide Western trends."[103] The key feature of this period, as this research highlighted, was the emergence of "homegrown terrorism." Only a few of these studies touched on the emergence of a new threat from individuals leaving to fight in Syria and Iraq. As our analysis confirms, there was in fact a second clear shift in the nature of the jihadist threat in both countries with the rise of ISIS, and more specifically the 2014 call for indiscriminate attacks on Western targets.

This shift clearly reflects broader changes in the number and the nature of jihadist plots and attacks throughout the West. Examining the European situation, for example, Petter Nesser states:

> From 2014 onward, nearly all plots in Europe have been linked to the Islamic State … The level of plotting has reached new heights. Never before have there been so many jihadi terrorist plots in Europe as in the period between 2014 and 2018. Never before have so many plots gone undetected and resulted in attacks. Never before have so many Europeans been killed in jihadi terrorist attacks. More people have died from jihadi terrorism in Europe between 2014 and 2018 (at least 345) than in the previous 20 years (at least 267).[104]

Australia and Canada experienced their highest recorded levels of jihadist activity as well. As with Western Europe, the United Kingdom, and the United States, the ISIS inspired incidents that occurred during this period were also predominantly unsophisticated plots and attacks by lone actors.[105]

In the post-2014 period, ISIS did inspire, and even supported, a small number of lethal group attacks as well. Most notably the co-ordinated bombings and mass shootings in Paris on 13 November 2015, the three bombings in Brussels on 22 March 2016, and the lone-actor, but perhaps group-guided, bombing in Manchester on 22 May 2017. No such group attacks occurred in Australia or Canada. Why this might be is not immediately clear from the data available. Although ISIS propaganda specifically called for attacks on Australians and Canadians, neither Australia nor Canada experienced any of these more elaborate and lethal attacks guided by ISIS. Despite advances in communications technology, perhaps ISIS has simply not been able to overcome the substantial logistical challenges that previous jihadist groups have also faced when attempting to coordinate small groups to plan and execute large-scale coordinated attacks, and avoid detection, in such geographically disconnected locations as Australia and Canada. Such difficulties are discussed in detail in a recent analysis of Operation Silves, the remotely directed IS attack which was ultimately foiled, but came close to fruition.[106]

Post–September 2014, Australia also experienced a significant drop in the age of the offenders (driven by the emergence of teenagers as a substantial part of the domestic jihadist networks). This pattern parallels global trends.[107] Canada had a similar experience. But the number of failed plots were far fewer, and the impact less pronounced. While Australia disrupted 16 separate plots and arrested 33 individuals in the post-2014 period, Canada thwarted only three plots, arresting four individuals. The post-2014 activity was therefore significantly lower in Canada than Australia, and markedly lower than in Europe, the United Kingdom, and the United States. This is the first key point of divergence between the two countries. Before discussing additional differences, it is worth noting three other similarities that are reflective of global trends.

The first is the profile of most of the individuals involved in domestic jihadist incidents. In line with expectations, the data shows that terrorism remains "a young man's game." As is the case elsewhere,[108] Australian and Canadian jihadists are largely men in their mid-twenties, or even younger in the post-2014 period. Few women were involved in incidents of domestic jihadist terrorism in Australia and Canada (6% of arrests in both countries), and the vast majority of the women were arrested for supporting men more instrumentally involved in plotting or perpetrating violent attacks. This does not mean that female terrorists are not capable of engaging in similar acts of violence. The data in hand does not speak to this issue. More simply, the data is consistent with findings of other studies reporting only a limited number of women being arrested for jihadist activity in the West.[109]

Second, no post-2014 attacks or plots in either country involved returned foreign fighters, despite the considerable concern expressed about this possibility.[110] A few attacks, notably in Belgium and France,

have involved returnees. For instance, on 24 May 2014 Mehdi Nemmouche, a 29-year-old French national of Algerian origin, opened fire at the Jewish Museum of Belgium in Brussels, killing four. He had fought, it is believed, for Islamist groups in Syria and may have had ties to ISIS. It is also thought that as many as seven of the attackers in Paris on 13 November 2015 were either returnees or agents of ISIS, as well as several of the perpetrators of the bombings in Brussels on 22 March 2016.[111] Otherwise, the anticipated surge in attacks from well trained and war-hardened veterans of the conflict in Syria and Iraq has never materialized. To date, although numerous foreign fighters have encouraged attacks on their homelands, very few foreign fighters have gone on to become domestic terrorists, and none in Australia or Canada.[112]

Third, and again contrary to popular concerns, no Australians or Canadians convicted of terrorism charges, and subsequently released from custody, have been rearrested for domestic terrorism offenses. Recent studies suggest that this finding is in fact in line with the best evidence available. Comparatively low levels of reoffending are the case for jihadist terrorists in other Western jurisdictions as well.[113]

Our analysis also highlights at least six differences in the domestic jihadist threat data for Australia and Canada. The first three differences are about the nature of the jihadist threat itself, while the other three relate to differences in the response to that threat. Documenting these differences is significant in itself, as it provides us with a more refined and locally nuanced conception of the global jihadist threat.

Firstly, while two in every three of the Canadian jihadists had undertaken some form of education beyond secondary school, approximately two in every three Australian jihadists did not even finish secondary school. Is this divergence consequential? With the limited data in hand, it is difficult to say. This finding may seem to make Canada exceptional. It certainly appears to differentiate Canadian domestic jihadists sharply from European jihadists, at least as they are often portrayed. In his comprehensive history of jihadist terrorism in Europe, for example, Nesser notes that the leadership of many cells is often relatively well educated. The vast majority of European jihadists, however, "lacked higher education." In fact, on a case-by-case basis, he documents that many came from relatively poor backgrounds and struggled in school.[114]

Surprisingly, though, robust data on the educational attainments of European jihadists is hard to come by. In his sample of 242 European jihadists, Edwin Bakker could only find data for 48 people, 42 of which finished high school and 15 completed university or college degrees.[115] In their comprehensive study of the patterns of jihadist terrorism across Europe, Angel Rabasa and Cheryl Benard only reported data on the British suspects in their dataset, and then for only 24 of the 31 individuals in their sample. They report that "more than three-quarters (79 percent) had at least begun college, although many never attended for more than one year. Twenty-nine percent received a bachelor's degree."[116] More data is available on the educational background of jihadist foreign fighters from Europe. This information is scattered, however, across dozens of studies with different samples, methodologies, and focal concerns, making clear comparisons and conclusions difficult.[117] Overall, it appears that the majority of European foreign fighters are from the lower to middle strata of society, and correspondingly, they have relatively low levels of education.[118] The data is spotty, however, and our focus is domestic jihadists and not foreign fighters per se.

If we contrast our findings on the educational backgrounds of jihadists with the other partners in the "five eyes" network, it is the Australian jihadists that appear exceptional. While only 8% of the Australian jihadists had completed a college or university degree, Hannah Stuart reports that 26% of Islamist related offenders in the United Kingdom (between 1998 and 2015) had some form of higher education. In an analysis of Islamist-related offenses in the United States (between 1997 and 2011), Robin Simcox and Emily Dyer report that 52% of the offenders "had attended some form of college," and 23% "had been educated to between college graduate and doctorate level." Another study of 217 American jihadists, with educational data for 139 individuals, found that 18.7% had some college education and 41.1% had a college degree or higher.[119] The educational background of jihadists in the United Kingdom and the United States, then, is notably higher than in Europe and Australia. The contrast in the Australian and Canadian data we detected helps to highlight the variable relationship between levels of education and radicalisation. It indicates that we are not simply dealing with a contrast between Europe and the United States. Any possible linkages between education and radicalisation

appear particularly complicated, and we clearly need a better understanding of this dynamic.[120]

The influence of the second difference we detected may be more relevant to explaining the higher rates of Australian jihadist activity post-2014. Despite all the changes noted across 20 years, Australian jihadists have remained a densely interconnected network, linked by blood and marriage. By contrast, Canadian jihadists were not as interconnected and more geographically dispersed. In fact, none of the Canadian jihadists were related by blood, and only four participants in one plot were related by marriage. The role of preexisting social networks and interpersonal bonds in forging commitments in all kinds of social movements, including extremist groups, is well established.[121] Perhaps, then, there is a correlation between the higher levels of connectivity in Australia and the higher levels of jihadist activity there. It would be interesting to explore this link further with more social network analyses, and especially comparative studies of jihadists in Australia, Canada and elsewhere.[122]

Interestingly, a number of Canadian jihadists have been arrested for assisting international jihadist plots from Canada, a phenomenon not observed in Australia. While a small number of Australians have been charged with funding and/or supporting international terrorist organisations, none are known to have directly assisted any international plots. This is the third difference noted. The reasons for this difference, however, are unclear at this time. On the one hand, perhaps the closer proximity of Canadians to jihadist networks in the United Kingdom and the United States encourages them to reach out to like-minded individuals there. On the other hand, the close co-operation, almost integration, of Canadian and American counter-terrorism efforts may be a contributing factor in detecting such international connections. Once again, though, more data would be required to adequately explore these possibilities.

If we look to other approaches to understanding differential rates of jihadism in the era of ISIS, there is some alignment with our findings, but the situation is complicated. In explaining why some European countries have been more afflicted by the surge in Islamic State–inspired jihadism than others have, Nesser focuses on three main reasons: "1) military interventions in Muslim countries; 2) jihadi networks; and 3) terrorist entrepreneurs."[123] Statistically, since 1990, the number of jihadist attacks and plots has increased "with Western interventions in Muslim countries," and in the post-2014 era, the countries "with the heaviest military involvement in the Muslim world—France and the United Kingdom—are most targeted. Conversely, countries with less military involvement such as Italy and Sweden are less targeted."[124] The number of plots and attacks also reflects the relative "capability to operate" in these countries, which "relies strongly on links and interactions between groups in conflict zones … and local networks." These networks, old and new, are stronger in the countries most affected by jihadist terrorism.[125] Lastly, he argues, the success of local jihadist networks has depended heavily on the presence of "terrorist entrepreneurs" who have been crucial in the recruitment of new members and provided some historical continuity to the networks.[126]

Relative to the United States, the United Kingdom, and many European nations, the Australian and Canadian involvement in military interventions in Muslim lands was less. Yet both engaged in the war in Afghanistan and were active members of the coalition against ISIS. Unlike Australia however, Canada refrained from joining in the highly controversial invasion of Iraq. The networks of jihadists in Australia and Canada, and their links with al Qaeda, ISIS and other jihadist groups also appear to have been less strong, yet internally the Australian networks were stronger than the Canadian ones. Finally, while many of the domestic plots in Australia and Canada had clear leaders,[127] none exerted much influence beyond their inner circle of plotters, so it is questionable whether there were any true "entrepreneurs" present. In this regard, it appears little has changed. In 2013, Sam Mullins concluded:

> … when we compare Canadian 'promoters' to others such as Abu Qatada, Abu Hamza, and Abdullah el-Faisal from the U.K. or Anwar al-Awlaki from the U.S., there is a marked difference. Canada has clearly not hosted a globally renowned ideologue with established connections to bona fide militants, nor have its online jihadi promoters been prolific or admired as the likes of Aabid Khan, Younis Tsouli, or Samir Khan. This comparative absence of highly influential individuals dedicated to propagating the ideology helps explain Canada's relatively low rate of

Islamist terrorism.[128]

In his analyses of jihadist terrorism in both Australia and Canada, Mullins also mentions the so-called "immigration-integration hypothesis." Countries such as the United States, Canada, and Australia, relative to the United Kingdom and Europe, have experienced fewer incidents of jihadist terrorism. This may be (at least to a degree) because they are nations of immigrants and have more successfully integrated their Muslim minorities, both socioeconomically and culturally. Whatever the merits of this still largely untested hypothesis,[129] we agree with Mullins when he asserts that this hypothesis "does not by itself offer a compelling, comprehensive explanation of the differential rates of terrorism. Rather, it seems that a number of factors have combined to afford Canada, and to a lesser extent Australia, a degree of protection."[130]

To be sure, one cluster of contributing factors is the nature and efficiency of the counter-terrorism apparatus in place in each nation. Of course, this entails a breadth of considerations spanning policy and practice with regard to policing, intelligence services, the law and judiciary, various ancillary social agencies, and politics, which far exceeds the parameters of this analysis. As indicated, however, our data includes three interesting differences in the response to jihadist terrorism in Australia and Canada that may or may not be significant. First, there are interesting differences in the rates of interception of jihadist plots. One in four Australian plots avoided detection (7 successful, 21 disrupted). In Canada almost one in two avoided detection (6 successful, 8 disrupted). Second, in Australia, three in four terrorists were convicted, and only one in ten were acquitted. In Canada, two in four were convicted, and three in ten were acquitted. Third, in Canada more extensive use was made of Peace Bonds, a kind of control order that is comparatively absent from terrorism prosecutions in Australia.

Overall, does this mean the Australians have been more successful in detecting and prosecuting domestic jihadist terrorists? Given the many relevant variables, it is impossible to say. Moreover, the number of cases is relatively small. Consequently, idiosyncratic factors could largely account for the differences noted. Nevertheless, our findings suggest that some systemic investigation of the contrasting results and approaches in such similar contexts is advisable in order for Canadians to improve their rates of detection and conviction.[131]

It is important to keep tracking global trends and their local manifestations through periodic comparative studies. The study of American, British or European data generates insights that are not necessarily transferable to the Australian and Canadian contexts without some consideration of the unique aspects of those nations, and their experiences with terrorism. It is also important to undertake comparative studies of highly similar nations to document that there are variations in the experience of jihadism, despite an overarching similarity in their histories, social systems, economies, and legal and political institutions and traditions.

As elsewhere, this study does highlight the powerful impact of the ISIS's global call to action in 2014. We need to develop a more complete and precise understanding of this event and why Al-Adnani's admonitions were so successful. To this end, the event itself needs to be documented more fully, more comparative datasets (similar to this one) need to be developed, and more specific research should be undertaken into the enthusiastic reception of Al-Adnani's declarations (e.g., quantitative and qualitative analyses of the online response, and interviews with jihadists and ex-jihadists). In Weberian terms, we need a better grasp of the "elective affinity".[132] between this message and the experience of young Islamists. The charismatic appeal of certain ideologues or entrepreneurs may be an essential factor to understand better, as Nesser and others have stressed,[133] but the words and works of such leaders tend to succeed because they resonate with the real experience of others. What is the basis of that "affinity"? This is a part of the global-local dialectic at the heart of contemporary terrorism and we need to delineate it more fulsomely. More comparative studies could be used to track the possible influence of the presence or absence of local entrepreneurs on the levels of jihadism in countries and regions. Much the same holds true for understanding the similarities and differences in the social networks established by jihadists throughout the West and the rest of the world. Mapping local variations in this key aspect of the global-local dynamic, and seeking to explain them, may be instrumental in understanding the nature and level of the jihadist threat in different national contexts.

About the Authors

Shandon Harris-Hogan *is the Director of RADAR Solutions, a company specializing in research, training and evaluation related to Countering Violent Extremism. He is also an Adjunct Fellow at Victoria University in Melbourne, Australia.*

Lorne L. Dawson *is a Professor in the Department of Religious Studies and the Department of Sociology and Legal Studies at the University of Waterloo. He is the cofounder and Director of the Canadian Network for Research Terrorism, Security and Society (www.tsas.ca).*

Amarnath Amarasingam *is an Assistant Professor in the School of Religion at Queen's University in Ontario, Canada. He is also a Senior Research Fellow at the Institute for Strategic Dialogue, an Associate Fellow at the International Centre for the Study of Radicalisation, and an Associate Fellow at the Global Network on Extremism and Technology. He tweets at @AmarAmarasingam.*

Acknowledgements

We wish to acknowledge the generous support of this research with a grant from The Canadian Network for Research on Terrorism, Security, and Society (TSAS; www.tsas.ca). The authors also wish to explicitly acknowledge the excellent contributions of Marcus Strobel and Gemma Pollard to the collection of the data used in this research.

Notes

[1] Pete Lentini, "Antipodal Terrorists? Accounting for Differences in Australian and 'Global' Neojihadists"; in: Richard Devetak and Christopher W. Hughes, Eds., *The Globalization of Political Violence* (New York: Routledege, 2009); Louise E. Porter and Mark R. Kebbell, "Radicalization in Australia: Examining Australia's Convicted Terrorists," *Psychiatry, Psychology and Law* 18 (2) (2011), pp 212–231; Sam Mullins, "Islamist Terrorism and Australia: An Empirical Examination of the 'Home-Grown' Threat," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 23 (2) (2011), pp. 254–285; Sam Mullins, "'Global Jihad': The Canadian Experience," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 25 (5) (2013), pp. 734–776; Andrew Zammit, "Explaining a Turning Point in Australian Jihadism," *Studies in Conflict and* Terrorism 36 (9) (2013), pp. 739–755; John McCoy and W. Andy Knight, "Homegrown Terrorism in Canada: Local Patterns, Global Trends," *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 38 (4) (2015), pp. 253–274; Shandon Harris-Hogan and Kate Barrelle, "Young Blood: Understanding the Emergence of a New Cohort of Australian Jihadists," *Terrorism and Political Violence*, 32 (7) (2020) pp. 1391–1412.

[2] For example, Shandon Harris-Hogan, "Anatomy of a Terrorist Cell: A Study of the Network Uncovered in Sydney in 2005," *Behavioral Sciences of Terrorism and Political* Aggression 5 (2) (2013), pp. 137–154; Bart Schuurman, Shandon Harris-Hogan, Andrew Zammit and Pete Lentini, "Operation Pendennis: A Case Study of an Australian Terrorist Plot," *Perspectives on Terrorism* 8 (4) (2014), pp. 91–99; Lorne L. Dawson, "Trying to Make Sense of Home-Grown Terrorist Radicalization: The Case of the Toronto 18," in Paul Bramadat and Lorne Dawson, Eds., *Religious Radicalization and Securitization in Canada and Beyond* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2014), pp. 64–91; Sally Neighbour, "Operation Pendennis in Australia," in Bruce Hoffman and Fernando Reinares, Eds., *The Evolution of the Global Terrorist Threat: From 9/11 to Osama Bin Ladin's Death* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014), pp. 163–191; Stewart Bell, "Leadership and the Toronto 18," in Bruce Hofmann and Fernando Reinares, eds., *The Evolution of the Global Terrorist Threat: From 9/11 to Osama Bin Ladin's Death* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014), pp. 143–162.

[3] For example, Sam Mullins, 2011, op. cit.; Sam Mullins, 2013, op. cit.; McCoy and W. Andy Knight, 2015, op. cit.; Alex Wilner, "Canadian Terrorists by the Numbers: An Assessment of Canadians Joining and Supporting Terrorists Groups," Ottawa: Macdonald-Laurier Institute (2019), available at: https://macdonaldlaurier.ca/files/pdf/20190205_MLI_Canadian_Terrorists_Wilner_PAPER_WebFinal.pdf; Nicole Tishler, Marie Ouellet, and Joshua Kilberg, "A Survey of Terrorism in Canada: 1960–2015," in Jez Littlewood, Lorne L. Dawson, and Sara K. Thompson, Eds., *Terrorism and Counterterrorism in Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2020), pp. 25–48.

[4] Mullins (op. cit., p. 760), for example, quite typically concludes: "When viewed as a whole, the background variables, operational behaviours, and investigations and outcomes clearly demonstrate the 'home-grown' nature of Canadian Islamist terrorism. In all three areas, the Canadian homeland has taken on greater significance and changes that have occurred are generally in accordance with existing analyses of home-grown Islamist terrorism in the West"; see Manni Crone and Martin Harrow, "Homegrown

Terrorism in the West." *Terrorism and Political Violence* 23 (4) (2011): 521–536.

[5] This is true, for example, for the two most comprehensive and meticulously prepared studies available: Sam Mullins, 2011, op. cit. and Sam Mullins, 2013, op. cit.

[6] Andrew Zammit, 2013, op. cit.; John McCoy and W. Andy Knight, 2015, op. cit. and Alex Wilner, 2019, op. cit.

[7] Andrew Zammit, "The Role of Virtual Planners in the 2015 Anzac Day Terror Plot," *Security Challenges* 13 (1) (2017), pp. 41–58.

[8] Amarnath Amarasingam, "What Aaron Told Me," *National Post*, August 12, 2016. URL: https://nationalpost.com/news/canada/what-aaron-told-me-an-expert-on-extremism-shares-his-conversations-with-the-terror-suspect

[9] Thomas Hegghammer, "Should I Stay or Should I Go? Explaining Variation in Western Jihadists' Choice between Domestic and Foreign Fighting," *American Political Science Review* 107 (1) (2013), pp. 1–15.

[10] The most recent study of Canadian jihadist terrorism, Alex Wilner, 2019, op. cit., illustrates the problems we are addressing. It usefully fills a void in the data available, but the sample studied rather ambiguously consists of information from open sources on "95 individuals with a nexus to Canada who have, or are suspected of having, radicalized, mobilized, and/or participated in Islamist terrorist activity between 2006 and 2017."

[11] In their most basic form, CVE programs are initiatives designed to reduce the number of violent extremists (and their supporters) through noncoercive activities (Will McCants & Clint Watts, *U.S. Strategy for Countering Violent Extremism: An Assessment*, Foreign Policy Research Institute E-Notes, December 2012). In this way, CVE augments traditional counter-terrorism efforts by undertaking activities in the pre- and post- criminal space (Matthew Levitt, *Defeating Ideologically Inspired Violent Extremism: A Strategy to Build Strong Communities in the Homeland*, Washington DC: Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 2017).

[12] David W. Brannan, Philip F. Esler, and N.T. Anders Strindberg, "Talking to 'Terrorists': Toward an Independent Analytical framework for the Study of Violent Substate Activism," *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 24 (1) (2001), pp. 3–24.

[13] For example, Vidino, Lorenzo and Seamus Hughes (2015). "ISIS in America: From Retweets to Raqqa." Program on Extremism, George Washington University. URL: https://extremism.gwu.edu/isis-america; Angel Rabasa and Cheryl Benard, *Eurojihad: Patterns of Islamist Radicalization and Terrorism in Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015); Sadeq Rahimi and Raissa Graumans, "Reconsidering the Relationship between Integration and Radicalization," *Journal of Deradicalization* (Winter 15/16, Nr. 5, 2015), pp. 28–62; Efraim Benmelech and Esteban F. Klor, "What Explains the Flow of Foreign Fighters to ISIS?" *Terrorism and Political Violence*, first version published online 31 Oct., 2018.

[14] Sam Mullins, 2011, op. cit., p. 268.

[15] Some examples, of cross-national comparisons, but largely with regard to just or a few aspects of terrorism, are: Reem Ahmed and Daniela Pisoiu, "Foreign Fighters: An Overview of Existing Research and a Comparative Study of British and German Foreign Fighters," (2014) Institute for Peace Research and Security Policy at the University of Hamburg, Hamburg, Germany; URL: https://www.semanticscholar.org/paper/ZEUS-WP-8-Foreign-fighters-Foreign-fighters-%3A-An-of-Ahmed-Pisoiu/8e04f0be7559a36fb78b90e6ee0459173b354b36; Same Mullins, "Re-examining the Involvement of Converts in Islamist Terrorism: A Comparison of the U.S. and U.K." *Perspectives on Terrorism* 9 (6) (2015), pp. 72–84; Marion van San, "Lost Souls Searching for Answers? Belgian and Dutch Converts Joining the Islamic State." *Perspectives on Terrorism* 9 (5) (2015), pp. 47–56; Angel Rabassa and Cheryl Benard, *Eurojihad: Patterns of Islamist Radicalization and Terrorism in* Europe (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015); Edwin Bakker and Roel de Bont, "Belgian and Dutch Jihadist Foreign Fighters (2012–2015): Characteristics, Motivations, and Roles in the War in Syria and Iraq." *Small Wars and Insurgencies* 27 (5) (2016), pp. 837–857.

[16] For more information on this arrangement see URL: https://www.dni.gov/index.php/who-we-are/organizations/enterprise-capacity/chco/chco-related-menus/chco-related-links/recruitment-and-outreach/217-about/organization/icig-pages/2660-icig-fiorc

[17] Shandon Harris-Hogan, "How to evaluate a program working with terrorists? Understanding Australia's countering violent extremism early intervention program," *Journal of Policing, Intelligence and Counter-Terrorism* 15 (2) (2020), pp. 97–116.

[18] Petter Nesser, "Chronology of Jihadism in Western Europe 1994–2007: Planned, Prepared, and Executed Terrorist Attacks," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 31 (10) (2008), p. 924.

[19] Thomas Hegghammer, "Should I Stay or Should I Go? Explaining Variation in Western Jihadists' Choice between Domestic and Foreign Fighting," *American Political Science Review* 107 (2013), pp. 1–15.

[20] Bart Schuurman, "Research on Terrorism, 2007–2016: A Review of Data, Methods, and Authorship," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 32 (5) (2020), pp. 1011–1026.

[21] When the Canadian Incident Database was created, for example, it was discovered that Canadian incidents were markedly underrepresented in the Global Terrorism Database and the International Terrorism: Attributes of Terrorist Events database,

despite using similar inclusion criteria (see Nicole Tishler, Marie Ouellet, and Joshua Kilberg, 2020, op. cit., pp. 26–28).

[22] Bart Schuurman and Quirine Eijkman, "Moving Terrorism Research Forward: The Crucial Role of Primary Sources," *ICCT Background Note* (2013): 4.

[23] See Aili Malm, Rebecca Nash and Ramin Moghadam, "Social Network Analysis and Terrorism," in Gary LaFree and Joshua D. Freilich, Eds., *The Handbook of the Criminology of Terrorism* (Hoboken: Wiley-Blackwell, 2017), pp. 221–231, and Marc Sageman, *The London Bombings* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2019), pp. 4–6.

[24] Thomas Hegghammer and Petter Nesser, "Assessing the Islamic State's Commitment to Attacking the West," *Perspectives on Terrorism* 9 (4) (2015), p. 4.

[25] Petter Nesser, Anne Stenersen and Emilie Oftedal, "Jihadi Terrorism in Europe: The IS-Effect," *Perspectives on Terrorism* 10 (6) (2016), p. 5.

[26] Sam Mullins, 2011, op. cit. and 2013 op. cit.

[27] Brynjar Lia, *Architect of Global Jihad: The Life of Al-Qaeda Strategist Abu Mus'ab Al-Suri* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007).

[28] Bruce Hoffman, *Policy Analysis 2842 - Lone Wolf: Passing Fad or Terror Threat of the Future?* (2017) URL: https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/lone-wolf-passing-fad-or-terror-threat-of-the-future

[29] Petter Nesser, "Research Note: Single Actor Terrorism: Scope, Characteristics and Explanations," *Perspectives on Terrorism* 6 (6) (2012), pp. 61–73.

[30] Thomas Hegghammer and Petter Nesser, "Assessing the Islamic State's Commitment to Attacking the West," *Perspectives on Terrorism* 9 (4) (2015), p. 22

[31] Petter Nesser, Anne Stenersen and Emilie Oftedal, "Jihadi Terrorism in Europe: The IS-Effect," *Perspectives on Terrorism* 10 (6) (2016), p. 9.

[32] Amarnath Amarasingam, "What Aaron told me: An expert on extremism shares his conversations with the terror suspect," *The National Post* 11 August 2016; URL: https://nationalpost.com/news/canada/what-aaron-told-me-an-expert-on-extremism-shares-his-conversations-with-the-terror-suspect

[33] Raffaello Pantucci, Clare Ellis and Lorien Chaplais, "Lone-Actor Terrorism Literature Review." *Royal United Services Institute Countering Lone Actor Terrorism Series No. 1* (2015), pp. 1–19.

[34] Ramón Spaaij, *Understanding Lone Wolf Terrorism: Global Patterns, Motivations and Prevention* (Dortrecht: Springer, 2012).

[35] Petter Nesser, "Research Note: Single Actor Terrorism: Scope, Characteristics and Explanations," *Perspectives on Terrorism* 6 (6) (2012), p. 70.

[36] Alex P. Schmid, "The Literature on Terrorism," in Alex P. Schmid, Ed., *The Routledge Handbook of Terrorism Research* (London: Routledge, 2011), p. 461.

[37] Shandon Harris-Hogan, "Australian Neo-Jihadist Terrorism: Mapping the Network and Cell Analysis Using Wiretap Evidence," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 35 (4) (2012), pp. 298–314.

[38] Andrew Zammit, "The Holsworthy Barracks Plot: A Case Study of an Al-Shabaab Support Network in Australia," *CTC Sentinel* 5 (2012).

[39] R v Mallah NSWSC 317 (21 April 2005).

[40] These figures are in line the with the Australian Security Intelligence Organisation (ASIO) September 2019 submission to the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Intelligence and Security where it notes: "Since September 2014 … there have been seven attacks on people and 16 major counterterrorism disruption operations in response to potential attack planning in Australia (Australian Security Intelligence Organisation, "Review of the Australian Citizenship Act Renunciation by Conduct and Cessation Provisions." ASIO submission to the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Intelligence and Security. 13 September 2019: 3).

[41] Along with the seven lone-actor incidents, these 14 plots also broadly fit Hegghammer and Nesser's category of "sympathy, no contact."

[42] Thomas Hegghammer and Petter Nesser, "Assessing the Islamic State's Commitment to Attacking the West," *Perspectives on Terrorism* 9 (4) (2015), p. 22.

[43] Lorne L. Dawson and Amarnath Amarasingam, "Homegrown Terrorist Radicalization: The Toronto 18 Case in Comparative

Perspective,"; in: Michael Nisbett, Kenneth Roach, and David Hofmann, Eds., *The Toronto 18 Terrorism Trials* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Law Review Press, forthcoming), manuscript p. 15.

[44] Ibid.

[45] See R. v Esseghaier, ONSC 5855 (23 September 2015). In this case, both of the accused plead guilty and received life sentences. In August 2019, the Ontario Court of Appeal ordered a new trial because the jury was improperly chosen. On Jan. 1, 2020, the end date for our dataset, the case remained before the courts.

[46] See Public Prosecution Service of Canada, *Guilty Verdicts in Terrorism Trial.* 3 June 2015. In this case, the trial judge overturned the jury conviction and stayed the charges. In Dec. 2018, the British Columbia Appeals Court upheld this decision. Both the trial judge and the Appeal Court found the RCMP had "entrapped" the couple. According to the advice received from two national security law experts, they still fit the criteria for inclusion in our dataset, since they were charged with a terrorism offense and found guilty. The entrapment finding does not mean they are "not guilty"; it simply indicates they were subject to an "abuse of process."

[47] Public Prosecution Service of Canada, *Verdict in Terrorism Case.* 19 December 2017.

[48] Public Safety Canada, *2018 Public Report on the Terrorist threat to Canada* (Ottawa: Public Safety Canada, 2019), p. 15.

[49] Dawson and Amarasingam, "Homegrown Terrorist Radicalization: The Toronto 18 Case in Comparative Perspective," manuscript p. 1.

[50] An additional 40 Australians were arrested for their involvement in domestic Jihadist activity during this period. However, because they were charged with a range of general criminal offenses (and not terrorism specific offenses), they were excluded from this sample. Additionally, Mohamed Nizzadeen and Mohamed Haneef were also excluded from the sample, as within a matter of days of their arrest it was determined that they had been wrongfully detained.

[51] The 2018 Public Report on the Terrorist Threat to Canada notes that "since 2001 a total of 55 individuals have been charged with terrorism offenses under the Criminal Code" (Public Safety Canada: 2018, 24). This study identified 49 Canadian Jihadists arrested under domestic terrorism charges during the period noted (an unnamed youth arrested in Kingston was detained in 2019). We excluded five domestic arrests from our sample because the individuals did not have a connection to jihadist ideology. This includes Mouna Diab, who was involved with smuggling weapons to Hezbollah, and Ramanan Mylvaganam, Suresh Sriskandarajah, Piratheepan Nadarajah and Prapaharan Thambaithurai, who were arrested for funding or assisting the Tamil Tigers. We are unable to identify the final domestic actor noted by the Canadian government.

[52] The three Canadians tried in the US were included because they were Canadians arrested on terrorism charges and they do not fit the traditional conceptualisation of a foreign fighter.

[53] "Antiterror Peace Bonds in a Nutshell," National Security Law: Canadian Practice in Comparative Perspective; URL: http://craigforcese.squarespace.com/national-security-law-blog/2016/4/1/antiterror-peace-bonds-in-a-nutshell.html

[54] Douglas Quan and Stuart Bell, "B.C. man targeted by police for terrorism peace bond denies having any involvement in terrorism," *National Post*, 16 December 2016.

[55] The Queen v Sevdet Ramadan Besim VSC 537 (5 September 2016).

[56] Amarasingam, Amarnath, "What Twitter Really Means for Islamic State Supporters." *War on the Rocks* (December 30); URL: https://warontherocks.com/2015/12/what-twitter-really-means-for-islamic-state-supporters/

[57] Two teenagers (both aged just 14) were identified and detained as part of a major terrorism investigation. Each subsequently was released on a form of good behaviour bond. Within 18 months of their original arrest, each, separately, went on to be charged with acts in preparation for a terrorist act.

[58] Individuals may be held, seemingly indefinitely, using a Security Certificate, in accordance with the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act of Canada. These certificates are applied to permanent residents or foreign nationals to remove them from Canada, because they are deemed "inadmissible for reasons of national security, violating human or international rights, or involvement in organized or serious crimes." They are used "in exceptional circumstances where the information to determine the case cannot be disclosed without endangering the safety of a person (for example, by putting a witness' life in danger) or national security (for example, by revealing investigation techniques)" (Public Safety Canada; URL: https://www.publicsafety.gc.ca/cnt/ntnl-scrt/cntr-trrrsm/scrt-crtfcts-en.aspx)

[59] Kevin Omar Mohamed, John Stuart Nuttall and Amanda Marie Korody all had applications for Peace Bonds withdrawn.

[60] Alex Migdal, Kat Eschner and Andrea Woo, "Who was Aaron Driver? The latest updates about the man killed after standoff in Strathroy," *Globe and* Mail, 11 August, 2016.

[61] Douglas Quan, "Can new federal unit address Canada's 'inconsistent track record' in terrorism prosecutions?," *National Post,* 2

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[62] Australian Security Intelligence Organisation, *ASIO Annual Report 2015–16* (Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia, 2016).

[63] The Australian Federal Police also identified an additional 109 children 'at risk' of radicalisation (James Renwick, *Report to the Prime Minister: The Prosecution and Sentencing of Children for Terrorism.* (Commonwealth of Australia: Independent National Security Legislation Monitor, 2018), p. 2.

[64] Shandon Harris-Hogan and Kate Barrelle, "Young Blood" (2018).

[65] Information regarding the age of Canadian Jihadists was only available for 46 of the 50 individuals. We do know that the four missing individuals were below the age of 18 at the time of their arrest, but since they are juveniles their specific ages were not released. Overall, the average age of Canadian Jihadists is therefore lower than the average stated.

[66] Edwin Bakker, "Characteristics of Jihadi Terrorists in Europe (2001–2009)"; in: Rik Coolsaet, Ed., *Jihadi Terrorism and the Radicalisation Challenge*, 2nd ed. (Farnham, Surry: Ashgate, 2011), p. 141.

[67] "Adelaide woman jailed for three years for Isis membership," *The Guardian,* 16 April 2019.

[68] For example, Edwin Bakker, "Characteristics of Jihadi Terrorists in Europe (2001–2009)," p. 140; Lorne L. Dawson summarizes the very mixed and inadequate data available in 32 studies with empirical data on Western foreign fighters in "A Comparative Analysis of the Data on Western Foreign Fighters in Syria and Iraq: Who Went and Why?" (Paper presented to the European Consortium for Political Research in 2019).

[69] While John Stuart Nuttall and Amanda Marie Korody, and Sabrine Djermane and El Mahdi Jamali were partners, neither "terrorist couple" was married at the time of their arrest.

[70] Martin Anderson, "Mental illness and criminal behaviour: a literature review," *Journal of Psychiatric and Mental Health Nursing* 4 (1997), p. 247.

[71] Paul Heroux, "Are Terrorists Insane?" *The Huffpost,* 29 January 2012.

[72] Martin Anderson, "Mental illness and criminal behaviour: a literature review," *Journal of Psychiatric and Mental Health Nursing* 4 (1997), p. 247.

[73] Bryan Bubolz and Pete Simi, "The Problem of Overgeneralization: The Case of Mental Health Problems and U.S. Violent White Supremacists" *American Behavioral Scientist* (2019), p. 2.

[74] Ibid., p. 2.

[75] Ibid, p. 12.

[76] Emily Corner and Paul Gill, "A False Dichotomy? Mental Illness and Lone-Actor Terrorism", *Law and Human Behavior* 39 (1) (2015), p. 24; Ramón Spaaij, *Understanding Lone Wolf Terrorism: Global Patterns, Motivations and Prevention.* (Dortrecht: Springer, 2012), p. 50.

[77] Emily Corner, Paul Gill and Oliver Mason, "Mental Health Disorders and the Terrorist: A Research Note Probing Selection Effects and Disorder Prevalence," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 39 (6) (2016), pp. 560–568.

[78] Commonwealth of Australia, *Martin Place Siege: Joint Commonwealth—New South Wales Review* (Canberra: Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet, 2015), p. 70.

[79] Ibid., p. 71.

[80] R v Khan (No 11) {2019] NSWSC 594 (5 June 2019), p. 3.

[81] CBC News, "Man who attacked soldiers in 2016 shouldn't have been acquitted of terror charges: Crown," *CBC News,* 24 June 2019.

[82] Liam Casey, "Woman guilty of terror charges in Canadian Tire attack sentenced to 7 years in prison," *Global News*, 4 February 2019.

[83] Cameron Houston, Chris Vedelago, Rania Spooner, Michael Bachelard and Nino Bucci, "Melbourne terrorist Yacqub Khayre: Long history of drugs, guns and crime." *The Age*, 6 June 2017.

[84] Stewart Bell, "Mental health system failed Quebec man who became infatuated with ISIL and killed a soldier: coroner," *National Post,* 5 May 2017.

[85] Catou Mackinnon, "Family of slain Quebec soldier condemns 'incompetence' of mental health workers who saw killer before

attack," *CBC,* 30 June 2017.

[86] Rhiannon Coppin, "Michael Zehaf-Bibeau, Ottawa gunman, asked B.C. judge to send him to jail," *CBC*, 23 October 2014.

[87] *Independent Investigation into the Death of Michael Zehaf-Bibeau October 22, 2014, Centre Block, Parliament Hill, Ottawa, Canada* (Ottawa: House of Commons and Royal Canadian Mounted Police, 2015), p. 35.

[88] Chip Le Grand and Mark Schliebs, "Radicalised in our suburbs and a threat to public safety," *The Australian*, 16 November 2018.

[89] Mark Schliebs, "Police find no evidence Bourke St Killer was mentally ill, links to notorious jihadists revealed," *The Australian,* 12 November 2018.

[90] "Finding into Death with Inquest—Ahmad Numan Haider COR 2014 4917" (31 July 2017) p. 25.

[91] Michael Safi, "Revealed: How I saw Farhad Jabar change a week before he became a killer," *The Guardian,* 8 October 2015.

[92] Jonny Wakefield, "Everything we know about the man charged in Edmonton's truck attack from the woman who knows him best," *Edmonton Journal,* 28 September 2018.

[93] Emily Corner, Paul Gill and Oliver Mason, "Mental Health Disorders and the Terrorist: A Research Note Probing Selection Effects and Disorder Prevalence," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 39 (6) (2016), p. 561.

[94] Stephane Beale, "Are terrorists "insane"? A critical analysis of mental health categories in lone terrorist's trials," *Critical Studies of Terrorism,* 7 (2) (2014), p. 262.

[95] Steven Yannoulidis, "Mental Illness, Rationality, and Criminal Responsibility," *Sydney Law Review* 25 (2) (2003), p. 197.

[96] R v Khan (No 10) [2019] NSWSC 447 (18 April 2019).

[97] R v Khan (No 11) [2019] NSWSC 594 (5 June 2019), p. 3.

[98] Following the incident Khan suffered a relapse of his schizophrenic condition "due to his non-compliance with his prescribed medication."

[99] Commonwealth of Australia, *Martin Place Siege: Joint Commonwealth—New South Wales Review* (Canberra: Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet, 2015), p. 71.

[100] Ibid., p. 72.

[101] Liam Casey, "Woman guilty of terror charges in Canadian Tire attack sentenced to 7 years in prison," *Global News,* 4 February 2019.

[102] Public Prosecution Service of Canada, *Ayanle Hassan Ali Not Criminally Responsible by Reason of Mental Disorder.* 14 May 2018.

[103] Sam Mullins, 2011, op. cit., p. 267; Pete Lentini, 2009, op. cit.; Sam Mullins, 2013, op. cit.; John McCoy and Andy Knight, 2015, op. cit.

[104] Petter Nesser, "Military Interventions, Jihadi Networks, and Terrorist Entrepreneurs: How the Islamic State Terror Wave Rose So High in Europe," *CTC Sentinel* (March 2019), pp. 15–21; for the situation in the United States see Lorenzo Vidino and Seamus Hughes (2015). "ISIS in America: From Retweets to Raqqa." Program on Extremism, George Washington University. URL: https://extremism.gwu.edu/isis-america.

[105] Thomas Hegghammer and Petter Nesser, "Assessing the Islamic State's Commitment to Attacking the West," *Perspectives on* Terrorism 9 (4) (2015), pp. 14–30; Corri Zoli, "Lone-Wolf or Low-Tech Terrorism? Emergent Patterns of Global Terrorism in Recent French and European Attacks," *Lawfare (8 June, 2016),* URL: https://www.lawfareblog.com/lone-wolf-or-low-tech-terrorism-emergent-patterns-global-terrorism-recent-french-and-european; Bérénice Boutin, Grégory Chauzal, Jessiac Dorsey, Marjolein Jegerings, Christophe Paulussen, Johanna Pohl, Alastair Reed, and Sofia Zavagli, "The Foreign Fighters Phenomenon in the European Union: Profiles, Threats and Policies," International Centre for Counter-Terrorism, The Hague (April 2016); URL: https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Alastair_Reed3/publication/300081992_The_Foreign_Fighters_Phenomenon_in_the_European_Union_Profiles_Threats_Policies/links/5752ebc008ae6807fafc25a7.pdf; Josiah A. Witherspoon, "Analysis of Low-Tech Terrorism in Western Democracies: Vehicles, Blades, and Incendiary Devices," TSAS Working Paper #17-05 (2017); URL: https://www.tsas.ca/publications/analysis-of-low-tech-terrorism-in-western-democracies/.

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