Who becomes a jihadist in Australia?

A comparative analysis

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Abstract

This paper compares jihadist radicalisation in Australia with that in other Western countries. It identifies similarities and differences in both the nature of the jihadist activity undertaken and the demographic characteristics of the people who became involved. From this, the paper examines the utility of various theories of violent radicalisation for explaining jihadism in Australia. This opens the way for investigation into how the national context shapes the distinctive features identified in this paper. It concludes that several of these features can be readily explained by the fact that, during the first two waves of global jihad, Australia differed from both the US and Europe by lacking strategic significance and geographic proximity to jihadist-influenced conflicts.

Introduction

The 2010 Commonwealth Government Counter-Terrorism White Paper emphasised the threat posed by a broad movement consisting of Al Qaeda, and groups allied, associated with it, and individuals inspired by it. Completed and ongoing prosecutions demonstrate that there are Australians committed to this movement (Australian Government, 2010: 7-8). This paper examines the activities and demographic characteristics of these individuals to help explain jihadist radicalisation in Australia.

Previous studies examining demographic characteristics of jihadists, such as by Sageman (2004), note that there is no uniformity among people who carry out violence in the name of jihad. The question of who becomes radicalised is greatly influenced by the context; the time and place where radicalisation is occurring. Consequently, this paper examines the characteristics of those who have radicalised in the Australian context and compares them to jihadists in contexts not altogether different: the UK, the US and countries in Western Europe.

This adds to previous research conducted by Louise Porter and Mark Kebbell (2010), and Sam Mullins (2011).[1]

This paper is divided into four parts. First, it gives an overview of jihadism in Australia, and introduces the sample of Australian jihadists in question. Second, it examines the characteristics of members of this sample, comparing them to jihadists in other Western countries. Third, it demonstrates what relevance these characteristics have to various theories of terrorist radicalisation. Finally, it examines how the Australian context helps explain the differences and similarities identified in this paper.

The term *jihadism* is used here in the same manner as in the Counter-Terrorism White Paper, as an imperfect but common descriptor for the broad Al-Qaeda aligned movement that "interprets history and current affairs through the lens of alleged oppression of Muslims, principally by the West" and calls for violence in response (Australian Government, 2010: 8). The term *radicalisation* refers to the process of becoming involved in a violent movement, in this case jihadism.

Jihadism in Australia

Since September 11, multiple cases of jihadist radicalisation involving Australians have been revealed. The first incident to gain public attention was when David Hicks was captured in Afghanistan in late 2001, but he was only one of several Australians who had become involved with jihadist organisations in Afghanistan and Pakistan. In 2003, Joseph Thomas from Melbourne was arrested in Pakistan and later faced terrorism charges on his return to Australia (R v Thomas, 2008). In 2004, Sydney medical student Izhar Ul-Haque, was charged over training with Laskar-e-Toiba (LeT) in Pakistan (Chulov, 2006: 146-167).

More recently there have been Australians involved in jihadist activity in Lebanon and Somalia, although there is less reliable information available on these events. Media reports show Somali community figures giving estimates of between ten to forty young Somali-Australians returning to fight for al-Shabaab (Kerbaj, 2007; Caldwell, 2007). At least 16

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[1] See also Lentini (2008) and Zammit (2009).

Australians have been charged, and some convicted, of jihadism-related terror offences in Lebanon.[2] There have also been reports of Australian jihadists in Yemen (Neighbour, 2010).

Jihadist activity also took place on Australian soil. In 2003 Zeky Mallah from Sydney was arrested and charged with preparing a terrorist attack, based on video recorded threats he had made towards the then Foreign Minister and Director of ASIO. In 2005 Sydney resident Belal Khazaal was charged with "making a document in connected with assistance in a terrorist act" (R v Khazaal, 2009).

Most important, law enforcement arrested many people involved in alleged plots to carry out violent attacks in Australia. British immigrant Jack Roche pleaded guilty to having conspired in 2000 with key Jemaah Islamiyah and Al Qaeda figures to bomb the Israeli embassy in Canberra, the Israeli consulate in Sydney, and murder a prominent Jewish businessman in Melbourne. In 2003 Sydney resident Faheem Khalid Lodhi, who had trained with LeT, was charged over conspiring to prepare a terrorist attack. The largest number of arrests occurred between November 2005 and January 2006, when 13 people in Melbourne and nine in Sydney were arrested in a co-ordinated effort by ASIO, Australian Federal Police and the NSW and Victorian police services, called Operation Pendennis. Lastly, in August 2009 five people based in Melbourne were arrested in Operation Neath and accused of planning an attack on Holsworthy Barracks in Sydney.

Some key features of jihadism in Australia stand out. First, most of this activity has taken place during the post-September 11 period, during what Marc Sageman describes as the third wave of global jihad. The first wave consists of those who fought in the 1980s against the Soviets in Afghanistan, where the movement originated. The second wave consists of those who joined the movement in the 1990s. It was during the second wave that the global jihadist movement consolidated its presence in Europe, major attacks against Western countries (mainly France and the US) began, and Al-Qaeda set up bases in Afghanistan, extending their influence over jihadist groups operating there, many of whom did not have Al Qaeda's global focus (Sageman, 2008: 48-50). With the exception of the Jack Roche case and a small number of Australians engaging in jihad overseas, there is little evidence of extensive jihadist activity involving Australians prior to the third wave (Neighbour, 2004, 2009; Chulov, 2006).

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[2] Most of these charges were for alleged involvement with the Lebanese jihadist groups Asbat al-Ansar and Fatah al-Islam. For more information see Chulov, (2006: 180-219; 2007), Neighbour (2007) and Zammit (2011).

Second, there is a diverse range of motivations. Some people appear primarily motivated by events in their country of origin. For example, most of those travelling to engage in jihad in Lebanon and Somalia are of Lebanese or Somali origin themselves. Many appear more motivated by global events, such as a perceived Western war on Islam. Members of both the Pendennis cells and the Neath cell spoke of attacking Australia to take revenge for its support of the US in Iraq and Afghanistan (R v Elomar, 2010: 43-55; R v Benbrika, 2009: 15-38; Munro, 2010a; 2010b). Some, such as Zaky Mallah, acted mainly out of personal grievances (R v Mallah, 2005).

Third, there is variation in the involvement of established jihadist organisations in these activities. Terrorist plots in Australia appear to have shifted from what have been termed chain-of-command plots, directly instigated by an established transnational terrorist organisation such as Al Qaeda or LeT, to self-starting plots, which may have international linkages but where the initiative and radicalisation processes occur amongst the small group of perpetrators (Neumann and Rogers 2007: 22-26).

The first known global jihadist plot in Australia was the Jack Roche affair. Roche was a member of Mantiqi Four, the Australian branch of Jemaah Islamiyah which operated from the 1990s up until 2002. In 1999 he travelled to Afghanistan to fight with the Taliban. While there he was asked by senior Al-Qaeda leaders to do reconnaissance for attacks intended to take place during the Sydney Olympics (Neighbour, 2004: 181-196). Being directly instigated by senior Al-Qaeda figures, this constituted a chain-of-command plot; although Mantiqi Four was not supportive as the leaders felt authority was being undercut, which helped the plot to fail.

There is less information on the 2003 LeT plot for which Faheem Lodhi was convicted. French citizen Willie Brigette was deported from Australia (and later convicted in France) for the same plot, and several more people were suspected of involvement (R v Lodhi, 2006). It is unclear from public information whether the initiative came from the Australian-based conspirators or by senior LeT figures. Nonetheless, there is evidence the plot was actively supported by LeT's international network (Rotella, 2010). Using Neumann and Rogers' (2007: 22-26) typology, it was either a chain-of-command plot or at least a guided plot, where the intended attack is approved of or supported, but not instigated, by an established organisation.

The cells arrested in Operation Pendennis demonstrate an evolutionary process in Australian jihadism away from chain-of-command plots. While at least two members trained overseas, one with Al Qaeda in 2000 and one with LeT,[3] everything points to the initiative, planning and, for most members, the radicalisation process occurring in Australia among the cells themselves. This is characteristic of self-starting cells and contrasts with the previous two plots.

There is less information currently available on the 2009 plot against Holsworthy Barracks, as those convicted have not yet been sentenced.[4] It appears that they developed a plan at their own initiative to attack the barracks and sought sanction from members of Al-Shabaab in Somalia, an organisation later proscribed under Australian terrorism law (Pantucci, 2011). This again suggests jihadist activity in Australia has shifted away from chain-of-command plots to self-starting plots, but with international linkages still playing a role.

Therefore, global jihadist radicalisation in Australia is a varied phenomenon. It has occurred among a small number of people who radicalised mostly during the third wave (after September 11), and have shown a diverse range of motivations. The most recent plots have been self-starting but with some of the individual perpetrators having international linkages.

Demographic characteristics compared

To examine the characteristics of those involved, this paper uses a sample of 33 people prosecuted in Australia for alleged jihadist activity. This includes the 29 people charged over terrorist plots, plus the four miscellaneous individuals prosecuted: Thomas, Mallah, Khazaal and ul-Haque.[5] Australians prosecuted overseas for alleged jihadist activities are excluded from this sample for several reasons. First, to ensure consistency with the UK, US and Western European samples they are being compared with, most of which did not include residents or citizens arrested overseas. Second, in several cases Australians prosecuted overseas did not experience a transparent judicial process and were victims of serious human

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[3] Initial media reports suggested multiple members of the Sydney cell trained with LeT, but this has not been confirmed in what is currently available of the court proceedings.

[4] No documents from the Neath trial have yet been made available, but there was regular media reporting of the proceedings.

[5] There is considerable scepticism among some scholars regarding the seriousness of the terrorism threat in Australia (Michaelson, 2010). Some of this scepticism is soundly based, given events such as the Mohammed Haneef debacle, the dismissal of Izhar al-Haque's charges on the grounds of alleged ASIO misconduct, and the use of an interview in Joseph Thomas's first trial that was later ruled inadmissible on appeal. However, the evidence presented in several trials (particularly the Roche, Lodhi, Pendennis and Neath proceedings), guilty verdicts, and the many failed appeals, leave little doubt that major terrorist attacks were intended or prepared for and have been foiled.

rights abuses, tainting the reliability of the information available on them, and raising the possibility that some were not involved in jihadist activity at all (Chulov, 2006: 61-76; 2007). Third, the information that was available on them was less likely to cover their demographic characteristics.

Therefore this sample only includes the 33 prosecuted in Australia. While they will be referred to in this paper as jihadists, this does not suggest that each one was willing to engage in terrorism. Most were indeed convicted of terrorism offences, but seven were acquitted: four people charged in the Melbourne Pendennis case, two people charged following Operation Neath, and Izhar ul-Haque. Two other members of the sample were acquitted of terrorism offences but convicted of related offences.[6] Another's terrorism conviction was recently overturned and he is facing re-trial. Nonetheless, due to transparent judicial proceedings there is enough information available on all sample members to infer they have at least partly undergone a process of jihadist radicalisation. Including all prosecuted, as opposed to only those convicted, ensures consistency with the studies they are being compared to, several of which take same approach.

Table 1 below shows a comparison of information on the demographic characteristics of this sample compared to jihadists in other Western countries. The information on the US, UK and Western European countries comes from a range a studies conducted by international researchers. The information on Australian jihadists was gathered by the author using publicly available information. In descending order of reliability, the sources used were court documents, media reports of court proceedings, general media reports, followed by any other sources.

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[6] Zaky Mallah was convicted of threatening violence against a Commonwealth official, and Joseph Thomas was convicted over falsifying his passport. They constitute related charges because they were part of the same set of activities for which the terrorism charges were sought.

	Australia: [Sample size 33]	**United Kingdom:** [Three studies, largest sample size 124]	**Western Europe:** [One study, sample size 242]	**United States:** [Two studies, largest sample size 152]
Age:	20 to 48, average 27.	16 to 48, average 27.	16 to 59, average 27.	15 to 63, average 29.
Marital status:	77% married.	38% married.	Unclear, but majority appear unmarried.	No information.
Parental status:	60% had children.	No information.	25% had children.	No information.
Education:	62% did not complete secondary school. Majority undertaking, or had completed, an apprenticeship or TAFE course. Much lower than average for Australian Muslims.	12% did not complete secondary school or equivalent. 58% attended or completed university. Better than average compared to fellow UK Muslims.	Poorly educated when compared to fellow Europeans, but not to fellow European Muslims.	Higher than average, compared to fellow Americans and American Muslims.
Economic status:	Somewhat low. 28% unskilled labour, 59% skilled labour. Some unemployed.	Low, relative to their skill level. 45% unemployed.	Low. 15% unemployed, 34% unskilled labour, 19% skilled labour.	29% unemployed. No other information.

Table 1: Characteristics of Australian jihadists compared. [7]

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[7] The studies used for UK jihadists are by Simcox et al (2010), Cole and Cole (2009), and Altunbas and Thornton (2009). For Western Europe this paper uses Bakker (2006). For the United States, this paper uses Jenkins (2010) and MPA Workshop (2010). The percentages presented do not include sample members on whom information was unavailable, only for those confirmed. For example, Simcox et al's study found 30.71% of their sample had attended or completed university, while 47.24% were unconfirmed. The unconfirmed are excluded from the data in this table, making for 58% having attended or completed university. For the countries where data were derived from multiple studies (UK and US) the percentages presented are from the study using the largest sample size unless the particular study did not provide information for that category. In some cases there were substantial differences between studies on the same country, or a study was unable to confirm information on a particular characteristic for more than 50% of their sample, or the data was unclear. In these cases (for example, marital status in Western Europe, or educational status for Western European and US jihadists) the author chose not to include percentages, providing instead a general description of the finding. Given cases of contradictory or missing data, some of these findings need to be treated tentatively. A greater degree of certainty may be possible in future as more studies are produced, on a larger scale for Europe and North America.

Islam in youth:	Majority unclear but more indications of low religiosity than high. Roughly 10% converts, 10% born-again and 10% strongly devout in youth.	Majority were nominally, but not devout, Muslims in youth. Small number of converts.	Majority had only a nominally Muslim upbringing. 28% converts to Islam.	44 % converts. No other information.
National status:	55% born in Australia. A further 30% immigrated as children.	49% born in the UK. 77% UK nationals.	About 35% born in Europe, very few had not lived in Europe for at least ten years.	52% born in US. 77% US citizens.
Family origin:	60% of Lebanese origin and about 10% of an Anglo, usually Australian, family background. 3 people of Somali origin, 2 of Pakistani heritage, and individuals of Jordanian, Bangladeshi and Algerian background.	46% South and Central Asian background, (half of them of Pakistani heritage). Next most common country of family origin was Somalia, at 6%.	30% Algerian, 30% Moroccan and 11% Pakistani background. Followed by a variety of other countries of origin.	20% American heritage both Caucasian and African-American. This was followed by 15 % Pakistani and 15% Somali heritage followed by Yemen and Jordan.

Table 1 demonstrates a range of similarities and differences between jihadists in Australia and other Western countries. First, Australians arrested in connection with jihadism varied in age, from 20 to 48. Generally they tended to be young, two thirds were below 30 and the average overall was 27. These ages are remarkably consistent with jihadists in Western countries, particularly during the third wave of global jihad. Both Edwin Bakker's (2006: 41) European sample and Simcox et al's (2010: 227) UK sample had an average age of 27 at time of arrest. US jihadists have been, on average, only a few years older (Jenkins, 2010: 5; MPA Workshop, 2010: 8).

When it comes to family status, three quarters of this Australian sample are married, most of them with children. This is unusual compared to other Western countries. One study of 77 convicted UK jihadists found only 38% were married (Altunbas and Thornton, 2009: 10). Bakker's (2006: 40, 47) European sample does not provide firm information but indicates that the majority were unmarried.[8] There do not appear to be any studies examining the family status of jihadists in the US. But we can say that the large amount of marriages and children among Australian jihadists is unusual compared to Europe and the UK.

Other important characteristics often examined in terrorism research are the educational and occupational status of the perpetrators. Australian jihadists are of somewhat low occupational status; most are labourers and tradesmen and some are unemployed, but they cannot be described as destitute. They are however of very low educational status. Almost none have completed tertiary education, and the majority had not finished secondary school.

In some ways this is consistent with other jihadists in the West. For example, Bakker's research on Europe and the three studies on the UK suggest that the radicals were generally of lower educational and economic status than average for the countries they lived in (Bakker, 2006: 37-40; Altunbas and Thornton, 2009: 10; Simcox et al, 2010: 241). In these cases they generally reflected the low socio-economic positions of European Muslims in general. Research on US jihadists suggest they have an economic profile much closer to their European counterparts than their US Muslim peers (though they tended to be better educated).[9] Therefore the generally low economic status of Australian jihadists is similar to others in the West, although if anything the Australian sample is better off.

Where Australian jihadists stand out is in being disproportionately poorly educated. Research on jihadists in Europe found that they were usually no less educated than their Muslim peers.[10] Studies of jihadists in the UK and US found that in both cases they were somewhat better educated than their Muslim peers, even though they tended to have poor employment

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[8] Bakker's (2006) study found little information on his sample's marital statuses, making it difficult to draw firm conclusions. Of the 66 (out of 242) he found reliable information, a majority *were* married, engaged, or divorced. However, he states overall that "our sample does not contradict the typical image of [jihadists as] single males" (Bakker, 2006: 47). One could perhaps infer that those on whom no information was reported were more likely to be unmarried, as married jihadists would be more newsworthy.

[9] For economic status, this is inferred from the 29% unemployed figure presented for US jihadists in MPA Workshop (2010: 31), which is disproportionate compared to other adult male Muslims in the US. For education, compare MPA Workshop (2010: 30) with Pew (2007: 24).

[10] For example, Edwin Bakker was able to find information on 48 European global jihadists, of which 15 had finished college or university, and European Muslims tend to be less well educated than their non Muslim peers (Bakker, 2006a: 76-77). Both Cole and Cole (2010: 68) and Altunbas and Thornton (2009: 10) found their sample was better educated than average for UK Muslims.

(Cole and Cole, 2010: 68; MPA Workshop 2010: 10; Simcox et al, 2010: 238-240). However, the Australian sample demonstrates a disproportionately poor level of education compared to other Australian Muslims, who tend to be better educated than the national average. Nearly 20% of Australian Muslims have attained a university degree (Hassan, 2009: 7), yet only one of this sample of 33 has one. About 70% of Australian adult Muslims have completed secondary school, while the majority of this sample has not (Hassan, 2009: 7). Hence, Australian jihadists have a similar or possibly better economic position to other jihadists in the West, but an unusually low educational position.

Another important characteristic of these Australian jihadists is the role that Islam played in their youth. This was much harder to find information on, so these judgements are tentative, but most of this sample did not have devoutly Muslim upbringings. Three members of the sample were clearly converts, Anglo-Australians with non-Muslim upbringings who converted to Islam. Another four may have been born nominally Muslim but have been reported variously as born-agains or converts. Only another four could definitely be said to have had devout Muslim upbringings. For the remaining 22 there was little information available, but at least 10 of them seem to have not been religious in their youth, judging by lengthy periods of drug and alcohol use.

This is consistent with the general pattern of third wave radicalisation in the West. Most studies found that Western jihadists usually did not grow up particularly religious, and some were converts (Sageman, 2008: 51). In fact, one study of US jihadists found that 44% were converts (MPA Workshop, 2010: 19).[11] This lack of religiosity prior to radicalisation shows the Australian jihadists following a pattern commonly seen in the West.

A further point of comparison between Australia jihadists and those in other contexts is their national status and geographic background. 55% of this sample were born in Australia (19 of 34 confirmed). A further 30% immigrated before adulthood, most before the age of 10, so the overwhelming majority of this sample grew up in Australia. Even though Australia is the most common country of birth for Australian Muslims, the proportion of native-born among this sample is disproportionate. 62% of Australian Muslims were born overseas, in contrast to only 45% of this sample (Hassan, 2009: 5).

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[11] This figure probably overstates the case. The study found 44% of the 80 individuals whom they had concrete information on religious status, out of a sample of 152. As converts are more newsworthy than non-converts, it is not likely that 44% of the remaining 72 sample members were converts. For the same reason, it is possible that Bakker's study also overstates the proportion of converts. Consequently, this author is unwilling to conclude that Australian jihadists are less likely to be converts than European and American jihadists, even though the figures in Table 1 suggest that.

What this tells us is that homegrown radicalisation occurs more frequently (as a proportion) in Australia than in most other Western countries.[12] For example, Bakker's (2006) study found that only a third of his European sample was locally born. In the UK and US respectively, 49% and 51% of jihadists were locally born (MPA Workshop, 2010: 27-28; Simcox et al. 2010: 231-233). This makes jihadism in Australia slightly more homegrown than in the UK and US, and significantly more so than in Europe.

For geographic background, the Australian sample is unique in that 60% are of Lebanese origin. This has not been noted as unusual in current research. For example, Mullins (2011: 267) states that the "prevalence of Lebanese heritage among home-grown terrorists is unique to Australia and indicative of its immigration history". However, this misses how disproportionate this involvement it, as Lebanese-descended Muslims make up only 20% of Australia's Muslim population.[13] In addition, people of Lebanese origin are rarely involved in jihadist activities in the West. In Edwin Bakker's (2006: 37) study of 242 jihadists in Europe, he only found seven of Lebanese origin. Brian Jenkin's (2010: 3) study of US based jihadists found only one (of 109 confirmed), while the MPA Workshop (2010: 23) found two (out of 129 confirmed).[14] This discrepancy is particularly significant given that the Lebanese-origin population in Europe and the US combined is many times larger than Australia's (Information International, 2001: 4-5).

Overall, this study shows that Australian jihadists have similarities to jihadists in other Western countries, in that they are often young, of apparent low religiosity in youth, and of generally low employment status. However, there are also differences: Australian jihadists are more likely to be homegrown, more likely to be married and have children, are disproportionately poorly educated, and are predominantly of Lebanese origin.

Relevance to radicalisation theories

This leads to the question of how this information can inform our understanding of their radicalisation. In terrorism research there is widespread agreement that there are no single-

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[12] Note that 'homegrown' here is defined here as whether the jihadists were born or had grown up in the country in question, it does *not* relate to their motivations or whether their activity had international linkages.

[13] In the 2006 Census 181,754 Australians stated that they have Lebanese ancestry, of which 68,369 listed their religion as Islam. With 340,392 people in total listing their religion as Islam, 20% of Australian Muslims are of Lebanese origin (ABS, 2006).

[14] This excludes Hizbollah supporters living in the West, for the purpose of this article they are not considered part of the Al Qaeda inspired global jihad.

factor explanations of radicalisation and that there are always multiple pathways to terrorism. However, there are various theories proffered that particular characteristics or life circumstances, in combination with many other factors, increase the likelihood of radicalisation occurring (Mullins, 2010). This sample allows us to test the utility of some theories in explaining jihadist radicalisation in Australia.

For example, in social movement research there is the theory of biographic availability, where people are more likely to become involved in a movement if they are young and lack responsibilities such as families (Olesen, 2009: 10-12). Similarly, in criminology research, family responsibilities have been shown to reduce the likelihood of involvement in regular crime (Mullins, 2009: 816). Terrorism researchers have generally found that this theory does little to help explain radicalisation (Mullins, 2009: 816). For example, almost all of Al Qaeda's central staff are married and have children, the same goes for most members of Jemaah Islamiyah (Sageman, 2008: 60-61). Nonetheless, some researchers such as Thomas Olesen (2009: 12) and Max Abrahms (2008: 96-97) have suggested that lack of family responsibilities can partly help explain radicalisation in Western countries. The UK and Europe samples in Table 1 are compatible with this theory, but the Australian sample offers no evidence to support this idea, as the majority are married with children.

It is difficult to tie the educational and economic status of this sample directly to radicalisation theories, because there is no consensus amongst terrorism researchers on the role of socio-economic factors in radicalisation, beyond a general agreement that absolute poverty does not drive terrorism. Some researchers argue that well-educated and middle class people are more likely to turn to terrorism (Silber and Bhatt, 2007: 22; Bergin and Townsend, 2007), whereas other researchers argue that socio-economic disadvantage among Muslims in the West increases the risk of radicalisation, because the global jihadist message is more likely to "resonate with their personal experiences" (Sageman, 2008: 83-84, 89-108; Benjamin and Simon, 2005: 81-94; Al-Lami, 2009: 4-5). The low socio-economic position of the Australian sample offers some support for the latter theory.

Other features of this sample also provide support for the argument that socio-economic disadvantage among Western Muslims is a contributing factor. One is the disproportionate involvement of Lebanese-descendents Muslims, who are the most disadvantaged and stigmatised of all Australian Muslim communities (Betts and Healy, 2006). Another is the very high level of involvement of second generation immigrants. Feelings of marginalisation

tend to be far more acute among second generation immigrants than among recent arrivals (Hage, 2011: 166-173). This is a variant of relative deprivation theory, developed by Ted Robert Gurr and sometimes used in radicalisation literature; raised expectations, when disappointed, make one more susceptible to radicalisation (Sinai, 2007: 36).

However, the findings here fail to support another variant of relative deprivation theory, that raised expectations caused by high educational achievement may be disappointed by the inability to get a fulfilling job afterwards. Marc Sageman (2004: 95) argues that this is not an adequate explanation of radicalisation but a likely precondition: "people who are satisfied with life are unlikely to join a religious revivalist terrorist movement". Terrorism research suggests that jihadists were often underemployed relative to their skill level (Sageman, 2004: 94), and the UK and US samples support this.

Yet it appears this has played no role in Australia. Most of those prosecuted were not underemployed relative to their, generally low, formal qualifications. As Australian Muslims are better educated than the national average, yet suffer two to three times the unemployment rate, it is somewhat surprising that this sort of relative deprivation – being well educated but underemployed – has not played a role (Hassan, 2009: 5). This variant of the relative deprivation theory may well help explain radicalisation in many contexts, but not currently in Australia.

Another characteristic examined was the religious upbringings of Australian jihadists. Only about 10% of this sample converted from a non-Muslim background, and it is estimated that 10% of all Australian Muslims are converts. So this sample of Australian jihadists doesn't provide evidence for the theory that converts are disproportionately more likely to become involved in terrorism. That said, Farhad Khosrokhavar (2009: 187) argues that "jihadist people in the West are the more easily radicalised as their knowledge of Islam and its traditions are sketchy, even nonexistent." The argument is that to become a jihadist one has to believe that Al Qaeda's worldview is the only true way of understanding Islam; whereas it is so divergent from most understandings of Islam that one must be relatively unfamiliar with Islam to accept it. Low religiosity in youth of Australian jihadists supports this.

Turning to the national status of Australian jihadists, the information present here doesn't provide evidence for what could be called the "dislocation" theory of terrorism. Marc Sageman used a 500-strong sample of global jihadists from many countries and found they were socially dislocated before becoming radicalised, "cut off from their cultural and social

origins, far from their family and friends" (Sageman, 2004: 92). 60% of his sample became turned to jihadism while living in a country in which they did not grow up. He similarly pointed out that a majority of his sample "were from country A, living in country B (when they joined) and targeted country C" (Sageman, 2008: 65). This is evidently not the case in Australia. With the majority being born, and almost all having grown up, in Australia, they cannot be considered cut off from their cultural and social origins.

The Australian context

This paper has identified some of the key features of jihadist radicalisation in Australia. It has occurred among a small number of people who radicalised mostly during the third wave (after September 11), and have shown a diverse range of motivations. The most recent plots have been self-starting but with some of the perpetrators having international linkages. The characteristics of those involved are in several ways similar to jihadists in other Western countries: they are often young, are of apparent low religiosity in youth, and generally have a low employment status. In some ways they differ from jihadists in other Western countries, in that they more likely to have grown up locally, more likely to be married and have children, are disproportionately poorly educated, and the majority are of Lebanese origin.

Factors affecting radicalisation occur at multiple levels, ranging from structural causes at the global and national level to more direct factors at the group and personal level (Dalgaard-Nielsen, 2010). Exploring the many possible ways that the national context shapes the distinctive features of jihadist radicalisation in Australia is outside the scope of this paper. Instead, this paper posits that several of these key features can be readily explained by Australia differing from the US during the first two waves of global jihad (1980s and 1990s) by lacking strategic significance, and differing from the UK and Europe during this period by lacking both strategic significance and geographic proximity to jihadist-influenced conflicts. Resulting from this, Australia lacked a significant presence of active transnational jihadist networks, greatly affecting the nature of local radicalisation.

Several scholars have shown how radicalisation occurs through intense social dynamics among tight-knit groups of likeminded individuals, often affiliated with wider transnational radical networks.[15] The role of transnational radical networks, linked to Al Qaeda and other

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[15] For examples of this in the Australian context, see Koschade (2007) and Harris-Hogan (2009).

established jihadist organisations, often veterans of the Soviet-Afghan war, was particularly evident in Europe during the second wave of global jihadism in the 1990s (Pargeter, 2008) However, a defining feature of jihadist radicalisation in Australia, which has shaped the characteristics discussed earlier, is the relative absence of these active transnational terrorist networks during the 1990s, particularly when compared to Europe.

This is best demonstrated by the Jack Roche affair: Al Qaeda had an interest in Australia during the build up to the Sydney Olympics, but the only way they could make inroads was through their unsuccessful attempt to co-opt elements of Mantiqi Four, the JI network already in place. Mantiqi Four itself was in many ways a failure: they were widely regarded as the "weak link" in JI and when they tried to take over administration of a Sydney mosque they were rejected by the local Muslim community (Michaelson, 2005: 333-334; Neighbour, 2004: 95-102). While they established a small community of support (at one point ASIO estimated that Mantiqi Four had 30 members and 100 supporters across three States) they were not comparable to the radical networks in Europe that managed to gain control of several mosques and gain substantial followings (Neighbour, 2004: 301). One account suggests the JI leadership was disappointed at the amount of money Mantiqi Four raised (Neighbour, 2004: 185-186). As Christopher Michaelson (2005: 333) points out, there was little evidence of anything approaching a "terrorist human infrastructure" in Australia at the time.

There were at least informal radical networks that facilitated travel to camps in Afghanistan and Pakistan. Yet the most radical networks were just not as well-rooted, sophisticated, well-connected to Al Qaeda or prepared for violence as those in several other parts of the world. They were not comparable to the networks affiliated with Finsbury Park and Brixton mosques in London, the M-30 mosque in Madrid or the Hamburg mosque. Prior to global jihadism's third wave, the most militant impact of Mantiqi Four and the more informal radical networks in Australia was the Jack Roche affair, and a few cases of Australians travelling to train and fight in Afghanistan and other jihadist battlegrounds.

The Australian context greatly influenced this. First, Australia lacked Europe's geographic proximity to jihadist conflicts. In the 1990s movements such as the Algerian Armed Islamic Group and Egyptian Al-Gama'a Al-Islamiyah used Europe as a place of exile, established networks and gained followers (Taarnby, 2007: 169). Émigrés fleeing Syria, Jordan, Saudi Arabia and elsewhere also played a role in spreading global jihadism to the West, as Middle Eastern states successfully, and often brutally, suppressed the threat from Islamist movements.

This process was assisted by the early 1990s war in Bosnia, which produced a strong sense of moral outrage at the atrocities perpetrated against Muslim citizens by a European country (Taarnby, 2007: 168-170). The Chechnya conflict played a similar, if more distant, role in the late 1990s (Nesser, 2009: 3-4). These factors largely did not apply in Australia given its relative geographic isolation, although an exception was Indonesian émigrés fleeing Suharto's suppression of Islamism, some of who formed Mantiqi Four (Neighbour, 2004: 90-94).

Second, Australia lacked strategic significance. In the 1990s many local jihadists from Algeria and Egypt made their struggle global by carrying violence to France and the United States respectively, which were seen as far enemies propping up the near enemy of secular governments. Australia could not be construed as imposing apostate regimes on Muslims, nor was Australia seen as a major participant in the perceived Western war on Islam. Petter Nesser has described how in the 1990s Europe was seen as a strategically useful arena for global jihad (Nesser, 2007: 929). Australia lacked this importance.[16]

However, the situation changed after September 11, with the third wave of global jihad. Security crackdowns around the world caused difficulties for many jihadist groups, but the increased rise of self-starting terrorism made the active role of these transnational jihadist networks less important. There was now a new global context: the declaration of the "War on Terror", the damage inflicted on Al Qaeda in Afghanistan and its shift to a more decentralised strategy, the internationally unpopular invasion of Iraq, exhortations from jihadist strategists to their sympathisers to "do it yourself" and examples of attacks in places such as Madrid and London. Another feature of the third wave has been local jihadist groups in Pakistan, Somalia, North Africa, Lebanon (to a lesser extent) and Yemen adopting an increasingly global, anti-Western focus and closeness to Al Qaeda (Bergen and Hoffman, 2010; Farrall, 2011). Jihadist activity in these countries now provided a further source of inspiration, and potential avenues for involvement, to individuals in Western countries.

This new global context facilitated jihadist radicalisation in Australia, leading to the self-starting plots and attempts by Australians to get involved in jihadist activity in Somalia,

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[16] Again an exception is the Jack Roche affair. Nesser (2007) describes Europe from 1998-2003 as an arena for global jihad, where European countries (except for France) were not the primary target of jihadist attacks. Jihadist networks in Europe at this time attempted several attacks on European soil, but had the United States as the primary target. The Jack Roche incident was similar, as the intended attacks were aimed at Israeli/Jewish targets, to occur during the Sydney Olympics, making Australia more of an arena than a primary target for global jihad. Nesser writes that from 2003 onwards Europe became a target in itself for the global jihadists; a similar development can be seen in Australia over the same period.

Lebanon and Yemen. Strategic significance increased through Australia's prominent support for US military efforts in Iraq and Afghanistan, construed by jihadists as part of a Western war on Islam. This may have boosted Australia's legitimacy as a target amongst those now radicalising as part of the third wave, who could have also now faced more difficulty travelling overseas for jihad because of international security crackdowns.

These reasons help explain why jihadism in Australia has only involved a small number of people who radicalised mostly during the third wave, and why the more recent plots have been self-starting. They also help explain some of the differences in the demographic characteristics of Australian jihadists discussed earlier. First, given that Australia had less of a significant presence of transnational jihadist terrorist networks, due to its geographic isolation and lesser strategic insignificance, it makes sense that most of those involved in jihadist activity in Australia were born or had grown up there. Hence, Australian jihadism is predominantly homegrown.

This is supported by the United States' experience, which effectively shares Australia's geographic isolation (its borders with Mexico and Canada have largely not proven useful for terrorists)[17] and like Australia, jihadist activity in the US is more likely to be homegrown than imported. However, because of America's greater strategic significance, it has been a prominent target for chain-of-command plots, directly initiated by Al Qaeda Central, Tehrik e-Taliban Pakistan and Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula, while recent terrorist plots in Australia have been self-starting (Bergen and Hoffman, 2010: 5-14).

This also helps explain why Australian jihadists are more likely to be married and have children than jihadists in Europe. Because they are more homegrown than in other Western countries, it is not particularly surprising that they are more likely to have families than their geographically mobile counterparts in Europe. An example that supports this is Simon Haddad's study of Fatah al-Islam in Lebanon. He found that the Lebanese born members tended to be married, often with children, while the transnational members were usually unmarried (Haddad, 2010: 562).

The young age, often irreligious childhoods and relatively low socio-economic position of Australian radicals require little explaining as they are common features among jihadists throughout the West. They are consistent with Scott Atran's (2008: 3) argument that "since

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[17] There is almost no evidence of jihadists entering the US from Mexico, although a small number have entered from Canada. See Leikin (2006).

the invasion of Iraq, with the rapid spread of internet access, the world has witnessed a more egalitarian, less-educated and materially well of, and more socially marginalised wave of would-be jihadi martyrs." This paper has shown that jihadist radicalisation in Australia shares much in common with third wave radicalisation throughout Western countries, but that it has distinctive features.

These distinctive features require that care be taken when attempting to explain radicalisation in Australia; theories derived from jihadism in other contexts, even those quite similar to Australia, are not always applicable to the local situation. The findings presented here also prompt many questions without immediate answers. It should also not be assumed that the national context can explain most differences and similarities, as this risks giving undue weight to structural causes and missing factors at the individual, group and community levels. Nonetheless these findings show the value of this approach to understanding radicalisation in Australia. Further research into the life stories, social interactions, and processes of involvement of radicalised individuals, and the impact of contextual factors, will reveal much about the current jihadist threat.

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