ASPI
AUSTRALIAN STRATEGIC POLICY INSTITUTE

COUNTER-TERRORISM POLICY CENTRE

COUNTERTERRORISM YEARBOOK 2020

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The editors would like to thank Steve Clark and James Dixon for their invaluable support, assistance and input in the production of this publication. We would also like to thank the authors for their hard work and dedication, as without them we could not have compiled the Counterterrorism yearbook 2020. Special thanks to Mike Burgess, the Director-General of the Australian Security Intelligence Organisation, for writing the preface to the 4th ASPI Counterterrorism yearbook.

We thank everyone at ASPI for their support.

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COUNTERTERRORISM YEARBOOK 2020

Edited by Isaac Kfir and John Coyne

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First published March 2020

Published in Australia by the Australian Strategic Policy Institute

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Preface

MIKE BURGESS

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The security threats confronting Australia remain formidable and are continually evolving.

Our world is becoming ever more complex, more uncertain and, as a result of globalisation, more 'connected' than at any other time in history.

The 2020 edition of ASPI's *Counterterrorism yearbook* considers three emerging themes that are matters of concern in the current security environment—namely, the demise of the Islamic State (IS) 'caliphate' and what that means globally and regionally for Australia, the increased threat from right-wing extremism, and the role of technology in propagating violent extremist ideologies.

In 2020, the character of terrorism will continue to evolve and take on a more dispersed and diversified face.

Violent Islamic extremism of the type embodied by IS and al-Qaeda and their offshoots will remain a principal concern.

Tens of thousands of Islamic extremists travelled to the Middle East to join al-Qaeda-aligned groups and IS, including from countries that weren't previously known as sources of Islamic extremists.

While the IS 'caliphate' has been defeated, remnants of IS will continue to be dangerous and will require ongoing attention.

The threat of terrorism in Australia is likely to remain elevated for the foreseeable future. A variety of factors influence the domestic security environment, including offshore groups, aspirational and prevented travellers to conflict zones, and possible returnees from Syria and Iraq.

ASIO has previously assessed and stated publicly that the threat posed by terrorism in Australia has plateaued at an unacceptable level. This is sometimes misunderstood as meaning that the threat has simply plateaued.

It is important to note that the threat of terrorism at home will remain unacceptably high for the foreseeable future.

The drivers that raised the national threat level in 2014 have not diminished. The availability of extremist material online—both propaganda and terrorism instructions—continues to shape the global trend towards lower-capability attacks.

Increasingly, threat groups are geographically dispersed and in some instances only connected through their online interactions. Enabled by the internet, social media and encrypted platforms, extremist networks are increasingly globalised, with operational support networks that span regions and borders.

Foreign fighters who travelled to Syria and Iraq to join Islamist extremist groups will exploit skills and networks acquired in the conflict zone to pose a threat to our interests in their home or third countries.

We continue to see vulnerable and impressionable young people at risk from being ensnared in the streams of hate being spread across the internet by extremists of every ideology.

The threat from right-wing extremists has increased in recent years. However, ASIO has been focused on the extreme right wing for many decades and has maintained continuous and dedicated resources to this area.

The nature of this threat is evolving: extreme right-wing groups are more organised and security conscious than before.

ASIO notes that the use of international online forums and spaces by the extreme right wing allows rapid and easy connections between extreme right-wing individuals globally. Some of these spaces have created extremely toxic peer environments in which acts of violence based on extreme right-wing ideologies are encouraged, glorified and promoted.

Despite the best efforts of governments here and abroad to manage terrorists who have been jailed for their offences, extremist ideologies run very deep.

The number of terrorism offenders scheduled for release from Australian prisons will increase over the next five years. These individuals may be held in a position of greater standing among their peers following release, which could be leveraged to recruit others towards an ideology supportive of violence.

It will be important to remain constantly alert to the enduring power and attraction of extremist messaging to those vulnerable to radicalisation.

This is a complex problem to solve, but it does reinforce the need to remain vigilant about the reach and the strength of extremist messaging.

We cannot afford to become complacent about the potential threat posed by terrorists after their release from prison.

Whatever the motivation of terrorists, whatever the method planned, they will continue to be creative in evolving their methods in response to both our investigative efforts and protective security measures.

The *Counterterrorism yearbook 2020* explores a number of these concerns. And while I may not endorse every argument and opinion, I commend this publication as a valuable contribution to the public discourse on counterterrorism. Congratulations to ASPI on its fourth edition.

Introduction

ISAAC KFIR AND JOHN COYNE

The 2020 edition of ASPI's *Counterterrorism yearbook* continues to provide assessments of how countries and regions are adjusting to terrorist threats. This year's edition also includes thematic chapters on mental health, strategic policing, the media, the terror–crime nexus and terrorist innovation. These chapters have been included to encourage governments to consider more proactive counterterrorism (CT) agendas that move beyond a focus on disrupting plots and discouraging people from joining and supporting terrorist groups. Such considerations will allow governments to deal with emergent areas of concern, such as game consoles, the role of artificial intelligence and predictive analytics.

The 2020 yearbook was drafted at a time of tremendous upheaval in the global system. We recognise that inter-state tensions are on the rise, and the global system is going through a drastic change as we enter a new decade and new forces and ideas emerge, which is one reason why we've included a chapter on right-wing extremism, which we haven't done before. Despite terrorism developments, attacks are in decline, which has led some states to reduce their threat levels (in November 2019, the UK lowered its terror threat from 'severe' to 'substantial'), due in no small part to positive developments in countering violent extremism.

Three themes emerge from the 2020 yearbook.

First, the experts seem clear that *Salafi-jihadi* terrorist activities have continued to decline—something that was noticeable as far back as 2015. The decline is very much linked to the demise of ISIL and the fact that al-Qaeda has changed its strategy.[1]

As the number of *Salafi-jihadi*-inspired terrorist attacks has declined, right-wing extremist activity has increased—a point well illustrated by the terrible Christchurch massacre.[2] The former director-general of ASIO, Duncan Lewis, has noted that while a sophisticated weapons attack by members of this disaggregated community was possible, lone-wolf attacks were more likely. Lewis added that far-right extremist networks 'are better organised and more sophisticated than those of the past'.[3] To address the growing concern over far-right extremism, we've included two chapters on that subject: one by Kristy Campion looking at this phenomenon in Australia and one by Elise Thomas focusing on the Christchurch massacre and the role played by such websites as *8chan*. We would argue that even though there isn't clear evidence of an organised Australian right-wing extremist campaign, security services and governments should keep a close eye on this phenomenon and maintain their commitment to promoting social cohesion.

Second, we address the persistent challenge posed by the demise of ISIL, and specifically the issue of returning foreign fighters and those convicted of terrorism offences who are coming close to the end of their prison sentences. Our experts indicate that there's a drastic need for the international community to adopt a united, cohesive approach to tackle not only foreign fighters but their dependants. The current disaggregated approach has meant that some countries have taken their foreign fighters back, whereas others have adopted such policies as citizenship revocation or simply refused to tackle the problem. Consequently, there's a strong likelihood that the problem will grow in time, as these individuals remain radicalised and continue to try to radicalise others, as we've seen in prisons, which has led to the introduction of risk and needs assessments.[4] Therefore, states must come together and develop an international response, as opposed to taking an ad hoc approach to the problem.

Third, we recognise the role of technology (specifically, social media) in the evolution of violent extremism. We note that we're likely to see more cyberterrorism and that extremist groups are likely to continue to use the internet to promote their intolerant views, placing an enormous strain on states that must balance the right to free speech with security.

We note and recognise that security services and policymakers face many challenges that require courageous decisions. We also recognise that there are no easy or cheap solutions to counter violent extremism. This is a battle that we'll face for many years to come and that demands tremendous investment.

We asked our experts to offer some recommendations in the hope that the yearbook could serve as a guide to policymakers facing these substantial challenges. None of the experts has claimed to have a panacea for the problem of violent extremism. Places such as Syria, Yemen and Mindanao will continue to attract nefarious actors, and post-conflict reconstruction will be expensive and challenging. Conversely, countries such as Australia will have to deal with new threats, such as right-wing-inspired violence.[5]

We support efforts to promote and encourage social cohesion policies and we identify the pull and push factors that entice young people to join violent extremist groups, but we also wish to emphasise that to have an effective CT policy demands that we address the toxic nature of political discourse, the willingness to revert to ahistoricism and think that just because we've been fortunate not to experience terrorist attacks that the problem has gone away. It hasn't. It's simply metastasising.

Many will note that this is the first *Counterterrorism yearbook* that has not had a chapter on Africa. Groups such as al-Shabaab and Boko Haram continue to terrorise their communities, and African governments haven't adopted more creative policies to deal with those groups and others. We will return to Africa in the next edition of the *Counterterrorism yearbook*.

We haven't included a chapter on China and the plight of the Uyghurs, but refer readers instead to the research of ASPI's International Cyber Policy Centre. We suspect that next year we'll have to devote more space to such places as Bangladesh, Central Asia, the Caucasus and North Africa, as *Salafi-jihadi* groups are making inroads in those regions.

We conclude by thanking the contributors, who put enormous effort into their chapters as they sought to provide assessments of terrorist groups but, more importantly, of what CT measures have worked and what needs to be done to ensure that terrorism doesn't continue to flourish.

NOTES

1 Barak Mendelsohn, *The al-Qaeda franchise: the expansion of al-Qaeda and its consequences*, Oxford University Press, 2015; Barak Mendelsohn, 'The future of al-Qaeda: lessons from the Muslim Brotherhood', *Survival*, 2018, 60(2):151–178; Colin P Clarke, *Using the McKinsey 7S framework to assess al-Qaeda over three decades: lessons for the future*, International Centre for Counter-Terrorism, The Hague, 2019, online.

2 Gary LaFree, 'Will terrorism continue to decline in 2019?', *The Conversation*, 27 February 2019, online.

3 AAP, 'Outgoing ASIO boss Duncan Lewis says right-wing extremism has increased in Australia,' *SBS News*, 17 October 2019, online.

4 Lorenzo Vidino, Bennett Clifford, *A review of transatlantic best practices for countering radicalisation in prisons and terrorist recidivism*, Europol, April 2019, online; UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), *Handbook on the management of violent extremist prisoners and the prevention of radicalization to violence in prisons*, UNODC, Vienna, 2016, online.

5 In an important essay, Bruce Hoffman and Jacob Ware note the rising threat posed by incels; Bruce Hoffman, Jacob Ware, 'Incels: America's newest domestic terrorism threat', *Lawfarre.com*, 12 January 2020, online.

COUNTERTERRORISM, COUNTERING VIOLENT EXTREMISM, SOCIAL COHESION:

Federal policies across the spectrum

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The Australian Government's first priority is to keep our community safe from those who seek to do us harm. Since 12 September 2014, when we raised Australia's National Terrorism Threat Level, the government has strengthened our nation's defences against terrorism, investing an additional $2.3 billion.

Each year, the threat environment grows increasingly complex. Sunni Islamist extremism remains the primary threat, while the threat from the extreme right wing has increased in recent years. Foreign fighters and their families have further complicated the security challenge, as around 230 Australians have travelled to Syria or Iraq to fight with or support groups involved in the conflict since 2012. Those Australians are part of a group of more than 40,000 foreign fighters—including around 7,500 from Western countries—who have travelled to the region since the conflict began.

In the face of these challenges, the traditional tools of disruption and intelligence are as important as ever, and Australia has seen 16 major counterterrorism disruption operations in response to potential or imminent attack planning in the past five years. However, increasingly, the need for a breadth of policy options has also come to the fore.

Since 2014, the Australian Parliament has passed 18 tranches of CT-related legislation, much of which provides Australia's law enforcement, security and intelligence agencies the powers they need to prevent terrorist attacks and manage those who would commit them. With enduring threats both offshore and onshore, and emerging issues such as the use of the internet as a tool to spread hate and radicalise populations, governments need effective policy options to counter terrorism in all its forms and to ameliorate the conditions that give rise to violence. That includes policies to prevent and counter extremism and to bolster Australia's social cohesion.

COUNTERTERRORISM POLICIES

The evolving terrorism threat demands that we constantly review our policy settings to ensure they keep pace. The Department of Home Affairs led a number of important CT policy initiatives throughout 2019, alongside other federal and state and territory agencies.

In July 2019, the parliament passed the *Counter-Terrorism (Temporary Exclusion Orders) Act 2019* to give law enforcement and security agencies greater control and certainty in managing Australians of CT interest returning to Australia. The Act gives the Minister for Home Affairs the power to make an order prohibiting the return of such a person for up to two years, or until the minister issues a return permit. A temporary exclusion order prevents that person returning without warning or without adequate protections in place. By requiring the person to provide timely notification to authorities, a return permit can assist law enforcement and security agencies in monitoring the individual's activities, associations and whereabouts.

On 10 June 2019, in order to enhance the ability of the ADF to support the states and territories in responding to domestic security incidents, the *Defence Amendment (Call Out of the Australian Defence Force) Act 2018* came into effect. The Act provides the legislative framework authorising the ADF to be called out to assist in responding to incidents of significant violence occurring in Australia. By making it simpler for states and territories to request ADF support, the Act gives greater flexibility in responding to a range of threats, given the varying response capabilities between jurisdictions.

The government's policy efforts extend to preventing terrorist exploitation of the online environment. The continued use of social media to spread hate, incite violence and divide communities presents a significant and ongoing challenge to Australia's security. Whereas, in previous years, online services gave terrorists a means to undertake rudimentary planning and recruiting, today social media enable the amplification of extremist narratives at a mass scale.

The attack in Christchurch in March 2019 brought violent right-wing extremism into sharper relief. Following that attack, the parliament passed the *Criminal Code Amendment (Sharing of Abhorrent Violent Material) Act 2019*, which commenced in April last year. This Act created new offences for social media and content hosting platforms that don't expeditiously report and remove abhorrent violent material (exemplified by the live streaming of the Christchurch attack). In direct response to the Christchurch attack, Prime Minister Scott Morrison also initiated the Taskforce to Combat Terrorist and Extreme Violent Material Online. Made up of government and industry representatives, the taskforce provided advice on practical measures and commitments to combat the uploading and dissemination of terrorist and extreme violent material. The government is focused on implementing a number of the taskforce's recommendations, including cooperation with industry on stronger prevention, detection, information sharing and research, to better understand and counter the spread of terrorist material online.

Other important policy reforms, which at time of writing are still before the Australian Parliament, include measures to strengthen the operation of terrorism-related citizenship loss under the Citizenship Act and to improve the operation of continuing detention orders for high-risk terrorist offenders (a number of whom will be eligible for release in the coming years).

Alongside these significant bodies of work, the Australia—New Zealand Counter-Terrorism Committee (ANZCTC) continues to guide cross-jurisdictional CT cooperation, including training, exercising and the development and acquisition of specialised capabilities. Following agreement by the Council of Australian Governments in 2019, the ANZCTC is also updating Australia's Counter-Terrorism Strategy to ensure the strategy remains fit for purpose in the light of the evolving security context.

COUNTERING VIOLENT EXTREMISM

CT policies are only one element of the government's efforts to keep Australians safe and the nation united. The resilience of the Australian community to terrorism is connected to the strength of our multicultural, diverse and socially cohesive society, and the government is committed to policies that tackle the underlying conditions that allow violent extremism to take root. As has often been observed, it's typically the most vulnerable, isolated and alienated members of our communities who are targeted for radicalisation by terrorist and extremist groups.

Australia's national approach to countering violent extremism (CVE) seeks to build resistance to all forms of violent extremism, whatever the motivation. The Australian Government has allocated over $53 million to CVE programs since 2013–14, including more than $13 million for programs that seek to intervene early in the radicalisation process, before a law enforcement response becomes necessary. The government's CVE strategy addresses the drivers of all forms of violent extremism, including far-right extremism, by building community resilience, supporting the diversion of at-risk individuals, and rehabilitating and reintegrating violent extremists where possible.

In addition, throughout 2019, the government has continued its efforts to support authorities at the coalface of CVE. The Radicalisation and Extremism Awareness Program, for example, equips frontline correctional, parole and juvenile staff across Australia to recognise, respond to and report potential indicators of radicalisation. The initiative has been delivered to more than 5,000 frontline staff across Australia since 2014.

Strong relationships between government and communities underpin our CVE efforts, as communities and families that trust government and are engaged in the broader Australian community are more likely to be resilient to extremist influences. Community liaison officers within the Department of Home Affairs and community liaison teams within the Australian Federal Police play an important role in building and sustaining relationships with communities throughout Australia, ensuring that approaches are adapted to local conditions. The officers and teams allow the government to gauge community sentiment, understand the impact of programs or operations, and open a dialogue to ameliorate community tensions. They also play a key role in supporting communities in times of crisis. In the aftermath of the Christchurch attacks, these officers drew upon strong and ongoing engagement with Muslim communities, providing outreach and reassurance by visiting mosques, attending vigils and responding to community concerns. Regular community engagement sustains trusted partnerships and keeps open critical information channels.

STRENGTHENING SOCIAL COHESION AND MULTICULTURALISM

The government is equally focused on developing and investing in initiatives to bolster social cohesion more broadly. Our values unite us and underpin our success as a prosperous, open and tolerant nation. Our multicultural society, based on mutual understanding and respect for diversity, is a strong bulwark against division and violence. On 20 March 2019, the government announced a $71 million package of social cohesion measures. This package, led by the Department of Home Affairs, invests in programs to help all communities become more active participants in, and beneficiaries of, Australia's economic and social development. Programs under the package include:

- the National Community Hubs Program, which helps migrants and refugee women with young children connect with their community through skills development, English language training and assistance in finding employment and accessing government support
- the Community Languages Multicultural Grants Program, which helps young Australians learn another language and connects people to new languages and cultures, bridging communication divides and enhancing intercommunity understanding
- digital initiatives through the Enhanced Community Engagement Program to help young people to understand and counter online hate.

A particularly significant initiative is the Fostering Integration Grants Program, under which grants are provided to community organisations with proven success in delivering grassroots programs to enhance the integration of new migrants. In February 2019, the program awarded 225 grants throughout Australia to deliver mentoring programs, educational workshops and programs aimed at reducing social isolation, improving English language skills and developing pathways to employment. One such project engages young migrant communities in Adelaide through sport, helping to engage youth and support them in making connections in their communities.

Underpinning the government's social cohesion policies and programs is a commitment to harness the strengths of Australia's multiculturalism and to create a stronger, more cohesive and resilient Australian community, united by shared liberal democratic values.

CONCLUSION

The threat of terrorism continues to evolve, and our CT policies, legislation and capabilities must be kept under constant review to meet emerging needs. However, the evolution and complexity of the challenge require a spectrum of mutually reinforcing policies that go well beyond CT. They require an ongoing policy focus on building and sustaining an Australian community in which everyone feels connected by common bonds and empowered to contribute as full participants in Australia's civic, social, cultural and economic systems. This policy focus goes to the heart of prevention, because a united society is one that's less susceptible to disengagement, radicalisation and terror.

Contemporary right-wing extremism

IN AUSTRALIA

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Right-wing extremist (RWE) ideology has been present in Australian political and social life for decades but it rarely resulted in political violence. In recent years, the ideas that animate the extreme right have garnered more support and threatened community cohesion in democratic societies. This threat escalated on 15 March 2019, when Australian citizen Brenton Tarrant live-streamed his lone-actor terrorist attacks on two mosques in Christchurch, New Zealand, killing 51 people.[1] This was the first mass-casualty terrorist attack by an Australian right-wing terrorist, and it highlights the ongoing development and challenges posed by the transnational extreme-right milieu.

DEFINITIONS

RWE ideologies encompass a broad array of beliefs that can be grouped by three salient features: exclusionary or ethnonationalism, authoritarianism, and anti-democratic beliefs.[2] Exclusionary nationalism is demonstrated by advancing an idealised and often ethnically selective identity, championing internal homogenisation and derogating those who don't conform.[3] It's authoritarian, sometimes emphasising 'traditional' sociocultural values and at other times emphasising the strong state and law and order.[4] It's also anti-democratic by rejecting the fundamental equality of citizens and opposing individual liberties, institutions or measures that maintain political pluralism.[5] In Australia, some extremists explicitly dismiss democracy as a myth.[6]

Other elements of the RWE world view that may be present include the conspiratorial belief that society is betrayed from within by treasonous elites who promote progressive agendas. Those agents are almost exclusively perceived to be from the left of politics and are denoted as 'cultural Marxists'. Some also champion concepts of social order and justice in which inequality (of gender, socio-economic status or ethnicity) is natural, expected and desirable. Ideas about social Darwinism can therefore be a central component of societal stratification.

RWE ideology can't always be placed on a precise continuum, but the actions taken in pursuit of the ideology can be. Peaceful rallies and protests are within the bounds of the law and are on one end of the spectrum. On the other end are terrorism and political violence motivated by RWE. For example, Australian political parties that subscribe to some RWE ideas, but are still engaged in the democratic process, are at one end of the continuum, while organisations and individuals who encourage or use coercive political violence to override or subvert the democratic process are at the other. It's the application of the ideology that creates the distinction between terrorists, such as Tarrant, and passive supporters, such as those who often prefer the term 'alt right' and share RWE ideas from behind an artificially respectable facade.[7]

Some contemporary RWE ideas originated from fascist movements that adopted a populist political style. When extremists use populist rhetoric to represent themselves as champions of the people fighting against corrupt elites, they effectively blur the lines of political discourse.[8] This can often influence mainstream policy positions; one study has suggested that there has been a cross-fertilisation of populist positions into the mainstream, which has had identifiable impacts on Australian policy.[9]

OVERVIEW

The Christchurch attack increased public awareness of RWE, but the attack didn't emerge from a void. RWE has attracted supporters in the Western world due to a variety of contextual factors.[10] Recently, it's been tied to anti-immigration sentiment and aimed primarily at immigrant and Islamic communities.[11] In Australia, one of the flashpoints was in December 2014, when Man Haron Monis, who claimed to be inspired by Islamic State, held 18 people hostage in the Lindt Café in Sydney.[12] RWE supporters integrated Monis's claim into their belief system, conflating jihadist terrorism with Islam more broadly and positioning Islam as fundamentally incompatible with Australian values.

Shortly after the Lindt Café siege, Reclaim Australia, its splinter, the United Patriots Front, and other groups began holding public demonstrations. They consolidated their position against Islam and held to a concomitant conspiracy theory regarding the Islamisation of the West,[13] referred to in RWE literature as 'the Great Replacement'. This soon turned into xenophobic narratives of the peril represented by Muslims on the one hand and the superiority of white Australian culture and values on the other.[14] Other targets included globalism, economic mismanagement and sexual and gender diversity. As the protests continued, the propaganda became more extreme, championing the deportation of citizens who opposed RWE ideas as 'traitors' and seeking cultural and religious homogeneity for a white Australia.[15]

Reclaim Australia, like many earlier movements, was unable to sustain its momentum and has since declined. However, it provided a base for broader organisation.[16] RWE groups such as Antipodean Resistance, Identity Australia, Right Wing Resistance and many others persisted in a fractious, yet interconnected, milieu. The development of the Lads Society and its penetration of the Young Nationals in 2018 is testimony to the sophistication and adaptive nature of these organised groups and their will to influence mainstream politics. In February 2018, outgoing Assistant Commissioner Mark Rowley of the Metropolitan Police in the UK stated that RWE groups were becoming increasingly organised. That view was echoed by former Director-General Duncan Lewis of ASIO in April 2019 and in ASIO's 2018–19 annual report.[17]

DEVELOPMENTS

Since March 2019, some Western governments have attempted to limit the availability of RWE propaganda through online measures. At the G7 Tech for Humanity meeting in May 2019, New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern launched the Christchurch Call. This was an initiative to ban terrorist and violent extremist materials online, prevent their further dissemination and restructure media reporting to avoid amplification.[18] While the internet acts as an echo chamber and enhances radicalisation opportunities, studies suggest that it doesn't replace the ideological exchange that occurs in physical networks.[19] The Christchurch Call, while commendable, leaves offline information networks that perpetuate RWE content unchallenged.

Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison was also at the G7 and proposed a transparency code to encourage digital platforms, such as Facebook and Snapchat, to report data on the disruption of extremist content.[20] The transparency code ensures that digital platforms take the removal of terrorist and violent extremist material seriously. This proposal also leaves more subtle extremist narratives unchallenged and ignores the presence of online material beyond social media. Influential publications that act as RWE vectors, such as the fiction book that inspired the Oklahoma City bombing, *The Turner Diaries* by Ku Klux Klansman William Pierce, and *The Siege* by James Mason, remain available for purchase.[21]

Online solutions, including deplatforming, address a carrier of RWE but fail to provide meaningful counter-narratives or to undermine the value that individuals attach to ideological affiliation. Ideologically driven narratives serve to recruit, motivate and guide violent actors,[22] but they don't always contain violent content; nor are they disseminated solely in open online spaces. It's been well established that public rallies, marches and protests are significant for RWE movements as means for building offline interpersonal networks, recruiting, establishing social identity and building group cohesion.[23] While peaceful protest should continue to be protected by Australian law, divisive narratives that damage community cohesion and inspire violent action should be challenged.

CHALLENGES

RWE presents numerous challenges to the counterterrorism apparatus through violent and non-violent activity.[24] In the past, RWE tactics have ranged from firebombing campaigns by the Australian Nationalist Movement and street fights and the harassment and targeting of political opponents by National Action through to nonviolent propaganda activities.[25] Broadly, those tactics have persisted, as evidenced by the arson of Destiny Church in Taree by a Right Wing Resistance leader and Odinist, Ricky White, in 2015;[26] persistent clashes between protesters (and splinter groups such as the United Patriots Front) and counter-protesters such as No Room for Racism;[27] and non-violent propaganda activities by Antipodean Resistance.[28] The alleged bomb plot against left-wing individuals and businesses in Melbourne by Philip Galea, a Reclaim and United Patriots Front affiliate, in 2016 shows a continuity in targets but a shift in tactics towards more lethal measures.[29]

Tarrant's attack was yet another shift for Australian RWE but was confluent with the actions of RWE lone actors internationally, such as when Anders Breivik shot 69 young people at Utøya in Norway.[30] The Oslo attacks demonstrated the efficacy and lethality of lone-actor operations motivated by a broader ideational extreme right. Tarrant claimed to be in contact with Breivik and was probably inspired by him. After Tarrant's attack, lone actors around the world claimed to be inspired by him, including the Poway Synagogue shooter in April 2017 and the El Paso shooter in August 2019. He also serves as inspiration domestically, as revealed in September 2019 by a RWE suspect who was arrested when he signalled his intent to commit a similar attack.[31] Tarrant's live-stream of his attack showed others how it could be done, and attempts to replicate it on live-stream, such as by the person who attacked a synagogue in Halle, Germany, in October 2019, have had varying levels of failure and success. Lone-actor terrorism is a hallmark of RWE terrorism operations and will remain a security challenge.

Previous RWE groups, such as the Australian Nationalist Movement, had conflict experience. That won't change, as it was reported that seven Australians travelled to Ukraine to fight alongside RWE groups such as the Azov Battalion.[32] Upon their return, they can be viewed as heroes by RWE supporters. The return of these fighters could pose several security risks. First, they can be lauded as leaders among their peers and they have international contacts to convey authority. Second, they're equipped to lead by their skills and experience. Finally, their knowledge could be exploited by existing RWE organisations and individuals, especially as it's believed that at least one of them had direct contact with an RWE organisation. This is an ongoing challenge in the contemporary context.

Although most RWE terrorists are male, women also form part of the threat milieu. For example, Lana Lokteff plays a significant role in RWE propaganda creation by perpetuating narratives

about the desecration of the white race through miscegenation and sexual violence against women.[33] This is aimed at radicalising and mobilising elements of the community. Another woman, Claudia Patatas, was convicted for her involvement in the proscribed group National Action, which sought to provoke a race war in the UK.[34] Other women solicit donations to support convicted RWE terrorists in prison. In Australia, it's evident from photos of Antipodean Resistance that it has a substantial female membership.[35] Generalising RWE as a male problem ignores the threat's complexity and ideological functions that cater to women. Narratives advocated by young RWE women internationally, such by YouTube propagandist 'SOPH',[36] have measurable impact, especially when their material is shared on Gab by male leaders of the Australian extreme right.[37] The specific roles and spaces for women in the contemporary RWE movement give them agency and avenues to contribute to the progression of the movement.

Finally, censoring divisive RWE narratives in the interests of community cohesion has reduced the overt presence of RWE groups and movements in the public domain. The extreme right, however, has existing narratives in which its members expect to be censored for speaking what they believe is the 'truth'. Censorship reinforces their conspiratorial world views and cements their departure from democratic processes. Within RWE communities, there's a conviction of white victimhood. Censorship (and political correctness) may reinforce those convictions. As a result of this ideational insulation, RWE ideology will continue to persist both offline and online.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Online and offline RWE networks must be confronted holistically. Both networks must be conceptualised as complementary to the radicalisation process. Research suggests that many join the RWE milieu through someone they know and trust.[38] Subscription to the ideology can therefore be a second-order effect in which affiliation is buoyed by meaningful interpersonal relationships, making disengagement from RWE groups or movements difficult. A Canadian study suggests that the threat posed by RWE groups can be effectively fragmented by exploiting membership infighting and leadership fractures.[39] Observation of best practice elsewhere, such as Canada and Belgium, could enrich practice domestically.

The strategic positioning of strong ideological counter-narratives, such as can be seen in PREVENT in the UK, is also required.[40] In Australia, RWE narratives are advocated by female members to galvanise selected communities, while confluent narratives are championed by male leaders. Domestic RWE narratives need to be exposed in public discourse for the threat they pose to Australian democracy, institutions and values. Condemnation in the mainstream political discourse of the language and the ideas that constitute implicit and explicit RWE ideology is part of that effort. More practically, confronting and exposing these ideological narratives must be prioritised to inhibit recruitment to specific groups and the broader extreme-right milieu.

The extreme right is adept at packaging and distributing narratives and ideology that can provide the basis for lone-actor mobilisation and violence.[41] While RWE groups have become more organised, Tarrant is an example of the continuing lone-actor threat. Some lone actors can be categorised as hero-worshippers, others as celebrity-seekers.[42] It's common to see the celebration of successful lone actors, such as by those who celebrate Tarrant as a 'saint' and those who were inspired by him, such as Patrick Crusius and John Earnest, as 'disciples'. The veneration of RWE terrorists can incite other prospective violent actors. That cycle hasn't yet manifested in Australia. Preventive measures, including scrutiny of firearms possession, must be reinforced to ensure that this remains the case.

Finally, RWE organisations must not be overgeneralised as a young male problem. The stereotyping of Australian RWE violence as strategically static and male-dominated must be avoided, and the role of women in the movement must be further investigated for the full risk to be understood, especially where propaganda and resourcing for organisations are concerned. The return of RWE fighters from Ukraine also has the potential to affect and renew the leadership and strategies used by organised groups in the Australian extreme right. A more agile conception of the threat nexus is therefore needed.

CONCLUSION

On 21 October 2019, six months after the most deadly terrorist attack by an Australian right-wing terrorist, ASIO Director-General Mike Burgess stated that RWE groups in Australia are 'more cohesive and organised than they have ever been over the previous years',[43] which was a slight expansion from earlier statements that there would be no 'dramatic reset'[44] in how the extreme right are countered in Australia. This is contrasted to Dresden, Germany, which declared a 'Nazi emergency' on 2 November 2019 due to the threat RWE poses to open democratic societies.[45] The Australian response could be reinforced, at the very least, with focused counter-narratives, given that domestic RWE is buoyed by strong ideological narratives and reinforced via online and offline networks. Without confronting the central motivating ideology, online countermeasures such as deplatforming and censorship will address only isolated aspects of RWE, while the fundamental premise for violent action endures. Without sustained and focused countermeasures, the RWE threat will remain energised and dynamic into the future.

NOTES

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MANIFESTOS, MEMETIC MOBILISATION AND THE CHAN BOARDS IN THE

Christchurch shooting

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The Christchurch terror attack in March 2019 was a watershed moment for terrorism in the digital age. Although not the first terror attack to be live streamed (live streaming has been used since at least 2016),[1] the Christchurch video was arguably the first to go truly viral among mainstream internet users. Around 1.5 million uploads of the video were detected on and removed from Facebook in the first 24 hours alone. YouTube hasn't released the data on how many different versions were uploaded on its platform, but says it removed 'tens of thousands' of uploads in the first day.[2] Official data hasn't been released by smaller file-sharing sites, but it's a safe assumption that thousands, perhaps millions, of versions of the video were uploaded across the internet beyond the major platforms. The swift response from governments around the world, in the form of the Christchurch Call, underlines the significance of the video.[3]

The speed and scale with which the live-stream video and Brenton Tarrant's manifesto were propelled across the internet points to a concerning shift among some members of online extremist communities. They moved from simply consuming and conserving the terrorist's content among themselves to using it to proselytise a mainstream audience.

Posting online manifestos and videos has become something of a staple of far-right terror attackers, especially where the perpetrator has radicalised primarily online.

The manifesto of Anders Behring Breivik (the Norwegian terrorist responsible for the deaths of 77 people in an attack in 2011) has since been cited as an inspiration in many attacks around the world, including the one by Tarrant.[4] Breivik was an active member of the infamous white supremacist online forum StormFront. Shortly before launching his attack, he emailed copies of his 1,518-page manifesto (written under the name Andrew Berwick) to 1,003 contacts,[5] including StormFront members.[6]

Within hours of the attack, links to download the manifesto as well as to Breivik's YouTube channel were being shared on StormFront. As Breivik's content was removed from the major platforms, StormFront users began to re-upload it across other platforms in order to continue to share it with other StormFront supporters.

Online extremist communities' collaboration to preserve and share terrorist content in the wake of an attack has been repeated over and over again in the years since Breivik's attack. With the benefit of hindsight, the pattern set in 2011 can be seen as a harbinger for what followed in 2019: an evolution from sharing the terrorist's propaganda among themselves to actively and aggressively driving it to mainstream internet users.

The metaphor of virality can be useful, but it's important to remember that it's just a metaphor. Unlike a virus, online content isn't self-propelling; nothing just 'goes viral' by itself. Behind every piece of 'viral' content are hundreds, thousands or even millions of human users who made a choice to engage with that content and share it with others.

Facebook has said that it detected at least 800 different versions of the Christchurch shooter's video uploaded to its platform in the first 24 hours after the attack.[7] The purpose of altering the video was to avoid automated detection by the content platforms, which were attempting to block more uploads based on a shared hash (cryptographic representation) of the original video.

To spell that out, that means an unknown number of people were so determined to keep the video on Facebook that they were prepared to spend hours of their time minutely altering versions of it and uploading it over and over again, up to and probably beyond the 1.5 million uploads that Facebook says it removed in the first 24 hours.[8] At its peak, the number of Christchurch shooting videos being uploaded onto YouTube reached up to one per second, and hundreds of YouTube accounts were created specifically to share the video.

As the major platforms cracked down, the promoters of the video changed tactics, instead uploading more copies of the video and manifesto across a dizzying proliferation of smaller hosting and file-sharing sites and then sharing links to them on the major platforms. Many of them were still accessible in November 2019.

One individual in New Zealand, a 44-year-old man who ran a 'Nazi-themed insulation company', was sentenced to 21 months in prison for sharing the video on Facebook and for requesting someone to turn it into a meme featuring crosshairs and a 'kill count'.[9]

However, even months after the attack, relatively little is known about the people who worked so hard to keep the Christchurch shooter's content not only online but readily available to mainstream audiences on major social media platforms.

It's a safe assumption that many of them came from 8chan's /pol board, however. Shortly before launching his attack, Tarrant posted on 8chan to share a link to the Facebook live stream as well as one to his manifesto, which he had uploaded to multiple file-sharing sites. He urged 8chan users to 'please do your part by spreading my message, making memes and shitposting as you usually do.' He also shared the links on Twitter.

In the wake of the attack, New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern described it as being 'designed to go viral'.[10] That's partly accurate. It *was* designed to go viral, but not among a mainstream audience, for whom many of the references would mean nothing. The multitude of memes, in-jokes and niche internet culture references included in Tarrant's manifesto and in the live stream itself (for example, the choice of music or the call to subscribe to a particular YouTube channel) were intended to appeal to a specific, narrow audience of users on forums such as 8chan, 4chan, Reddit (where the video was narrated by users on a sub-Reddit called 'watchpeopledie') and Gab and in like-minded groups on other more mainstream platforms, including Facebook.

The tone of the manifesto mirrors the discourse on those platforms: flashes of deathly extremism wrapped in layers of sarcasm, 'shitposting' and trolling for a reaction. As Aja Romano, a journalist who covers internet culture for *Vox*, said:

> The ultimate goal of including the memes seems to be a show of solidarity with the manifesto's primary audience: the 'insiders' who understand that while the copypasta is a joke, nothing about the extremist ideology is. The memes inserted into the manifesto serve to bolster fellow extremists' enthusiasm, making them feel even more unified as people who 'get' the references and subscribe to the racist views. Ultimately, the memes help turn the manifesto itself into a radicalizing force.[11]

It worked. For example, despite evidence of at least some efforts by moderators to remove posts glorifying Tarrant's actions from forums such as 4chan, some posts remained up for over a week.

Memes (literally) glorifying Tarrant as a saint and promoting the radicalising effect of the /pol board are also still in wide circulation (Figure 1).

The significance of the Christchurch shooting video and manifesto isn't (just) that it reached more mainstream internet users than perhaps any other such alt-right terrorist content to date. It's that it successfully moved an unknown number of users in online extremist communities from being passive consumers and conservators to become active propagandists—or worse.

Since the Christchurch shooting, at least three other terrorist attacks with direct links to the 8chan community have occurred in the US and Germany. Each of the attackers appears to have tried to emulate the virality of Tarrant's manifesto and live stream, although none had the same success. The two American perpetrators posted manifestos to 8chan, both of which directly cited Tarrant as an inspiration. By the time of the attack in Halle, Germany, the 8chan forum had been taken down (although it's since been revived as 8kun), so instead the attacker posted his links to an obscure forum loosely affiliated with 4chan.[12] His manifesto contained direct references to 8chan.

Figure 1: The sanctification of a shooter

It's of course impossible to know whether the Christchurch video and manifesto played a decisive role in inspiring those attacks, or whether they would have occurred even without Tarrant as an example to copy.

What's clear is that even if well-intentioned efforts to prevent content like this from reaching mainstream audiences in the future succeed, they won't address the most significant threat: the radicalisation of the online extremist communities who are the true target audience.

There are some reasons for optimism. At least some users on forums similar to 8chan have been increasingly self-policing the most extreme content in order to avoid being taken down as 8chan was in August 2019. The moderation of overt calls for violence also appears to have stepped up to some extent, although such posts are still not difficult to find.

The return of 8chan in its latest incarnation as 8kun in November 2019 will add a new dynamic to the mix (assuming it manages to stay online in the face of both legal and what might delicately be termed 'extra-legal' efforts to take it down), but it may be that the more extreme users who have already shifted to Telegram won't return to the clearnet version of the forum (there are also Tor and Lokinet versions). This would make the community more difficult for new users to access—but also create the risk that it could become even more insular and radicalised.

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Prison radicalisation

AND DERADICALISATION IN AUSTRALIA

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PRISON RADICALISATION

A number of individuals who have committed acts of terrorism were radicalised in prison.[1] Examples include Richard Reid (the 2001 'shoe-bomber'), some individuals involved in the 2004 Madrid bombing[2] and the attackers who committed the *Charlie Hebdo* shooting.[3] Studies of European and US jihadists have highlighted the relationship between prison and radicalisation.[4] In Australia, one example is Guy Stains, who was radicalised in prison when serving a sentence for murder in NSW and left Australia after his release to fight for the Islamic State.[5] In 2017, he was reportedly killed in a US drone strike in Syria.[6]

Across the ideological spectrum of Islamism and white supremacy, prisons have been the scene of radicalisation and recruitment into violent extremist groups.[7] Research from the US indicates that post-prison violent extremism is related to whether offenders were radicalised in prison.[8] Overseas research and inquiries into prison radicalisation in New South Wales have found that prison radicalisation is driven by a number of factors, and that behaviours that can be interpreted by prison authorities as signs of radicalisation (such as a prisoner converting to Islam) don't necessarily mean that an inmate presents a risk of radicalising to violent extremism.[9]

Radicalised inmates comprise three groups of offenders:

- individuals subjected to a period of incarceration for terrorist offences
- individuals who have exhibited extremist views, behaviours, or both, but haven't committed terrorist offences
- individuals identified as at risk of radicalisation due to an association with known extremists.[10]

For brevity, I use the term 'radicalised offender' to refer to this cohort.

How governments and prison authorities deal with radicalised offenders has become an issue of concern. One response has been to introduce legislation and increase security regimes and restrictions targeting this cohort. Efforts have also focused on the development of deradicalisation and disengagement programs. Within the literature, deradicalisation is understood as a change in beliefs, while disengagement is defined as a change in behaviours.[11] This chapter reviews counter-radicalisation efforts implemented by prison authorities in Australia and overseas and outlines some of the challenges in tackling inmate radicalisation. The evidence on how best to do so is still growing, and investment in evaluation to identify what works is needed.[12]

PRISON PROGRAMS TO COUNTER VIOLENT EXTREMISM

Prison authorities in Australia and jurisdictions abroad have developed programs to tackle radicalisation. While the design of those programs varies in relation to how inmates are referred to participate in them, the programs generally try to generate disengagement and deradicalisation by focusing on one or more of the following:

- education
- employment
- lifestyle (sports, hobbies, personal health)
- psychological counselling and support
- family support
- religious education and mentoring.

Prison-based programs have been implemented in countries in the Middle East and Southeast Asia. One well-publicised initiative is the Saudi Arabian Prevention, Rehabilitation and After-care Program, which has been a model for other countries.[13] A focus of the program is on religious re-education on Islam and dialogue between inmates and religious scholars. Education and vocational training are also provided, as well as support to family members, which includes regular family reunions with detainees.[14]

Programs in countries such as Singapore and Indonesia have a similar focus in their content.[15] One of the few interventions that's been subject to a systematic evaluation is a Sri Lankan program targeting individuals who were members of the Tamil Tigers. Program participants are housed in rehabilitation centres and provided with a variety of courses, including art; yoga; vocational and educational training; courses in emotional intelligence; and counselling. They're encouraged to participate in different sports, and more hardcore Tamil Tiger members are separated from other participants. A series of evaluation studies showed that program beneficiaries showed a decline in support for violent extremism.[16]

In the US, a key criticism has been the lack of any targeted federal prison program for extremist inmates.[17] Some US states have implemented programs targeting released terrorist inmates; for example, the US District of Minnesota Probation Office has adopted a multi-tiered approach encompassing mentoring, counselling, religious education, social assistance, employment and vocational support, and family engagement.[18]

The UK has utilised a series of interventions targeting extremist prisoners.[19] One example is the 'healthy identity' intervention, which is based on tested approaches to working with criminal offenders more generally to address criminogenic needs, pro-social modelling, emotional management and cognitive restructuring (that is, critical thinking).[20]

At the time of writing, only two states in Australia have dedicated prison programs targeting radicalised inmates. The Victorian Community Integrated Support Program was established in 2010 to target inmates and parolees and was expanded in early 2015 to also target at-risk individuals in the community.[21] In NSW, the proactive integrated support model (PRISM) intervention is delivered by Corrective Services NSW.

PRISM is a case-managed intervention that aims to address the psychological, social, theological and ideological needs of radicalised offenders. It targets individuals across the ideological spectrum, from far-right white supremacists to Islamists. The primary objective is to redirect clients away from extremism and help them to transition out of custody. This is achieved through individually tailored intervention plans. It's a voluntary intervention that's been operating since 2016 and is delivered by a team of psychologists in partnership with other stakeholders, such as a religious support officer and service and program officers.[22]

PRISM has been subjected to a series of evaluations, and the results indicate that it addresses a range of needs relevant to facilitating disengagement and assisting in reintegration. This includes, for example, facilitating change in clients' ideological beliefs and their support for violent extremist groups; distancing from associates; engagement in work, vocational and educational training; and encouraging insights into offences. The engagement of family members is also a focus. Analysis shows that the longer clients are engaged in PRISM, the more likely they are to show change over time related to indicators of deradicalisation and disengagement.[23] The lessons from the evaluation of PRISM are that the consistency of engagement and participation matters a great deal in generating positive change among radicalised offenders and that clients will experience 'ups and downs' on their pathway to disengagement. Programs and policy responses need to be flexible to respond to such circumstances.

POLICY CHALLENGES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The problem of prison radicalisation and deradicalisation needs to be tackled in a holistic fashion, balancing the goals of security through incarceration with rehabilitation that focuses on reintegration and release. Governments, policymakers and prison administrators need to make judgements on a case-by-case basis because there's no single pathway into or away from radicalisation and responses need to be tailored.[24] A range of considerations and factors will influence the effectiveness of policy responses. This section briefly discusses some of those issues.

THE EXPERIENCE AND CONDITIONS OF INCARCERATION

Prison administrators have tackled the problem of terrorist offenders through strategies of either concentration or dispersal, both of which have pros and cons.[25] For example, a strategy of concentration can involve radicalised inmates being held in designated terrorist wings, thus helping to manage the risks they present, but that can further intensify their extremism.[26] A strategy of dispersal can help decrease the level of influence radicalised offenders have over one another and contribute to rehabilitation, but it can also provide opportunities for terrorist inmates to radicalise and recruit prisoners from the mainstream inmate population.[27] Whatever approach is adopted, it's imperative that radicalised offenders are given work and educational opportunities and that family members can visit regularly.[28] This contributes to deradicalisation and disengagement. While terrorist inmates can be subject to some of the most restrictive prison regimes, they should be given opportunities to have their security classification routinely reassessed and to have restrictions relaxed over time. If the conditions and experience of incarceration are too severe, the deradicalisation and reintegration of radicalised inmates will be far more difficult and prolonged.[29]

PREVENTIVE DETENTION LEGISLATION

In Australia, the *High Risk Terrorist Offenders Act 2016* (the HRTO Act) introduced post-sentence detention for terrorist offenders. In NSW, that legislation is complemented by the *Terrorism (High Risk Offenders) Act 2017* (the THRO Act), which expands the focus on offenders who haven't been convicted of a terrorism-related offence but who are seen as at risk of committing one.[30] Further developments also include a presumption against parole for terrorism-related offenders.[31]

While legislation such as the HRTO and THRO Acts is concerned with ensuring community safety, that doesn't mean that the consequences of such schemes shouldn't be thought through, as the legislation can have a range of potential consequences. For example, given that anti-authoritarian and anti-government sentiment in part drives radicalisation in combination with grievances about perceived injustices,[32] inmates can perceive such legislation as being simply aimed at continually punishing them, increasing their grievances about how they're treated. Potentially, it can make it far harder to engage radicalised inmates in programs aimed at deradicalisation and community reintegration. However, for some, it could make them more receptive to participating in an intervention in order to avoid or minimise any adverse assessment, and thus generating individual change and reform. Again, these outcomes require monitoring on a case-by-case basis.

RISK ASSESSMENT

A number of tools have been developed to assess risks among extremist inmates.[33] Examples include the Extremism Risk Guidance 22+ (ERG 22+)[34] and the Violent Extremist Risk Assessment version 2 revised (VERA 2R).[35] It should be kept in mind that few of these tools have been subject to large-scale validation studies, so their predictive validity is unclear. Also, risk assessments have their own problems, particularly when it comes to terrorist offenders. For example, it's argued that many risk assessment tools prioritise sensitivity (being able to accurately identify those who present a current or future risk of radicalisation) over specificity (being able to identify those who don't). This is the result of not wanting to miss any true positive cases, but can lead to someone being classified as a risk when they're not.[36] This can also occur as a result of risk aversion among decision-makers and practitioners when using risk assessment tools.[37] Such outcomes can waste resources and undermine effective intervention work. This means that information exchange and sharing are essential to accurate risk assessments. Also, assessments should pay equal attention to risk factors for extremism and to protective or resilience factors that reduce risk.

COMMUNITY SURVEILLANCE, MAINTENANCE AND FOLLOW-UP

Preparing radicalised offenders for release into the community needs to be a government priority. Many convicted terrorists will be eligible for release in the coming years, and some will be released into the community on parole. It's unrealistic to assume that they can be detained indefinitely or continually denied parole. Their successful reintegration once they're released helps to enhance community safety. Like many prisoners, convicted terrorists face challenges when released from prison, such as finding work, reuniting with family members, breaking from social affiliations and associates, and community rejection and stigmatisation.[38] The research indicates that the recidivism of violent extremists is low[39] and that extremist re-engagement is driven by a variety of factors.[40] To avoid this, community maintenance and follow-up are essential to ensure that radicalised offenders are successfully reintegrated. This should include, for example, assistance with finding work and ensuring that people aren't re-engaging with radicalised associates or extremist content online. While security agencies may prioritise the need to survey radicalised offenders once they're released from prison, it's important that this doesn't undermine community reintegration and requires agencies to work in partnership so the goals of security and reintegration are achieved.

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Youth and violent extremism

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The prevalence of young people in violent extremism isn't a 21st-century phenomenon. The Nazi party in Germany founded the Hitler Youth organisations in the early 1920s to indoctrinate juveniles, and the Irish Republican Army discovered the value of recruiting juveniles or 'cleanskins' during the 1980s and 1990s war of attrition in Ulster.[1]

The 21st century has brought a new level of concern about the number of young people now engaging in violent extremism. The Radicalisation Awareness Network reported in 2018 that young people make up the highest percentage of individuals joining violent extremist groups worldwide.[2] This phenomenon also occurs in Australia. In 2018, the Australian Security Intelligence Organisation indicated that, due particularly to the persistent use of online propaganda and the presence of young people detained in the youth justice system, the number of young people involved in terrorism-related offences may continue to rise.[3]

In 2019, the Independent National Security Legislation Monitor's report to the Prime Minister, *The prosecution and sentencing of children for terrorism*, noted that over 10% of all people convicted for terrorism offences since 2014 in Australia were under the age of 18 at the time they offended, and a further 25% were aged between 18 and 25 years.[4] With such involvement of young people in violent extremist groups, and particularly the participation of young people in terrorist acts, the importance of youth-targeted P/CVE approaches can't be overstated.

WHY DO YOUNG PEOPLE GET INVOLVED?

For many reasons, young people continue to be more susceptible to the development of extremist beliefs. According to international organisations such as the UN Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate, young people remain particularly vulnerable to radical and extremist narratives due to three primary drivers identified by Akil Awan: their developmental search for identity and belonging; feeling disenfranchised from traditional political processes; and experiences of inequality in employment and education and social marginalisation.[5]

The use of online and social media platforms has enabled violent extremist groups and terrorist organisations such as ISIS to focus their narratives and recruitment campaigns to an international audience of young people by appealing to those drivers, often through the use of selectively presented facts that seek to reinforce and exploit individual vulnerabilities.

Young people represent a particularly complex cohort for understanding the notion of radicalisation, and therefore the risk of extremist violence. Many factors associated with normal adolescent development make them vulnerable to radicalisation into violent extremism. Those who do become involved in violent extremism or terrorist activity are a unique group, which complicates the heterogeneous and individually specific pathways of radicalisation models and violent extremist behaviour.

Normal adolescent developmental processes, such as cognitive and personality development, immaturity of judgment, limitations in critical and consequential thinking, ongoing formulation of a sense of self and identify, and susceptibility to the influence of peers or charismatic leaders, results in young people being more readily accepting of extremist groups' propaganda and narratives and vulnerable to radicalisation.[6]

Social isolation or feelings of 'not fitting in' with peer groups, communities or society can contribute to a young person's radicalisation to violent extremism. The search for belonging or the ability to identify with a group is an important developmental milestone, making those who feel that they don't 'fit in' or who are questioning or searching for an identity vulnerable to radicalisation. Some of the young people I've worked with struggled with establishing a sense of cultural identity somewhere between their experience of their family's culture of origin and their Australian cultural identity. Some were rejected by the group they primarily identified with and felt as though they were isolated and 'on the outer' of social or peer groups. Others have been motivated by the status, recognition or notoriety that being involved with an extremist group provides them—something they felt they wouldn't be able to achieve in their 'normal' social context.

As well as belonging and identity, one important factor contributing to the radicalisation of youth is the influence that friends, family and significant others have on the formation of their beliefs. Young people are very susceptible to having their beliefs influenced by those in their familial or social networks, and particularly by those whom they idolise or respect, such as a hero or leader. Many of the young terrorist offenders I've worked with cite the influence of familial or peer relationships or prominent terrorist leaders or preachers in the formation of violent extremist beliefs. Most often, they're influenced because they feel loyalty to their family and friends, they feel a need to fit in with a particular group of peers, they idolise a particular leader and adopt their beliefs in order to be like them or they simply believe the narratives they're told because they trust the influencer implicitly. Given their age and developmental stage, they're unlikely to question or challenge those ideas or beliefs without well-developed critical thinking skills and a well-formed sense of identity.

While there's no one specific pathway or profile for a young person's radicalisation to extremist violence, there are a number of factors that contribute significantly, including the search for identity, sense of self or belonging, the ideological appeal or 'sell' of the group, the prospect of fame or recognition, and the influence of or indoctrination by family or peers.

Identifying young people who may be at risk of radicalisation to violent extremism involves looking for indicators similar to those among young people who may be engaging in criminogenic, gang-related or substance-use behaviour and includes identifying and recognising early signs when they withdraw from usual social or familial contexts and isolate themselves from their peers or community.

Other behavioural indicators can also be early warning signs, such as:

- expressing written or spoken support for violent extremist acts (such as before the Parramatta justice precinct attack), groups (for example, ISIS or the United Patriots Front) or individuals (such as Brenton Tarrant) who conduct terrorist acts
- verbalising a desire to join an extremist group or terrorist organisation
- changing their physical appearance to conform or identify with an extremist or terrorist group (for example, shaving their head or growing a beard)
- rejecting or arguing with family or friends on the basis of beliefs (such as insufficiently strict adherence to a religion or political belief)
- starting to spend a lot of time with and paying close attention to a new group of peers or associates.

THE INFLUENCE OF THE INTERNET AND SOCIAL MEDIA

The internet and particularly social media have become powerful tools and platforms giving rapid access to unlimited information at any time. The digital age and the prevalence of social media in the daily lives of young people mean they're more easily and frequently exposed to and able to access radical and extremist narratives and the messages of terrorist organisations, which have developed sophisticated online and social media recruitment campaigns. Campaigns specifically targeting young people, including through the use of domains and social phenomena such as online gaming, chatrooms or memes, have been increasingly exploited by far-right and Islamist extremist groups.

However, while most youth spend much time online, and a large proportion of them have accessed or been exposed to radical or extremist material, most aren't influenced to radicalise to violent extremism. Extremist messages seen online can reinforce existing negative views about other social or cultural groups and contribute to radical views, but current research suggesting that exposure to online extremist content is unlikely to be a causal factor on its own in the development of violent extremist beliefs. The existence of this material and the continued proliferation of both the content and the number of platforms hosting the content does, however, normalise and justify extremist narratives.

Those individuals who actively search for that material are more likely to adopt extremist beliefs or behaviours, particularly when their online activity is paired with real-life influencers and push or pull factors. Many young people whom I've interviewed in the youth justice context reported being exposed to or participating in the viewing and sharing of some online violent extremist content in the form of violent or graphic videos and pictures, but those images and narratives alone haven't influenced the majority of them to adopt violent extremist beliefs or behaviours.

RESPONSES NEEDED TO COUNTER VIOLENT EXTREMISM AMONG YOUNG PEOPLE IN AUSTRALIA

Since 2001, the terrorism threat has evolved significantly. There's been a significant shift from large-scale and complex attacks to low-level, rudimentary attacks, resulting in far lower capability requirements and more ability for young people to engage in violent extremist acts. Additionally, there's been some recognition that holding extremist beliefs can lead to acting violently, which has prompted a policy shift to introduce CVE measures. Such measures include recognition that CVE strategies must have an emphasis on early intervention, before a law enforcement response is needed, and early intervention must include a focus on young people. The UN Office of Counter-Terrorism has prioritised projects focused on young people, and UNESCO has recommended that all policymakers focus on implementing strategies that assist young people to develop resilience to resist extremist narratives and help them to acquire the social–emotional skills to overcome adversity and engage constructively in society without having to resort to violence.

Australia hasn't been immune to the global terrorism threat. Our young people are, perhaps not surprisingly, increasingly engaged in the global extremist and terrorist phenomena. We face a unique challenge in Australia: our young people are geographically isolated from much of the conflict but remain connected through their technical and internet abilities. They're also directly affected by some of the harshest counterterrorism legislation in the world and the complexities of a multicultural society that embraces religious and political freedom of expression.

In order to identify and respond to early indicators and divert young people from violent extremism, policymakers and those engaged in work with young people in the government and non-government sectors need to focus on engaging with them by recognising their strengths and interests, encouraging their engagement in positive social and community activities, linking them to appropriate mentors, challenging 'us and them' narratives, and maintaining their connection to their families and friends. It's important that individual young people or groups aren't singled out, publicly or in their communities and social networks, as 'at risk', as that may reinforce feelings of alienation or a lack of belonging.

This work can succeed through:

- empowering young people to participate in the development and implementation of youth-specific interventions and programs
- allowing them to develop independent thinking, research and leadership skills
- building and fostering their capacity for critical thinking
- engaging in early intervention and diversion conversation with them
- delivering training and awareness-raising sessions to staff working with young people to help them understand and identify different ideologies
- understanding when and how to report indicators that a young person may be radicalised to violent extremism.

It's also important that young people are engaged in conversations and programs that assist them to develop their identity and a stronger sense of self. Programs that focus on helping them to identify their values, set and maintain clear boundaries, problem solve and practise mindfulness will help them to develop a sense of who they are.

These approaches are similar to the education and identification initiatives delivered by government and non-government organisations when building capability to respond to risk-of-harm indicators among children and young people. In fact, engagement in violent extremism is another risk of harm to be considered for all children and young people, with possible outcomes as significant to their health and wellbeing as other risks, such as criminal activity and drug use.

Additionally, policymakers and governments need to:

- focus on building evidence specific to young people, which can be achieved only through the adequate funding, resourcing and delivery of and research into diversion interventions targeting young people
- commit to the development and delivery of education and training for all youth-sector staff in recognising and responding to the indicators of radicalisation
- develop and implement targeted strategies to engage with young people to build their involvement in early intervention and diversion efforts.

While young people's involvement in violent extremism is of particular concern, they are especially amenable to being diverted away from engaging in violent extremism if their latent radicalisation is identified and responded to early, with appropriate and respectful interventions.

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Australia's pyrrhic policing victories

OVER TERRORISM

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STRATEGIC POLICING

Most Australians understand the role that the Australian Federal Police (AFP) play in countering crime, promoting public safety and arresting alleged terrorists. Over the past two decades, the AFP's contribution to Australian counterterrorism (CT) efforts has changed markedly, and the lion's share of the force's activities is now well beyond the public eye. Officers now work in multiple locations (such as the Counter Terrorism Coordination Centre and the National Threat Assessment Centre), in joint taskforces and teams (such as joint CT teams) and in covert roles (surveillance, undercover and human source teams).

The AFP's contributions to national and domestic security in the CT space can now be better described as 'strategic policing'.[1]

This chapter explores the contribution of the AFP's strategic policing activities to Australia's CT successes before discussing factors that may affect future success.

THE ROAD TO SUCCESS

Since the Bali bombings in 2002, the Australian Government has required the AFP to assume an increasingly proactive role in disrupting domestic terror threats.

Before 2014, the AFP's executive officers stressed that the force was a policing organisation rather than a national security[2] or intelligence agency.[3] They accepted the need for the AFP to evolve, but they weren't in the business of collecting security intelligence. However, the increasing complexity of CT investigations has meant that the force is no longer just investigating terrorist attacks as criminal acts. Instead, it's become integral to the identification and disruption of potential terrorist acts. The AFP has prioritised the task of improving domestic and international CT information sharing and operational coordination. That effort was formalised following the publication of the *2017 Independent Intelligence Review*.[4]

The AFP has worked with its state and territory police partners over almost two decades to break longstanding bureaucratic CT silos in law enforcement jurisdictions. While traditional cultural tensions between those organisations will always simmer, the AFP and its partners have nurtured the kinds of collaborative frameworks necessary to consistently detect, disrupt and prosecute homegrown terrorists.[5]

The formation of a joint CT team in each state and territory has been the key to operationalising those efforts.[6] The teams bring CT staff from state and territory police, ASIO and the AFP together in a physical space where information can be rapidly shared and operational activity coordinated.

To become more proactive, the AFP needed to bridge the longstanding intelligence and policing divide. This has been a long process, but it has led to greater cooperation between the AFP, ASIO and the Australian Signals Directorate.[7] The AFP's presence on senior intelligence committees, such as the National Intelligence Collection Management Committee and the National Intelligence Committee, has facilitated closer relations at the strategic level. At the operational level, secondments of AFP officers to agencies such as the National Threat Assessment Centre and the Counter Terrorism Coordination Centre have been pivotal in identifying opportunities to share intelligence and rapidly exchange information. At the tactical level, the joint CT teams have allowed for greater case management coordination.

Since its establishment, the AFP has been a global leader in promoting international police-to-police cooperation. The force's successful collaboration with the Indonesian National Police after the Bali bombings was possible only because of its decades-long history of cooperation. As the global terror threat has evolved, the AFP has taken proactive measures to address it. Recognising that the threat doesn't begin at the water's edge, it's continued to build on its overseas presence.[8]

While the AFP's international efforts have been predominantly bilateral, there have also been greater multilateral efforts. Through the establishment of the Jakarta Centre for Law Enforcement Cooperation, it's been able to increase regional capacity and cooperation.[9] The AFP has also been a strong advocate for the Five Eyes law enforcement group.[10] Both efforts continue to build the kinds of interpersonal relations that promote intelligence exchange and enhanced operational coordination.[11]

The AFP's contributions to Australia's operational CT results speak for themselves. Since September 2014, Australia's police have collectively and collaboratively disrupted 17 terror plots.[12] All of those successes can be linked in some manner to the AFP's strategic policing efforts to improve collaboration with state and territory police forces, Australian intelligence agencies and international partners. While there's always room for improvement in intelligence sharing and operational coordination, further dynamic enhancements to the AFP's CT strategic policing will require new approaches.

EVOLUTION AND REVOLUTION IN CT STRATEGIC POLICING

The unprecedented rise in lone-actor terror plots and the use of vehicles in attacks against pedestrians clearly illustrate that terrorists are capable of innovation, so policing strategies need to be agile in order to deal with terrorism's evolution.

To date, the AFP has responded to the demand for agility with aplomb:

- In the early 2000s, the AFP was able to use telecommunications interception warrants in almost all of its CT investigations. Today, the force increasingly works with other agencies, using alternative evidence-collection techniques, to counter the impact of encryption and changes in the way that terrorist organisations such as Islamic State (IS) communicate with their followers.
- During Operation Pendennis in 2004, using information provided by the local Muslim community, the AFP disrupted a domestic terror plot involving two terrorist cells in different state jurisdictions. At that time, cooperation between the AFP and the NSW and Victorian police forces was cumbersome. While the disruption efforts were a success, the AFP, ASIO and the federal Director of Public Prosecutions struggled to both use and protect nationally classified material in Australian courts.
- In 2017, using information provided by a foreign intelligence service, AFP officers disrupted a plot, involving international connections, to blow up an Etihad plane leaving Sydney Airport. The force was able to work more closely with its domestic partners than it did during Operation Pendennis. It was also well prepared to protect domestically and foreign sourced classified material from disclosure.
- When the outward flow of foreign fighters to IS was at its height, the AFP, its state and territory police partners, ASIO and the Australian Border Force began to engage families and communities to report anomalous behaviour. The rise of the lone-actor phenomenon resulted in the implementation of similar strategies. This resulted in increased community cooperation.
- In response to the rapidly evolving CT environment, a closer relationship between government and the AFP has been established. That relationship has closed the time lag between terrorism developments and legislative responses. Over the past year, the Australian Government has rapidly developed a range of new terrorism-related policies and legislation to deal with the next wave of emerging terror challenges, ranging from citizenship loss provisions to new online content laws.[13]

Australian governments, of all persuasions, have zero tolerance for failures in Australia's CT arrangements. That position has driven the AFP's strategic policing efforts further away from the investigation of crimes and towards the disruption of plots and the mitigation of risks. This kind of policing work relies heavily on intelligence assessments of alleged offenders' intents and capabilities. The information used in such decision-making often doesn't meet the threshold of the 'beyond reasonable doubt' burden of proof that's the traditional realm of police.

DRIVERS FOR FURTHER CHANGES TO CT STRATEGIC POLICING

Over recent years, IS has developed its cyber capability to create a diffuse and often encrypted communication network. To date, big-data analytics and social media intelligence-gathering have been dominated by Australia's intelligence agencies. However, the AFP now needs to consider what capabilities it needs to mitigate the impacts of increased encryption. Arguably, the solution to this challenge will involve more than new telecommunications interception legislation: it will need all-new thinking on evidence collection, as opposed to just intelligence collection.

Over the past few years, law enforcement and intelligence agencies across the globe have managed to stem the flow of foreign terrorist fighters leaving their shores. In response to that success, IS has intensified its efforts to recruit and empower global followers to 'think caliphate but attack locally'. The continued rise of lone-actor terrorism, and its greater attraction for younger jihadists than for previous terrorist cohorts, present police with a problem for which cyber intelligence collection appears to be the only solution. The strategic policing approach to such a challenge is likely to involve a dynamic paradigm shift in police capacity, with a focus on data scientists and analysts rather than investigators.

In this CT maelstrom, the intensity of the terror threat has increasingly denied the AFP the opportunity to fully engage communities on their perceptions of and priorities for CT policing. The AFP has just accepted the government's position that CT has a higher priority for police than other crime types, such as drug importations, even though more Australians are killed by illicit drug overdoses than by terrorists.

POLICING'S CT POLICY CYCLE IN 2019

Despite all of the AFP's CT successes, the current model of policing based on expanding policing powers and resources is likely to be increasingly unsustainable. In a Western liberal democracy, regardless of the level of threat, it's logical to assume that there must be a limit to the number and type of new powers that can be allocated to law enforcement and intelligence officials, especially if those powers come at the cost of the individual freedoms and rights of Australian citizens. There's also a real

possibility that progressively increasing the powers of police and intelligence officials will eventually erode public support for the AFP's and the government's CT measures.

Before an alternative to the current trend of progressively expanding policing powers can be considered, it's necessary to consider the government policy processes that underpin the AFP's strategic policing CT framework. At present, the further evolution of the AFP's strategic responses is inhibited by a less than dynamic cycle of events that reinforce each other through a feedback loop. This policy cycle begins with terrorist organisations innovating in pursuit of their aims and in response to government CT efforts, which subsequently affect terrorism risks.

When the federal government becomes aware of such changes or an increased threat, it looks for a means to respond. The response needs to mitigate the risk of terrorism, but at the political level there's also a drive to demonstrate the government's security credentials to the public, despite the fact that some Australians perceive that as an effort to 'securitise' the nation.

Bureaucrats then look for responses that give government visible demonstrations of their commitment to protecting the community.

Policymakers are strongly attracted to providing new powers (for example, powers to move on and compel the provision of identification at airports) through legislation, new AFP funding, or both. This has certainly been the case for the AFP's response to lone-actor terrorism and the increased use of encryption.

The funding and resources provided for the AFP in new policy measures are generally linked to addressing a specific problem. The AFP's executives can then use the funding only for the purposes for which it was appropriated, which limits their organisational ability to respond nimbly to emerging terrorism trends. While legislative action shows the government's responsiveness, it doesn't necessarily result in proactive terrorism risk mitigation. As highlighted in ASPI's 2018 report, *I can see clearly now! Technological innovation in Australian law enforcement: a case study of anti-money laundering*, law enforcement innovation relies on the ability to monitor what's happening in the operating environment and having the time, space and resources to consider the problem and alternatives.[14]

And then, of course, terrorist organisations continue to innovate in line with local conditions or global trends, which begins the process all over again.

While this cyclical model for CT policy has some benefits for community perceptions of security and the AFP budget, it doesn't guarantee future success. At some point, there must be a limit on how many additional powers can be granted to police in a liberal democracy before democratic freedoms are undermined.

Seen through a security sector reform lens, the AFP's strategic policing appears to be transitioning away from a human-rights-based policing model towards greater securitisation. Oversight of the strategic policing model is arguably decreasing and being made more difficult by a trend in which new legislation to extend police powers is rapidly introduced. The counter-argument here is that the new legislation is passed by a democratically elected parliament, so maybe there's less oversight, but that a level of secrecy is necessary because the threats are so serious and complex. However, given that so much of the AFP's strategic policing CT model relies on a supportive public, perhaps the 'Trust us!' argument is no longer sufficient.

While almost everyone wants to be safe from terrorism, lately it's become apparent that the tangible and intangible costs of the AFP's strategic policing responses to terrorism are rising. At the same time, there appears to be little data to suggest that policing efforts are reinforcing public safety perceptions. This may in some part be causally linked to the way that politicians in Western liberal democracies perpetuate the narrative that we aren't safe.

WHAT NEXT?

It seems clear that the terrorism threat in Australia and to Australians and their interests overseas is enduring and that the current tempo of AFP activity in this space will continue. The AFP and its partners should be congratulated for their CT successes, particularly those since 2014. However, as the terror threat continues to evolve, it's likely that the current government model for enhancing AFP strategic policing through more powers and more resources can't be sustained in the long run.

The Australian Government needs to revisit Australia's Counter-Terrorism Strategy and consider whether its efforts to provide the AFP with new powers have resulted in unnecessary securitisation. It needs to consider what impacts piecemeal legislative amendments may have already had on the nature of policing and the AFP. A clear focus ought to be on whether the balance of the AFP's criminal and administrative interventions is fit for purpose. The outcome of that review could well include the revocation of legislation.

Technology and data are common themes across much of the AFP's CT strategic policing challenge. Those themes call for increased capacity to collect, analyse and operationalise data. However, there are broader questions over whether the nature of strategic policing is changing the force's human resources requirements. It seems very likely that the AFP's strategic policing workforce ought to include increasing numbers of data scientists and analysts, rather than investigators.

NOTES

1 In the context of this paper, 'strategic policing' is defined as those law enforcement contributions to national and domestic security that are focused on the proactive disruption of terrorist plots and the mitigation of terrorism risks. Strategic policing requires police to move beyond arrests and prosecutions to focus on shaping the operating context and mitigating risk.

2 A government agency that directly contributes to protecting Australia's national security.

3 A member of the Australian intelligence community: the Office of National Intelligence, ASIO, the Defence Intelligence Organisation, the Australian Secret Intelligence Service, the Australian Signals Directorate and the Australian Geospatial-Intelligence Organisation.

4 Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet (PM&C), *2017 Independent Intelligence Review*, Australian Government, Canberra, June 2017, online.

5 Australian Federal Police (AFP), *Joint counter terrorism teams*, Australian Government, no date, online.

6 The joint CT teams are partnerships between members from the AFP, state and territory police and ASIO. They aim to work closely with other domestic agencies in the broader intelligence community and with international partners to identify and investigate terrorist activities in Australia (including terrorism financing), with an emphasis on preventive operations.

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8 AFP, *International engagement: 2020 and beyond*, Australian Government, 2017, online.

9 John Coyne, *The future of the Jakarta Centre for Law Enforcement: Indonesia's chance to promote a new era of regional law enforcement*, ASPI, Canberra, February 2017, online; John Coyne, Alexander Vipond, 'Where to next for the JCLEC?', *The Strategist*, 22 December 2016, online.

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PROSPECTS AND CHALLENGES OF PROSECUTING

foreign fighters in Australia

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Since 2011, a large number of individuals known as 'foreign fighters' (FFs), have travelled to Syria and Iraq to fight for or support ISIS and other jihadist terrorist organisations.[1] While estimates vary, reports in 2016 suggested that more than 36,500 fighters from 100 countries had arrived in the region, including 230 from Australia.[2] Due mainly to ISIS's loss of territory, a number of FFs have already returned to their countries of departure, including approximately 40 Australians. Another 80 Australians are believed to still be active in conflict zones.[3] At the time of writing, reports indicate that around 13,000 non-Iraqi FFs and their family members, amounting to 2,000 men and 11,000 women and children, including Australian citizens, have been captured and are being detained in Syria.[4]

In the light of these developments, two questions have been asked in Australia and overseas:

- Can returning fighters be properly tried in national courts?
- Where should fighters currently detained in Syria and Iraq face justice?

INTERNATIONAL INSTRUMENTS RELATING TO FOREIGN FIGHTERS

In 2014, the UN Security Council addressed FFs in its Resolution 2178,[5] which states that UN member states should ensure that they have in place criminal laws that allow them to appropriately prosecute and penalise FFs for the commission of terrorist acts.[6] The need to have strategies in place for 'appropriate prosecution' of FFs was reiterated in 2017 in UN Security Council Resolution 2369.[7] The Security Council therefore obligates member states to put national laws in place and to prosecute FFs, where appropriate, based on those laws.

PROSECUTING FIGHTERS IN AUSTRALIA

In line with those international obligations, the Australian Federal Police (AFP) stresses that the 'preferred option when anybody comes back … [from] fighting in theatre or supporting terrorist organisations in the Middle East is to prosecute them'.[8]

PROSECUTING RETURNEES

In 2014, to increase the prospects of successfully prosecuting FFs, Australia passed specific foreign fighter laws. As a consequence, it's a criminal offence for an Australian citizen or resident to enter a foreign country with the intention of engaging in hostile activity[9] and to engage in hostile activities in a foreign country (referred to as 'foreign incursion offences').[10]
In addition, preparatory acts, including giving or receiving goods and services to promote the commission of a foreign incursion offence, are penalised.[11] It is also illegal to enter or remain in certain declared areas in which a terrorist organisation is engaging in hostile activity, regardless of whether the individual carries out hostile activities during their stay.[12] The Minister for Foreign Affairs can declare certain areas through a legislative instrument if the minister is satisfied that there's a conflict zone and a listed terrorist organisation is engaging in hostile activities. The offence is therefore not based on conducting terrorist activity or travelling to the region with the intent of engaging in terrorism but merely on entering no-go zones. An exception to the criminalisation applies where the travel is for a legitimate purpose recognised in a list of exemptions, including visiting family members, providing humanitarian aid and being involved in broadcasting. At trial, it's for the defence to adduce sufficient evidence to establish a reasonable possibility that the defendant entered a declared area for a legitimate purpose. If that occurs, the prosecution must subsequently disprove that beyond a reasonable doubt.

Returning foreign fighter cases in Australia

Despite the introduced legislation, very few returnees have been charged in Australia and so far no full criminal trial has taken place.[13] Returnees Mehmet Biber and Belal Betka were charged with foreign incursion offences in 2016 and 2017,[14] to which they pleaded guilty in 2018 and 2019, respectively.[15] Biber was sentenced to 4 years and 9 months imprisonment, while Betka's sentence hasn't yet been reported.[16]
In addition to the limited number of arrests and the relatively short sentence imposed, so far no Australian returnees have been charged with principal offences committed overseas, such as murder or arson. This gives rise to the question of why so few people have been charged.

Problems with foreign fighter prosecutions in practice

Trials against FFs are difficult due to evidentiary and practical issues. Where defendants remain silent and family members fail to come forward, convictions will heavily depend on other forms of evidence, such as evidence collected overseas. Foreign evidence may be adduced in a terrorism-related proceeding in Australia if it doesn't have a substantial adverse effect on a fair hearing.[17] Yet, as the AFP points out,

gathering 'foreign evidence is a difficult and complicated process, particularly when evidence is located in an area outside the control of any legitimate government.'[18] Where evidence against a specific accused is gathered by international intelligence agencies, it often originates from unknown sources and is heavily redacted due to security risks. Prosecutions built on international intelligence could violate a defendant's right to a fair hearing based on public evidence.[19]

Other types of evidence, such as photos from a defendant's social media account, may be difficult to obtain from private corporations overseas, and recovering photos or posts may be a lengthy process. A particular problem can arise where chat communications are encrypted and can't be decrypted and read by criminal justice authorities. Even if specific posts can be recovered, they may amount only to circumstantial evidence.

Some cases may require hearing a large number of witnesses from abroad or may involve overseas information requests. Apart from being logistically challenging, these prosecutions may fail when international cooperation fails. Due to the described evidentiary issues, even establishing that an individual was located within the boundaries of a 'declared area' at a specific time has proven problematic in practice in Australia.[20]

Despite those challenges, it can't be overlooked that a number of Western countries have obtained sufficient evidence to allow them to prosecute and convict returnees in a number of cases.[21] Apart from concentrating on terror-related offences, more recent prosecutions in other countries, including Germany and the Netherlands, have started to also focus on principal offences committed abroad, such as murder,[22] and war crimes, including violating the personal dignity of war victims.[23]

THE REPATRIATION AND PROSECUTION OF DETAINED FIGHTERS

While some fighters have returned to Australia and other Western countries, a notable number are detained in Syria or Iraq. Criminal trials against ISIS fighters are taking place in Iraq,[24] but the Syrian Democratic Forces have stated that they have neither the capacity nor the authority to prosecute individuals and have urged states to take back their citizens.[25] Debate has therefore arisen about where those fighters should face justice.

The US standpoint is that FFs should stand trial in their countries of origin—a strategy that's believed to prevent them from returning to the battlefield.[26] That means that Australian fighters should be returned to, investigated and, where appropriate, prosecuted, rehabilitated and reintegrated in Australia.

Yet, perhaps not the least due to the challenges of building a case against FFs, possible fears of a public outcry and the national security risk that unimprisoned returnees may pose, the Australian Government is 'determined to deal with these people as far from [Australia's] shores as possible'.[27] That attitude is in line with the approaches taken by some Western European countries, including Germany, France, the UK and the Netherlands, which are reluctant to assist in the return of their detained citizens, especially adult males, from Iraq and Syria.[28] Yet, it isn't in accordance with international resolutions requiring UN member states to investigate and, where appropriate, fairly prosecute and reintegrate FFs in their country of origin. Thus, Australia and other countries aren't honouring their international obligations in relation to FFs.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The focus in many states is now on managing returning fighters, including the question of what steps to take with detainees in Syria and Iraq. Prosecutions of fighters in Australia and in other states have proven difficult in practice. As a consequence, only a small number of returnees have been charged in Australia. Problems with prosecutions and the prospect that fighters will be able to re-enter the country without being detained may have contributed to Australia's reluctance to repatriate detainees from conflict zones. It can't be overlooked that facilitating the return of extremists to Australia may indeed pose national security risks, as rehabilitation might not be successful in each individual case, but preventing their return might mean that some escape or are released back into the region, with the opportunity to re-join terrorist organisations. This approach is therefore not without security risks for the international community.

The situation isn't an exclusively Australian predicament but also concerns other states from which FFs have departed. It's therefore vital to work together on a global scale and to develop appropriate strategies in order to reduce national and international security risks posed by FFs while also enhancing national compliance with international obligations in this context.

NOTES

1 Reem Ahmed, Daniela Pisoiu, *Foreign fighters: an overview of existing research and a comparative study of British and German foreign fighters*, Institute for Peace Research and Security Policy, University of Hamburg, December 2014, 1.

2 James R Clapper, Director of National Intelligence, 'Statement for the record: Worldwide threat assessment of the US intelligence community, Senate Armed Services Committee', 9 February 2016, 5; Rachel Baxendale, 'Coalition urges Labor, crossbenchers to pass new foreign fighter laws', *The Australian*, 21 July 2019, online.

3 Linda Silmalis, 'Jihadis flood back to "burbs"', *Daily Telegraph*, 21 July 2019.

4 See, for example, Eric Tlozek, 'Australian presumed dead fighting for IS shows up alive two years later in Syrian prison, *ABC News*, 4 September 2019, online; Letta Tayler, *Western Europe must repatriate its ISIS fighters and families*, Human Rights Watch, 21 June 2019, online. It's unclear how many foreign fighters and their family members are being detained in Iraq. It's been reported, however, that in 2018 and the first quarter of 2019 around 514 foreign ISIS defendants had been tried in Iraq and some had been sentenced to death under counterterrorism laws. See Alissa J Rubin, 'France hands ISIS suspects to Iraq, which sentences them to hang', *New York Times*, 31 May 2019, online.

5 The resolution refers to foreign terrorist fighters (FTFs) and defines them as 'individuals who travel to a State other than their States of residence or nationality for the purpose of the perpetration, planning, or preparation of, or participation in, terrorist acts or the providing or receiving of terrorist training, including in connection with armed conflict.' See UN Security Council Resolution 2178, UN Doc. S/RES/2178, 24 September 2014, 1, online.

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10 Criminal Code (Cwlth), section 119.1(2).

11 Criminal Code (Cwlth), section 119.4.

12 Criminal Code (Cwlth), section 119.2.

13 Adam Brookman, who *inter alia* is accused of supporting ISIS by providing medical services, is yet to stand trial. It's been reported that the prosecution intends to call more than 50 witnesses and to introduce evidence relating to Brookman's social media account. See Chip Le Grand, 'Aussie Adam Brookman faces terror charge over Syrian airport attack', *The Australian*, 31 January 2018, online.

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16 David Spicer, 'Mehmet Biber jailed for four years after travelling to Syria to fight with jihadist organisation', *ABC News*, 27 April 2018, online.

17 See *Foreign Evidence Act 1994* (Cwlth), Part 3A.

18 Parliamentary Joint Committee on Intelligence and Security (PJCIS), *Review of the 'declared area' provisions sections 119.2 and 119.3 of the Criminal Code*, report to the Australian Parliament, Canberra, 2018, 20.

19 See also the discussion in Lexie Henderson-Lancett, 'The foreign fighter legislation of 2014—implications for the future of criminal jurisprudence?', *Alternative Law Journal*, 2016, 41(1):48, 50.

20 PJCIS, *Review of the 'declared area' provisions sections 119.2 and 119.3 of the Criminal Code*, 20.

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26 David Wroe, '"Take responsibility" for your Islamic State fighters, America urges Morrison government', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 11 March 2019, online.

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Salafist-jihadism

IN SOUTHEAST ASIA

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The threat of terrorism in Southeast Asia remains high, but, as is the case in Australia, it's neither an existential threat nor even one of the more significant ones facing most people in the region. It is, however, resilient.

Even in southern Thailand and the southern Philippines—the regions most severely affected by terrorism in Southeast Asia—terrorist violence remains but one threat among other forms of violent crime and doesn't begin to approach the level of threat found in conflict-ridden parts of the Middle East and Africa.

While the long-running, largely low-level, insurgencies of the southern Philippines and the deep south of Thailand fuel a steady stream of violence, *jihadi* networks and small groups inspired, directly or indirectly, by Islamic State (IS) and al-Qaeda are the greatest immediate threat, particularly in Malaysia, the Philippines and Indonesia. The precipitating drivers remain local grievances, but individuals and groups tend to become more brazen and less inhibited in using extreme violence when they see themselves as being part of a cosmic struggle and their actions being praised and validated by a global insurgent movement.

The Jemaah Islamiyah (JI) attacks in Bali on 12 October 2002 were a direct result of Indonesian, Malaysian and Filipino fighters travelling to join the conflict in Afghanistan in the 1980s. Those 'Afghani alumni' formed the leadership and core of JI. While most were persuaded that post-Suharto Indonesia was neither the time nor the place for violent jihad, an idealistic and impatient minority disagreed and took it upon themselves to orchestrate a series of suicide attacks with improvised explosive devices (IEDs) throughout the 2000s.

Many attacks in recent years have been inspired by the rise of IS in Syria and Iraq. Some have involved returnees from the fighting in the Middle East, but most have involved people who were unable to travel but were inspired to act in the name of IS at home. Since the devastating defeat of its insurgency in Poso, Central Sulawesi, in 2007, the JI network, in seeking to quietly and carefully rebuild, has avoided provocative violence.

At the same time most, if not all, Patani Malay insurgents from Thailand's deep south and many Moro insurgents in the southern Philippines continue to be driven by local grievances framed in ethnonationalist terms, unlike violent Islamist extremists in peninsular Malaysia and in Indonesia.

The defeat of the IS caliphate project in Syria and Iraq and the interrupted flow of foreign fighters and supporters have brought some respite but by no means the cessation of the threat. The lessons of the Afghanistan conflict and the rise of al-Qaeda in the 1980s are that a relatively small number of foreign fighters travelling to a conflict zone can have a disproportionate influence and that the impact at home might be felt only many years later.

The longer historical experience of Indonesia, and to some extent the Philippines and Malaysia, is that violent extremism is highly social and is prone to being intergenerational. JI in Indonesia arose out of the Darul Islam movement that began in the 1950s and was injected with fresh life in the 1970s and 1980s, partly because of political oppression and a crackdown on militants. JI was inspired by the experience of fighting in Afghanistan in association with al-Qaeda and, while it broke with Darul Islam in 1993, the family and social connections woven through its fabric have their origins in decades of conflict, local grievance, increasing radicalisation and the rise of transnational terrorist networks.

What this means is that neither the end of the IS caliphate nor the arrest and sentencing of thousands of militants and supporters will end the threat or dissipate the social movements involved.

INDONESIA

The tactical response to violent extremism in Indonesia is led by Detachment 88, the specialist Indonesian Police counterterrorism unit better known locally as Densus (a contraction of *Detasemen Khusus*, Special Detachment). The larger strategic response is coordinated by BNPT (*Badan Nasional Penanggulangan Terorisme*, the National Agency for Combating Terrorism).[1] Without relentless intelligence work behind the scenes, and a regular stream of arrests, the threat of terrorism would quickly worsen. And yet policing, prosecution and detention by themselves are unable to eliminate or even greatly diminish the resilient threat posed by violent extremist networks. Real advances will begin to be made only when the cycle of recruitment and radicalisation is interrupted by disengagement from malign networks, individual and collective rehabilitation and the effective re-engagement of former militants with mainstream society. Fortunately, the implications of this challenging dynamic are now widely recognised by experienced counterterrorism leaders in Indonesia, and most of the key actors, including within the government, acknowledge the necessity of a broader approach to preventing and countering violent extremism.

While the present problem largely manifests through individuals and networks linked to IS, many long-term observers, such as Sidney Jones and her colleagues at the Institute for Policy Analysis of Conflict (IPAC), warn that JI, which continues to be inspired by al-Qaeda, is a persistent and powerful radical presence and potentially a longer term danger. Their reasoning, as is unpacked below, is that JI remains a significant future threat precisely because it's a well-disciplined, deeply radical, intergenerational network patiently playing the long game.[2]

Around 800 Indonesians travelled to Syria and Iraq to support the IS caliphate project. Another 400 or so arrived in Turkey *en route* to Syria before being turned back by Turkish authorities. In late 2019, in the wake of the final defeat of the caliphate, around three dozen alleged IS fighters were detained in Syria along with a much larger number of family members—somewhere around 700—separately detained in Syrian displaced persons camps.[3]

Most of the successful and attempted terrorist attacks in Indonesia in recent years have been carried out in the name of IS and have been linked to the peak IS network, Jemaah Ansharut Daulah (JAD). Some have involved returnees, but most were launched by people who had never travelled to the Middle East. Detachment 88 intelligence work has become so effective that larger cells and more ambitious attack plans seldom proceed to fruition without interruption. Consequently, most of the attacks involve either secretive, close-knit cells, such as the three families involved in the Surabaya attacks in May 2018, or lone actors working autonomously and often spontaneously, such as the married couple who attacked General Wiranto with crude knives as he stepped out of his car on a visit to Bantul, west of Jakarta, in October 2019.[4]

The targets of such IS lone-actor attacks have been, for the most part, police or other security personnel. Even when the attacker acts alone, however, there will invariably be social networks of influence and support behind them, at the very least in their online relations. In Indonesia, that network is generally more immediate. And, if the attack involves obtaining a gun or deploying an IED, there's almost always a support group off-stage. Such was the case with the lone suicide bomb attack on police headquarters in Medan, North Sumatra, on 13 November 2019. Within four days of the attack, police arrested 43 suspected JAD militants—20 in North Sumatra and neighbouring Aceh, 22 in Java and 1 in Kalimantan. A further two people thought to be the bombmakers died in a police raid.[5]

Detachment 88 has become enormously effective in detecting and disrupting terrorist plots. Its work has led to the arrest of more than 1,400 suspected terrorists since the formation of the specialist counterterrorism police unit 15 years ago. Around 808 were arrested between 2015 and 2018, and 376 arrests were made in 2018 alone.[6] A further 24 alleged militants were killed in counterterrorism operations in 2018. The vast majority of those arrested were successfully prosecuted and sentenced.

This success, however, has generated its own problems. Indonesia has a relatively large prison population of more than 250,000 detainees in almost 500 prisons. That population is roughly twice the design capacity of the prisons holding it, resulting in a prisoner to prison guard ratio of around 55 to 1.[7]

Historically, terrorism prisoners have been scattered throughout the Indonesian archipelago, but more recently there's been a focus on concentrating them in specialist facilities. By October 2018, the Directorate General of Corrections, working with experts in Detachment 88, had placed 252 IS-inspired terrorism detainees in three maximum security prisons. The longer term plan is for most terrorism detainees to be kept in a new, specially constructed, prison on the prison island of Nusa Kambangan, near Cilicap, off the south coast of Central Java.

These changes come about because of growing concerns about terrorism detainees radicalising other prisoners and being free to operate as leaders and recruiters from within their prison cells, exploiting lax visiting rules and using smuggled mobile phones and computers.

Indonesia lacks an extensive and suitably resourced parole program, and in-prison rehabilitation programs for terrorist detainees have until recently been limited to small pilot projects initiated by civil society organisations. BNPT has only recently initiated a 'deradicalisation' program for around 500 terrorism detainees in a specialist facility in Sentul, Bogor, West Java. BNPT has also initiated a series of rehabilitation programs for women and children sent back from Turkey.[8]

These initiatives represent the most significant engagement with rehabilitation programs so far in Indonesian. Like similar programs elsewhere, however, they struggle with problems in assessing risk and progress in rehabilitation and have experienced some significant failures together with some promising signs of individuals disengaging from violent extremist networks.

The greatest danger facing Indonesia at the moment is from radicalised individuals in networks inspired by IS, whether linked to JAD or operating separately. The vast majority of the larger, more sophisticated and ambitious terrorism plots are likely to continue to be foiled by Detachment 88 due to the work of some of the best and most experienced police counterterrorism intelligence teams in the world, but lone actors remain a perennial threat. But, as noted above, JI remains a significant

concern not least because it has a large, disciplined, well-organised network of more than 2,000 activists. This means that the JI network is as large today as it's ever been and has now recovered from its decimation in 2007, when its campaign of armed clashes with police in Poso, Central Sulawesi, led to a crushing counterinsurgency campaign assisted by the Indonesian military and to the death or capture of its senior leadership.

By publicly disavowing violence and focusing on *dakwah* (proselytising) as a peaceful pathway to eventually establishing an Islamic state, JI has broadened its base of support and carved out a public space for open campaigning. Leaders such as Abu Rusdan, who was sentenced to three and half years in jail in the mid-2000s for his activities with JI, appear regularly on television and campaign on university campuses and in madrasahs, mosques and public venues in the name of outreach organisations such as Majelis Dakwah Umat Islam.[9] IPAC has documented JI's efforts to recruit strategically important graduates and professionals.[10]

One of the reasons that JI continues to be considered a potential security threat is that it appears to be playing a double game. While publicly disavowing violence, it has ongoing links with weapons procurement and paramilitary training. Sometimes referred to as 'Neo-JI', the network that reinvented itself over the past decade has established Asykari military wings across Java and in southern Sumatra.[11]

In June 2019, Para Wijayanto, a JI sniper and bombmaker trained in Mindanao and Poso, who had been on the run since 2003 and who was thought to have been acting since 2008 as JI's true emir, or leader, was arrested in Bekasi on the eastern edge of greater Jakarta. Para had been responsible for sending dozens of JI recruits to train with al-Qaeda affiliate Jabhat al-Nusra in Syria in six waves between 2013 and 2018, as part of a 'grand strategy' of quietly building a skilled and disciplined paramilitary force even while advocating against the immediate use of violence within Indonesia. Police arrested 14 returnees in May 2019, and those arrests led to Para being tracked down. A total of 34 suspected JI militants were arrested in May and June 2019. At the same time, it was discovered that JI had interests in palm oil plantations that generated a substantial revenue stream to finance its operations.[12]

JI has been running a highly disciplined network, both above and below ground, that answers to no one, but the group's nonviolent extremism points to a wider problem of exclusionary, sectarian, extremism that its public *dakwah* campaigns have contributed to. Hateful extremism—nonviolent extremism that incites hate and demonises minorities—has been a growing force in Indonesia for decades and is a more immediate problem than violent extremism for most Indonesians. It manifests in groups such as the vigilante militia Islamic Defenders Front (FPI—Front Pembela Islam). Since its formation in August 1998, in the turbulent wake of Suharto's sudden resignation in May, FPI has grown to a network of several hundred thousand activists across Java. Working with hateful extremist groups has proven irresistible for some political actors, most notably retired general Prabowo Subianto[13]. Prabowo's camp actively supported the '212 movement' campaigns against the Chinese Christian governor of Jakarta, 'Ahok' (Basuki Tjahaja Purnama) in 2016 and 2017, led by FPI and building on a virulently sectarian campaign against rival presidential candidate Joko Widodo (Jokowi) in 2014 that was partially reprised in the lead-up to simultaneous parliamentary and presidential polls on 17 April 2019[14].

Fearing, apparently for good reason, that violent extremists would seize the opportunity to attack around the time of the 22 May official announcement of the poll results, Detachment 88 moved to arrest 31 suspected terrorists belonging to five networks affiliated with IS. The unit seized 11 fully-assembled IEDs containing TATP, IS's explosive of choice.[15]

Despite those arrests, energetic riots on 21 and 22 May in Central and West Jakarta followed Prabowo's emphatic rejection of the poll results (despite losing to Jokowi by a wide margin of 44.5% to 55.5%). FPI activists were involved in the riots but the network did not appear to be in control of what happened[16]. Eight people were killed and more than 700 injured in the worst political violence in Indonesia since the fall of the Suharto regime in May 1998. One man was reported to have died in hospital of a gunshot wound but the cause of death of the other seven was not revealed. Security Minister Wiranto declared that 'paid thugs' had instigated the violence—claims backed up by police chief Tito Karnavian in their joint press conference. Envelopes of cash were reportedly seized from some rioters, along with weapons such two pistols and an M4 carbine semi-automatic rifle. As he showed the military issue M4 to journalists Tito explained: "This gun comes with a silencer so if you shoot at the masses, no one will hear. Based on our intelligence, the targets were government and military officials as well as protesters, and the aim was to create martyrs".[17] He said that he had ordered his men to use only rubber bullets rather than live rounds when they confronted rioters, in order to avoid police being blamed for any deaths or injuries resulting from gunshot wounds. Tito was praised for his measured handling of the rioting, which was contained to two days.

Even more remarkably, police claimed that former army general Kivlan Zen, a key ally of Prabowo, and early patron of FPI, had attempted to orchestrate the assassination of Jokowi's key security officials, including fellow former generals Security Minister Wiranto, Maritime Minister Luhut Pandjaitan, National Intelligence Agency chief Budi Gunawan and Presidential Intelligence Adviser, and former police general, Gories Mere. Kivlan, who had been arrested on charges of illegal possession of weapons, denies any knowledge of the alleged plot, and the affair remains shrouded in mystery.[18]

In a surprising move, Prabowo was appointed Minister of Defence when Jokowi's new cabinet was announced in late October. Not only does the inclusion of his rival in the cabinet consolidate Jokowi's coalition in parliament, but it also reduces the risk of political actors aligned with Prabowo succumbing to the temptation to employ hateful, and possibly violent, extremism to sabotage the government.

Tito Karnavian was made Minister for Home Affairs, taking him out of the chain of control of policing, but not before he had vastly increased the size of Detachment 88 and expanded its operations to every province. As minister, he's now responsible for the strategically important work of drafting and implementing new security legislation. His former deputy in Detachment 88 and the head of the police Criminal Investigation Agency, General Idham Aziz, replaces him as Chief of Police.[19]

In the same month that those announcements were made, Detachment 88 arrested a further 40 suspected terrorists planning bombings involving at least four suicide bombers.[20] And, as mentioned above, a further 43 were arrested in November.[21] As in most arrests in recent years, the suspects are alleged to be members of JAD.

Indonesian counterterrorism is now better resourced and led than ever before, and the important work of rehabilitation has finally commenced in earnest, but the threat remains resilient and shows no signs of abating.

MALAYSIA

Malaysia is but one-tenth the size of Indonesia and has so far suffered no significant international terrorist attacks. Nevertheless, it faces a level of threat from terrorist groups that's proportionally every bit as great as that facing Indonesia. Since 2013, Malaysian authorities led by the very experienced counterterrorism division within the Special Branch of the Royal Malaysian Police have foiled 26 planned terror attacks. This has led to the arrest of more than 460 terrorism suspects, of whom a surprisingly large portion, around 131, were foreigners from 21 countries, mostly from neighbouring Indonesia and the Philippines (47).[22] By the end of July 2019, the number arrested had risen to 519.[23]

Social surveys have consistently revealed that young Malays have become radicalised to a significantly greater degree than Indonesian youth. A recent survey found that 21% of Muslim university students felt that terrorism was 'an effective strategy to achieve an objective', and around half of those surveyed acknowledged that it would be possible for them to develop violent radical ideas that might result in violent acts.[24]

As in Indonesia, the main focus of concern in Malaysia lies with those inspired by IS, including the 102 or more Malaysians who travelled to Syria to join IS since 2013. It's thought that at least 40 have been killed in combat, including nine as suicide bombers. Despite concerns over the risk that might be posed by IS fighters and supporters returning from Syria, Malaysia remains determined to repatriate its citizens, to prosecute them and to seek to rehabilitate them where possible. So far, 11 Malaysians have been repatriated and are being processed. A further 39 detained in Syria, out of a total of at least 65, have reached out to the Malaysian Government and requested repatriation.

Authorities worry not just about those who have travelled to Syria and returned, but also about those who had aspired to join the caliphate and are now frustrated that they were left behind. Malaysia, even more than Indonesia, struggles with a febrile environment of sectarian sentiment, much of it openly propagated through religious lectures and training activities. In this context, the IS *takfiri* judgemental narrative of anti-Shia, anti-Christian and anti-mainstream Muslim sentiment remains an ever-present facilitator of radicalisation, even though so far the Special Branch has been able to prevent any successful attacks.

In May 2019, the Special Branch announced that it had foiled a wave of intended large-scale attacks and assassinations of prominent 'anti-Muslim' personalities by IS 'wolf packs' and planned for the first week of Ramadan. One Malaysian, two Rohingya and an Indonesian were arrested in greater Kuala Lumpur and in Terengganu on 5 and 7 May as police hunted three other men—two Malaysians and an Indonesian—suspected of planning attacks.[25]

The thwarted attacks were seen as a worrying development in which IS played into local anxiety and sought to engineer sectarian violence while using foreign militants in Malaysia. Following the arrest of 16 suspects—12 Indonesians, three Malaysians and one Indian—counterterrorism chief Ayob Khan Pitchay observed in September that IS capitalises on the perception that 'Islam is under threat in Malaysia' and that the new government is 'not doing enough to protect Muslims.'[26]

On 24 May, two men were arrested after making TATP IEDs and testing them near their homes. This brought to a total of 80 the number of suspected terrorists arrested in Malaysia in the previous 12 months.

A major source of concern in Malaysia lies in militants travelling between the eastern Malaysian state of Sabah, on the island of Borneo, and the adjacent Sulu archipelago in the Philippines, which is the home territory of the IS-aligned Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG).

THE PHILIPPINES

The activities of foreign fighters in the Philippines remain an ongoing concern amid fears that the collapse of the IS caliphate could put even more focus on less well-governed parts of western Mindanao as safe havens for IS supporters. The Philippines' problems with terrorism are largely homegrown and relate to long-running problems with insurgent violence in western Mindanao and the Sulu archipelago. The presence of a relatively small number of foreign fighters, however, has been an important element in connecting local grievances with global struggles, first with al-Qaeda and now with IS. Groups such as the ASG were formed by Filipinos returning from fighting and training with al-Qaeda in Afghanistan in the 1980s and early 1990s. It appears that a surprisingly small number of Filipinos have travelled to fight with either IS or al-Qaeda in Syria. The reasons for this, as with so many regional variations around the world (such as, for example, IS's limited penetration in India or the absence of attacks in Italy), aren't clear. Distance should be no more a limiting factor for Filipinos than it is for Indonesians or Malaysians. Cost might be a factor for poorer Filipinos, but the prospective sending networks are relatively well cashed up from criminal activities such as kidnapping for ransom. Officials in Manila, as in New Delhi, might wish to claim credit for lower numbers of attacks due to better policies and management, but that's scarcely plausible. A more likely explanation is that Filipino extremists find themselves busy exploiting opportunities in poorly governed spaces close at hand without having to travel to the Middle East.

Nevertheless, the Syrian connection through Indonesians, Malaysians and foreign fighters from further afield has become strong, particularly with IS.

When four major *jihadi* groups, including the notoriously ill-disciplined piracy cum kidnapping-for-ransom gang, ASG, declared their allegiance to IS in mid-2014, it was seen more as an exercise in branding than as a significant strategic realignment. The siege of Marawi that erupted on 23 May 2017 and continued for five bloody months, resulting in the deaths of at least 980 militants (including at least 44 foreigners), 165 security personnel and 87 civilians, made it clear that the IS connection had, in fact, substantially changed the nature of the insurgent conflict.[27]

When the siege of Marawi began, the Armed Forces of the Philippines confidently declared that the conflict would be ended within days. In the end, it was concluded only after the nearly total destruction of the largest Muslim-majority city in the Philippines. Months of artillery barrages and aerial bombardment left the centre of Marawi looking like post-IS Mosul. More than 350,000 inhabitants were forced out of the city, and most continue to live in squalid displaced persons camps. The Army declared IS to have been comprehensively beaten, but the structural damage, both physical and social, inflicted on the city of Marawi seems certain to sow a bitter harvest of intergenerational radicalisation.

And, while many IS-aligned leaders were either killed or arrested, many leaders and fighters escaped the city before the siege ended and continue to recruit, campaign and launch attacks. Over the past 18 months, those attacks have taken on the horrible form of suicide bombings—a mode of attack new to the Philippines but well developed by IS. The Philippines is awash with small arms, including military assault rifles, that are a major, but as yet largely unrealised, threat to its neighbours, Indonesia and Malaysia. As a result, IED attacks, including suicide bombings, had been relatively uncommon.

Since the siege of Marawi, at least 100 more foreigners have made their way, often via Sabah, to join the IS fighters in the jungle. The introduction of suicide bombings has come via foreign fighters linked to IS. In July 2018, a turning point came when an explosives-packed van driven by a Moroccan militant exploded outside a security checkpoint in the town of Lamitan on the island of Basilan, killing him and 10 others, including six Malaysians, in what's thought to have been the first suicide bombing in the Philippines.[28]

A twin suicide bombing of a cathedral in Jolo shocked a nation long accustomed to violence. On 27 January 2019, one week after the autonomy plebiscite was held to support the creation of the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region (an initiative reviled by IS militants), the Cathedral of Our Lady of Mount Carmel was rocked by two powerful blasts in the midst of Sunday mass. The bombs killed 22 people and wounded more than 100. DNA tests eventually confirmed early reports that the suicide bombers were Rullie Rian Zeke and Ulfah Handayani Saleh, an Indonesian husband and wife linked to JAD. They had apparently spent almost a year in Turkey after travelling there in 2016 with their three children while attempting to enter Syria and join the IS caliphate. They had been arrested by Turkish authorities and repatriated to Indonesia in 2017. They underwent a brief rehabilitation program in Indonesia before travelling to the Philippines and becoming the first deportees to have been known to be involved in a major attack.[29]

As in Indonesia, IS is the source of the greatest immediate terrorist threat facing the Philippines. It has united multiple militant and insurgent groups and given them renewed focus and discipline. But it isn't the only threat. Not all of the insurgent groups in the southern Philippines have sworn allegiance to IS. Some remain independent, and others maintain links with Indonesia's revitalised JI network, which has decades of connections, often reinforced through marriage, with Mindanao.

Another long-established source of threat is the Maoist New People's Army (NPA), which has both political supporters and fighters spread across the Philippines archipelago, drawn to its championing of the poor and the downtrodden. The recently retired Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces of the Philippines, General Rey Guerrero, has stated that the NPA commands around 3,700 fighters.[30] Although involved in numerous violent incidents over its 50-year history, often linked to intimidation and revenue raising, it hasn't been involved in any major attacks in the past four years. Like JI in the Philippines and Indonesia, however, the NPA remains a latent threat with considerable potential.

The existence of the NPA also serves as reminder that Salafist-jihadism isn't the only form of political extremism and toxic nationalism with the potential to threaten society in Southeast Asia.

MYANMAR

In Myanmar, ultranationalism in the form of radical Buddhist groups such as Ma Ba Tha (the Organisation for the Protection of Race and Religion / the Patriotic Association of Myanmar) is the most significant immediate extremist threat. Emerging in January 2014 to provide a vital source of social and cultural support for hardliners within Myanmar, the hateful extremism of Ma Ba Tha, which has links to the Islamophobic 969 movement and charismatic Buddhist monk and hate-preacher Ashin Wirathu, has been directing its sectarian hatred primarily against Rohingya Muslims in Rakhine (formerly Arakan) State.[31]

The Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA) emerged in 2013 in the wake of the 2012 Rakhine State riots, in which at least 80 people were killed and 100,000 displaced. In August 2017, it claimed responsibility for coordinated attacks on police posts and an army base. It also claimed to have carried out an ambush in the village of Turaing in January 2018. Despite its claim of campaigning to liberate the Rohingya from Burmese oppression, it has very limited support among the Rohingya and is poorly equipped and organised. ARSA, nevertheless, has the potential to emerge as a shadowy insurgency much like that involving Patani militants in southern Thailand, but conditions in Rakhine State make that unlikely in the short to medium term.[32]

The greater counterterrorism concern about Myanmar is that ARSA's presence will be used to justify the ongoing persecution and ethnic cleansing of Rohingya, leading not only to widespread suffering, human rights abuses and the flight of more than 900,000 Rohingya to neighbouring Bangladesh, but also to the eventual radicalisation of some Rohingya youth. If even a tiny proportion of the 1 million Rohingya refugees living in squalid conditions in Cox's Bazar in southern Bangladesh should succumb to targeted recruitment and radicalisation, there would be far-reaching consequences for Bangladesh, Myanmar and the Rohingya diaspora, including the 60,000 living in Malaysia.

THAILAND

When gunmen killed at least 15 people at a checkpoint manned largely by village defence volunteers in Muang Yala District in Yala Province, Thailand, on 5 November 2019, the bloody carnage was shocking even for a region accustomed to a seemingly endless series of attacks since the Patani Malay insurgency reignited in 2001. Most of the attacks have been small-scale affairs primarily targeting police and military personnel. This attack, however, was the largest since 2001. It involved, it's thought, 20 assailants in a sophisticated coordinated attack in which many of the victims were local Patani Malay Muslims. Trees were felled to block roads and a power pylon was bombed ahead of the attack, and the assailants made their getaway with weapons seized from the checkpoint.

The insurgent conflict has claimed 7,000 lives since 2001, but for several years there had been a steady decline in violence. In 2018, the annual death toll had fallen to 218, which was the lowest since 2004 (against a high of 892 in 2007) and, until 5 November 2019, the country had been relatively peaceful. The attack is thought to have been retaliation for the death in custody of insurgent suspect Abdulloh Isomuso on 20 July. It might also be that the highly secretive Barisan Revolusi Nasional Malay–Patani (the most powerful insurgent group) was aiming to boost its stocks ahead of long-anticipated peace negotiations with the government.

Whatever the reason behind this awful upswing in violence, it's a reminder that this complex ethnonationalist insurgency won't be resolved without deep commitment from the government in Bangkok. So far, it has avoided the fate of the Moro insurgency in southern Mindanao and hasn't been co-opted by global *Salafi-jihadi* elements, but the longer it's allowed to run on without resolution of the underlying grievances, the greater the danger that IS, al-Qaeda or some other globalising extremist network will find traction with a new generation of insurgents.

The risk of that occurring is compounded by the increasing presence in Thailand of the sort of Buddhist ultranationalist extremism that has taken hold in Myanmar. The arrests of Thai Patani Malay militants in Special Branch counterterrorism raids in Malaysia in recent years suggests that groups like IS are beginning to make small inroads into the troubles in Thailand's deep south. Malaysia's own security challenges, and the porous borders it shares with both Thailand and the Philippines, mean that both the Thai authorities and Malaysia's Special Branch risk being caught by surprise.

SINGAPORE

Even in the tightly managed city-state of Singapore, where social media activity is closely monitored for signs of extremist involvement, IS influence remains a threat. For example, one or more Singaporeans were among the foreign fighters caught up in the siege of Marawi in mid-2017.[33] Even more remarkable is the story of Rasidah Mazlan. The 62-year-old Singaporean woman, a production technician, was one of three Singaporeans identified in 2019 as being cultivated by IS supporters via social media. One 40-year-old man was arrested under the Internal Security Act in January, and Rasidah and a 39-year-old man were placed under restriction orders.[34] Singapore is arguably better positioned to deal with the threat of terrorism than any other nation in Southeast Asia through the Internal Security Act and comprehensive programs such as the community-based Religious Rehabilitation Group, but it too isn't immune from the insidious and resilient threat of radicalisation.

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After Marawi:

LESSONS, ROOT CAUSES, THE FUTURE

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The most overt manifestation of terrorism in Southeast Asia in recent years was undoubtedly the siege of Marawi in the southern Philippines by local terror groups, including the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG), the Maute Group and Ansar Khalifa Philippines, which have pledged allegiance to Islamic State (IS). More than a thousand people—mostly terrorists and security forces but also at least 47 civilians—died in the five-month siege, and almost 400,000 residents were displaced.[1] What started as a local security problem quickly became a regional problem with global implications, in part due to the presence of foreign terrorist fighters (FTFs), who looked to the Philippines after opportunities to join IS in Syria and Iraq diminished. It's now estimated that the siege of Marawi featured an estimated 40 FTFs from 12 different countries in and outside the region, supplementing more than 1,000 local terrorists.[2]

AFTER MARAWI

While Marawi was a wake-up call about the potential for significant terrorist violence in the Philippines, it wasn't the beginning of a new era or the conclusion of one. Terrorist groups in the Philippines have long been responsible for bombings and attacks on civilian targets, including most prominently the ASG's 2004 bombing of *Superferry 14*, which killed 116 people in what's considered the deadliest terrorist attack in the Philippines to date, after the Marawi siege.[3]

GLOBAL AND REGIONAL TERRORIST NETWORKS AND FOREIGN TERRORIST FIGHTERS

One indicator of the seriousness of the threat posed by FTFs from outside the region after Marawi was a suicide bombing in July 2018 by Abu Khatir al-Maghribi, a German-Moroccan dual national, who detonated a vehicle-borne improvised explosive device at a security checkpoint in Lamitan Basilan, killing 10 people.[4] Other incidents included the arrest of a Spaniard in Basilan with bombmaking materials and an Egyptian with $19,000 in cash on his way to Basilan.[5]

The region has also witnessed increasing cooperation between local groups at the national and regional levels after Marawi, including with global terrorist networks. This intensified cooperation has largely taken place through social media and encrypted messaging applications, including with the involvement of Southeast Asian FTFs in Syria or Iraq—members of the infamous Katibah Nusantara (the Malay Archipelago Unit of IS)—and through the physical presence of FTFs in the southern Philippines. ASPI's 2018 *Counterterrorism yearbook* featured an excellent article that stated:

> Foreign fighters may bring some technical expertise, but the reason that they're so important—especially in the Philippines—is that they can bridge parochial divides and rivalries.[6]

This has also been illustrated by previous rivals ASG and the Maute Group setting aside differences and joining forces to 'conquer' Marawi City.

TARGETING OF PLACES OF WORSHIP

Another prominent example of how local groups continue to cooperate with regional and global networks after Marawi was a major terrorist incident on 27 January 2019 in Jolo on Mindanao in the Philippines, when two suicide bombers detonated themselves in the Roman Catholic Mount Carmel Cathedral during Sunday services, killing 23 people and wounding more than 100.[7] The attack was initially attributed to the IS-affiliated ASG, but it was later discovered that the suicide bombers were an Indonesian couple—so-called 'frustrated travellers'—who tried to join IS in Syria in 2016 but were arrested in Turkey and sent back to Indonesia in 2017.[8] They were reportedly recruited by Hatib Sawadjaan, the emir of IS Sulu.[9] The UN Security Council's Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team on Da'esh, Al-Qaida and associated individuals and entities, in its July 2019 report, stated that, in the light of this attack, as well as other similar attacks in Indonesia and Sri Lanka, the targeting of places of worship in Southeast Asia 'may prove to be a trend in IS operations'.[10]

A SURGE IN SUICIDE BOMBINGS

Other suicide attacks in the Philippines include the Indanan, Sulu, bombing in June 2019, which involved the first known Filipino suicide bomber, Norman Lasuca, alongside a second bomber who is yet to be identified but suspected to be an FTF.[11] Another bombing in Indanan, in September 2019, involved a female ASG member.[12] The head of the Philippine Institute for Peace, Violence and Terrorism Research, Rommel Banlaoi, attributed the 'spike' in suicide bombings in the Philippines after Marawi to the emergence and influence of IS in the Philippines.[13] Philippines security officials also confirmed that at least seven FTFs were training local militants for suicide attacks.[14]

RENEWED CLASHES, SUCCESSOR GROUPS AND 'OTHER' GROUPS

Renewed clashes took place in 2019, mostly between the government and the ASG or remnants of the Maute Group. According to the UN Security Council's Monitoring Team, 'violence in the southern Philippines linked to ASG remained steady for the first half of 2019' and 'Philippine security forces frequently engage ASG and regularly report clashes causing casualties on both sides.'[15] While it's true that the Maute Group was largely defeated after the Marawi siege—all of the seven Maute brothers were killed—there are already reports of its members regrouping and the formation of a successor group called the 'Turaifie Group' after its leader, Abu Turaifie.[16] Other reports claim that Abu Dar is now the leader of the remnants of the Maute Group.[17]

Other terrorist groups still active in Mindanao, including the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters (BIFF), have broken ties with the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) because of their dissent from the ongoing peace negotiations between the MILF and the Philippines Government. Reportedly, BIFF professed its allegiance to IS as early as 2014.[18] Another group, unaffiliated with IS or al-Qaeda, is the New People's Army (NPA), the armed wing of the underground Communist Party of the Philippines. The NPA has been on US and EU terrorist lists for many years, but was included in the Philippines national terrorist list only in December 2017.[19] Unlike other terrorist groups, the NPA is thought to be more centrally organised, and is understood to have a fighting force of 3,700 members.[20]

ONGOING RECRUITMENT AND THE CRIME–TERROR NEXUS

A recent news report by *al-Jazeera* stressed that anti-government sentiment is high among those displaced due to the Marawi crisis and that there have been indications of ongoing (successful) recruitment efforts by extremist groups inside camps for the displaced. It was reported that the sign-up bonus is between $390 to $1,000.[21]

Some members of terrorist groups—especially the ASG and the Maute Group—or those affiliated with them are primarily motivated by criminal profits (such as from kidnapping for ransom, drug or arms trafficking and people smuggling), rather than aspirations for a 'caliphate'.[22] Proceeds from those crimes could be used to pay for salaries of new recruits and weapons. This is where a strong crime–terror nexus can be found in the Philippines, and there's a nexus with maritime security issues as well, especially in the Sulu and Celebes seas between Malaysia and Indonesia.

END OF THE MARTIAL LAW

The Martial Law in Mindanao which is currently in its third year is set to end on 31 December 2019. It was confirmed on 10 December 2019 by a spokesperson of President Duterte that it will not be extended for another year.[23] Neither the end of the Martial Law, nor the end of the Marawi siege or the death of some leaders of local terrorist groups will resolve the threat of terrorism in Mindanao, which is far from over until the root causes are addressed.

ADDRESSING THE ROOT CAUSES

The issues of terrorism and violent extremism relate in part to underlying grievances and conditions that remain largely unaddressed. Some grievances identified by UN Women include dissatisfaction with governance, a perceived lack of respect for local religions and cultures, and anger over a lack of economic and social opportunities.[24] Other grievances relate specifically to the aftermath of the Marawi siege, including the perception that some civilian casualties and extensive property destruction weren't justified as 'collateral damage' in air strikes directed at suspected militants.[25] As in other places, collateral damage has proven to be a successful recruitment narrative for IS and other terrorist groups.

THE PEACE PROCESS AND THE BANGSAMORO ORGANIC LAW

There's been some progress in the broader peace process in the south of the Philippines with the establishment of the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM) through the ratification of the Bangsamoro Organic Law (BOL) in 2019.[26] The implementation of the BOL could signal that an end might not be far off for the decades-long conflict between the MILF and the government. That conflict has resulted in a state of lawlessness that terror groups—often splinter groups of the MILF—have successfully exploited.

Empowering local communities and leaders in Mindanao, giving them more autonomy, ending a protracted state of martial law and establishing a fair and transparent rule of law will be important assets in the prevention and countering of terrorism and violent extremism. Recently, it was reported that the MILF was starting to work together with the Armed Forces of the Philippines to capture IS-affiliated militants.[27] However, another author made a valid point recently in an article in *The Diplomat*:

> As MILF wasn't the sole perpetrator of regional violence, a lasting peace for Mindanao cannot be predicated on a peace agreement with them alone. The path toward lasting peace in Bangsamoro and the wider Mindanao is only just beginning with the establishment of BARMM.[28]

NATIONAL ACTION PLAN ON PREVENTING AND COUNTERING VIOLENT EXTREMISM

Another hopeful step towards addressing underlying grievances and conditions conducive to the spread of terrorism and violent extremism is the Philippines National Action Plan on Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism, which promotes a 'whole of nation' approach.[29] The plan focuses on participatory governance; infrastructure; human development and poverty reduction; economic development; and security, justice, and peace. The adoption of such a plan is in line with recommendations from the UN Secretary-General in his Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism (2015) which was adopted by the UN General Assembly in 2016. The UN Office on Drugs and Crime and other UN agencies provided technical inputs to the Philippines while the plan was being drafted.

COLLABORATION WITH CIVIL SOCIETY

Ensuring that partnerships and synergies are created between the government and civil society is an important aspect of effective P/CVE programming. It was recently reported that martial law in the southern Philippines 'makes for a challenging environment for NGOs to operate' and that 'strengthening a harmonious and engaged civil society and military relationship is vital to securing peace and stability in Bangsamoro.'[30] As a neutral and impartial partner, the UN can play a key role in those efforts by drawing on the expertise of its various agencies. Part of the effort needs to include building the independence and neutrality of civil society, while at the same time building the awareness and capacity of government to enable and encourage harmonious and meaningful partnerships with civil society. The lack of a healthy relationship between local and national security service providers (police, military) and civil society stakeholders and local communities has proven to be one of the main contributing factors to terrorist organisations finding recruits in many countries worldwide.[31]

GENDER DIMENSIONS

A gender-sensitive approach must also be taken when establishing trust-building activities. UN Women has conducted an important research project—a series of 'listening processes'—which started in September 2017, and one of its major findings was that women noticed early warning signs of an upcoming conflict in Marawi in the weeks before the crisis started, including through chat and text messages.[32] One of the conclusions that can be drawn from the findings is that, if women would have been more trusting of authorities and empowered to act, they could have notified relevant authorities.

THE RECONSTRUCTION OF MARAWI CITY

The reconstruction of Marawi is making some progress, but much more help is needed. According to the Asian Development Bank, an estimated US$1.5 billion is needed for the rehabilitation of the city.[33] Recent reports estimate that there are still between 66,000 and 100,000 people displaced, of whom 4,500 stay in evacuation centres; the others stay with relatives.[34]

The establishment of a new 10-hectare military base in Marawi, instead of homes for the displaced, has been criticised as not contributing to trust-building efforts and risks fuelling existing grievances. Reportedly, a community leader, the Sultan of Marawi, Abdul Hamidullah Atar, has warned that the construction of the base might 'provoke more resentment' and 'cause extremism to multiply'.[35] Another grievance relates to the demolition of homes in Marawi City without the consent of their (displaced) owners.[36]

It was recently reported that a new Bill was proposed in the Philippines' Congress: House Bill no. 3543, or the 'Marawi Siege Victims Compensation Act'. The Bill is still under consideration.[37]

THE REHABILITATION AND REINTEGRATION OF FIGHTERS

It should be recognised, however, that some steps have been taken by the Government of the Philippines that could prove to be an effective start towards reconciliation, including the recently launched program to integrate former fighters into the community and provide them with socio-economic assistance, education or training, and health benefits. This is mainly targeted towards former MILF combatants,[38] but also those who joined more extremist groups involved in the Marawi siege, such as the Maute Group.[39]

A valid point is that 'the reintegration of former violent extremists into their communities, as opposed to incarcerating them, minimises the chance of in-prison radicalisation and recruitment.'[40] On the other hand, there are noted downsides to related programs, including that *de facto* amnesty may be granted to violent extremists and not only to those who have committed minor offences. An environment of impunity for terrorist offenders needs to be avoided for obvious reasons. In addition, from a more practical point of view, it's difficult to assess whether an individual is indeed a member or former member of a violent extremist group or is just claiming to be so in order to obtain socio-economic assistance. This then raises questions about the fairness of assisting former violent extremists over law-abiding citizens in need of socio-economic assistance.[41]

More recently, a Bill was proposed to the House of Representatives in the Philippines: House Bill no. 4585 on 'Establishing the Program on Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism and Appropriating Funds Therefor'. The Bill would seek to encourage people engaged in violent extremism to return to mainstream society and become productive citizens, providing a legal basis and funding for government agencies and local government units to implement return, reform and reintegration efforts. One of the aims of the Bill is also to establish linkages with relevant NGOs or civil society organisations.[42]

CONCLUSIONS

Based on our analysis of the situation of terrorism and violent extremism in the Philippines after Marawi, especially in the Mindanao region, we conclude that, while there have been some notable achievements and successes, there's still a lot of work that needs to be done to address the underlying causes that led to the siege. The establishment of the BARMM and the adoption of the BOL are key achievements that will provide less rationale for groups and communities to engage in armed conflict with the authorities. That said, many underlying issues remain to be addressed, in part because terrorist groups in Mindanao aren't part of the peace process and subsequent agreements.

Importantly, additional grievances and root causes remain, including poverty; unemployment; organised crime activity; lack of access to justice and good governance; prolonged displacement; gender inequality; discrimination; and other human rights issues. Those problems may lead young men and women, often marginalised members of society, to join or consider joining terrorist groups. These factors are in turn exacerbated by the influence of global and regional terrorist networks such as IS, which are using the situation to advance their ideology.

A hard security-sector approach alone won't solve these issues, despite the fact that a military approach was used to liberate Marawi. It's now time to put additional effort into addressing underlying factors to prevent a 'Marawi 2.0' from occurring. The upcoming adoption of the National Action Plan on P/CVE, as well House Bill 4585, should be important for addressing root causes. Ideally, their adoption will lead to meaningful strategies and concrete steps to enhance collaboration between civil society and the security agencies, make a difference in preventing vulnerable and at-risk communities from being recruited, and lead to the disengagement of those already recruited.

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Syria

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In 2019, the Syrian Government inched nearer to victory over the eight-year Syrian uprising with the help of Iran, Russia and myriad foreign militias. Nonetheless, the conflict continued to provide the conditions in which proscribed terrorist organisations flourish. The regime's pyrrhic victory is coming at an enormous political and human cost, while the very real socio-economic and political pressures that fuelled the uprising have remained unresolved. These dynamics will continue to fuel sympathy for violence in Syria and ensure that the country will remain a significant focus for counterterrorism analysts in 2020 and beyond.

Developments in Syria's north and east dominated headlines for much of the year, including the announcement of a US operation that led to the death of the Islamic State (IS) group's leader, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi. IS quickly announced Abu Ibrahim al-Hashemi al-Qurayshi as its new leader, but it's worth noting that leadership decapitation doesn't always undermine the capacity of terrorist organisations.[1] Perhaps more significant, therefore, was IS's defeat in Baghouz in eastern Syria in March 2019. The defeat deprived the group of the last of its territorial caliphate, although it retains a significant sleeper cell network that remains active in Iraq and Syria, and thousands of fighters remain on the run in those countries. The group also continued to act globally and was linked to the Easter bombings in Sri Lanka that killed 259 people and the August suicide bombing that killed 92 wedding-party guests in Kabul. The US withdrawal from northern Syria in October 2019 and Turkey's subsequent invasion were viewed by many as an opportunity for IS to further regroup. By weakening the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), which have been the most effective anti-IS force, and rerouting its focus from preserving gains against IS, the Turkish invasion created a power vacuum in pockets in Syria that IS may seek to exploit in 2020. As Hassan Hassan of the Center for Global Policy explained:

> ISIS is coming back slowly, but the danger is real …Their organization still functions. You would imagine it shattered, but it seems to be robust. It's not back yet, but they are rebuilding and still have that kind of fear and ability to scare and terrify people in the areas.[2]

The Turkish invasion also forced the SDF to sign an agreement with the Assad regime on somewhat unfavourable terms. Any regime takeover of northeastern Syria will exacerbate the (still unresolved) underlying roots of the Syrian conflict and create conditions in which a resurgent IS could thrive. Indeed, Brain Katz and Michael Carpenter have gone so far as to declare that 'Turkey's invasion of Syria now makes ISIS's resurrection all but a fait accompli.'[3] The loss of IS's territorial caliphate also resulted in tens of thousands of fighters and supporters being taken into the custody of the SDF. As of November 2019, more than 10,000 IS men and boys (including an estimated 2,000 foreign nationals) were held at 25 makeshift facilities across northern Syria.[4] Because most nations refuse to repatriate foreign fighters, there have been unsuccessful efforts (notably by France) to transfer them to more secure facilities in Iraq to face trial. Four French nationals received the death penalty in May, so human rights organisations have raised concerns about Iraq's legal system, including the lack of due process and the use of evidence gathered under torture.[5] Seeking justice via Iraq is therefore laden with challenges. The Australian Government has doubled down on its refusal to repatriate foreign fighters and its use of its citizenship-stripping laws to prevent former fighters returning home. This position seems contradictory to advice from the intelligence community: the September 2019 submission from the Australian Security Intelligence Organisation (ASIO) to the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Intelligence and Security noted that:

> In a globally interconnected world, the location of an individual offshore as a result of citizenship cessation will not eliminate any direct threat they pose to Australian (or other) interests overseas, and it will not prevent their reach-back into Australia to inspire, encourage or direct onshore activities that are prejudicial to security—including onshore attacks.[6]

It added that such a strategy may be counterproductive: 'In some instances, citizenship cessation will curtail the range of threat mitigation capabilities available to Australian authorities.' Nonetheless, the US's sudden withdrawal from Syria and the immediate Turkish invasion highlighted just how quickly the picture can change in Syria. It led to a rapid deterioration of the situation on the ground and, when half of SDF prison guards were redeployed to the front lines, some inmates were able to escape.[7] IS views prison breaks as an opportunity to replenish its fighter ranks and will look to exploit any further weakening of SDF authority. Its antecedent, Al-Qaeda in Iraq, regrouped on the back of eight prison breaks in Iraq in 2012 and 2013 as part of its 'Breaking the Walls' campaign, which freed hundreds of fighters.[8]

IS's incarcerated female supporters and child members housed at the al-Hol camp present an additional challenge.[9] Although approximately 1,400 of the 11,000 foreign women and children at the camp have been repatriated,[10] debate has ensued on the role of the group's female recruits. IS women are frequently depicted as hapless 'brides', which understates the complexity of female agency, as some recruits played roles in policing and as propagandists and recruiters. Many of those incarcerated have remained staunch IS supporters: in September, the late IS leader called on the group's fighters to liberate

the al-Hol women, prompting intra-camp unrest that left one woman dead and seven injured. While it may be tempting to dismiss IS women as mere bystanders, Aaron Zelin has warned that civilian breakouts aim to:

> … repopulate the broad-based caliphate project and society. Facilitating a breakout for this population would also help restart the Islamic State's multigenerational plan of socially engineering children by allowing them exposure only to life within the framework of its ideology.[11]

Indeed, while it's long been clear that the authorities in northern Syria aren't equipped to manage the challenge of IS's incarcerated fighters and supporters, the chaos that followed the Turkish invasion underlined the need for a swift international response that promotes international security, upholds human rights—particularly those of the children—and most importantly provides justice for IS's victims in Syria and Iraq. The window of opportunity for the international community to exercise decisive influence over their own fighters won't remain open indefinitely.

Idlib Governorate in the country's northwest remains an area in which the international community is less able to influence outcomes. Idlib's population of 3 million residents lives amid appalling conditions and regular aerial bombardment by Syrian and Russian warplanes.[12] More than 500 civilians were killed and thousands injured in regime and Russian airstrikes between April and September 2019 alone.[13] The governorate is also the final bastion of Syria's myriad anti-government and anti-IS forces, as well as civilian activists and Syrians who can't live safely in Assad-controlled territory. The most powerful actor in Idlib is Hayat Tahrir al-Sham, which was formed from the merger of groups including Jabhat Fateh al-Sham (formerly Jabhat al-Nusra). The 20,000-strong group is no longer formally linked to al-Qaeda and has recently demonstrated what Elizabeth Tsurkov has described as 'a growing willingness to compromise' on the back of the defection of hardline members to the new al-Qaeda affiliate Hurras al-Din (HaD), as well as increasing military pressure from the Syrian Army and its affiliates.[14] This will ensure that low- to medium-intensity conflict remains a feature of daily life in Idlib Province. However, the group and its antecedents are also known for grave human rights abuses and authoritarian modes of governance, which is an additional concern for Idlib's population.

Hayat Tahrir al-Sham competes for authority with others, including the less powerful HaD, which controls key territory along the Turkish border. It was revealed that IS chief Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi was killed at a compound in Idlib's Barisha, which is under HaD control. Although this prompted a flurry of commentary about a detente between IS and al-Qaeda, it more likely reflected the sympathies of the individual who owned the compound. Although many of the groups in Idlib—including Hayat Tahrir al-Sham—claim to have no interest in targets outside Syria, their significant combat experience, the fluid nature of the groups and the presence of people and groups with IS and al-Qaeda links ensure that Idlib will continue to be closely watched by counterterrorism analysts. However, any response from the international community must centre on Idlib's 3 million civilians and be geared towards providing long-term safety, justice and accountability for them—and Syrians more broadly—as those are the issues that led to the conflict's outbreak and will continue to fuel conflict and radicalisation if efforts aren't made to address the root causes.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR POLICYMAKERS

1. Moral questions aside, the repatriation of foreign fighters is essential in order to monitor and punish perpetrators and to avoid a situation in which further prison breaks could allow IS to rebuild and fighters to return to militancy in Syria, Iraq or elsewhere. It is naïve to assume that Australia would be unimpacted by the involvement of its nationals in terrorism-related events abroad, and Australia's legislative tools, particularly the 'declared area offence' in section 119.2 of the *Criminal Code Act 1995*, make it one of the best placed states to investigate and prosecute its own nationals. Australian authorities must leverage this advantage to prevent Australian nationals being involved in terrorist activities at home or abroad in the future.
2. Return foreign IS women and children to their home countries and enact appropriate legal and reintegration measures. In particular, the repatriation of children (of whom 7,000 are under the age of 12) is a moral imperative, as they too are victims of war. A court in The Hague recognised this in November 2019, ordering the Netherlands to repatriate all children of Dutch parents.

3. Prioritise the provision of humanitarian aid through existing providers in Idlib to support the 3 million civilians languishing in the province.
4. Lobby UN Security Council member states to support (and consider broadening) Security Council Resolution 2165 when it comes up for renewal in mid-2020. The resolution is the mechanism that allows cross-border aid to be delivered to areas outside government control in Syria, without requiring government permission. It was substantially weakened in January 2020, with only two of the four existing approved border crossings (Bab al-Salam and Bab al-Hawa in Turkey) renewed. Cross border aid can no longer be delivered through Iraq or Jordan.
5. Increase international pressure on all warring parties involved in Idlib (including the Syrian and Russian governments) to respect the laws of war, and support efforts to establish an international legal process to deter violations and hold perpetrators accountable, even in the absence of the resolution of the broader conflict.

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Yemen and Salafi-jihadism

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Yemen's rugged topography, rampant corruption and persistent conflicts have long made it an attractive hub for militant jihadists, who have been operating there since the 1980s. Today, after nearly five years of internationalised civil war, the conditions for extremism to thrive are better than ever.

Militant jihad in Yemen was given a huge boost in March 2015 when a Saudi-led coalition of Sunni Arab countries intervened militarily to contain the perceived influence of Shia Iran and restore the internationally recognised government toppled by the Houthi rebels. This sectarian framing of Yemen's war fits perfectly into the jihadists' own highly polarising narrative of true believers versus deviants, pitting Muslims against other Muslims. For an entire year, Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) was able to run a protostate out of the eastern coastal capital, Mukalla. Its fighters were ousted in April 2016 by United Arab Emirates (UAE) special forces with help from US allies, but they were dispersed, not killed.

Both AQAP and Islamic State (IS) persist in Yemen, despite being weakened over the past two years, especially by relentless drone strikes, special forces operations and their own current internecine fighting. AQAP has proven particularly resilient. There are several reasons for this, all of which suggest that AQAP will remain a force to be reckoned with, despite its leaders currently having gone to ground.[1]

THE ROOTS OF AQAP'S SUCCESS

AQAP's successful revival in 2015 can be attributed to four main strategies.

First, AQAP built strong local networks. Just as it rebranded itself as 'Ansar al-Sharia' (Partisans of Islamic Law) in 2011 to distance it from any negative baggage attached to the al-Qaeda label, in 2015 it again rebranded itself as 'Abna Hadramawt' (the Sons of Hadramawt).[2] This gave it more local appeal as it struck power-sharing deals with local governance structures. AQAP also used locally attuned messaging that referenced tribal history and popular grievances and made use of traditional poetry and song.

Second, AQAP has positioned itself as the 'good guy' of jihad, in contradistinction to the indiscriminate violence and blanket apostasisation policy of IS. It revised its dictatorial governance style of 2011 and 2012 and carefully avoided alienating tribes and local populations in areas under its influence, including by negotiating blood money payments for tribesmen who had been killed accidently in operations aimed at the Yemeni military.[3] It also took a more gradualist approach to implementing sharia law, nurtured kinship ties, struck revenue-sharing deals, apologised for past excesses and avoided apostasising local Sunni Muslims.

Third, AQAP worked to win passive toleration from local populations by filling the vacuum left by a corrupt absentee government. It's important to note that populations in Yemen's east are well armed and thus couldn't be 'terrorised' into submission. AQAP spearheaded an impressive program of community development projects, including improving electricity, water and sewerage infrastructure, building roads, renovating schools, and stocking hospitals. Some 56% of tweets from AQAP's governance Twitter feed during 2016 were about its hands-on development activities.[4] In contrast to the war raging in Yemen's west, where coalition bombs rained down on civilians, not just Houthi military targets, AQAP's territory looked like a haven of stability.

Fourth, youth outreach has been a core part of AQAP's playbook, not only in its protostate but also in frontline zones. It has spread propaganda inside schools, used mobile kiosks to hand out materials, held competitions for children to summarise its mission booklet, arranged study groups and awarded prizes, including guns, cash and motorbikes. Both AQAP and IS videos have made heavy use of the theme of group belonging and bonding, most potently in stylised images of fighters cooking and eating together. This is particularly appealing in a country in which 10 million people are close to starvation and many youth are displaced, deprived of education and devoid of hope. This projects the war on extremism well into the future.

Today, there remain pockets of society, especially in the south, that see the Saudi-led intervention as fruitless, view UAE ambitions with suspicion, consider the Yemeni Government corrupt and fear the takeover by southern separatists from Aden. These people look back on AQAP rule with nostalgia.[5]

ISLAMIC STATE IN YEMEN

IS, by contrast, never succeeded in holding territory in Yemen. It expanded for a brief period in 2014 and 2015, proclaimed various provinces around Yemen, undertook several headline-grabbing attacks and attracted AQAP defectors keen to be part of a growing caliphate. Nevertheless, IS never usurped AQAP as Yemen's primary jihad group.[6]

IS's inability to gain traction in Yemen, particularly among the tribes, can be attributed to its overt and indiscriminate brutality; its inability to rival AQAP's deep roots, territorial hold and community projects; its failure to employ culturally nuanced ways of appealing to locals; and its arrogant and alien leadership style.

IS is currently largely confined to the Qayfa region of northwest al-Bayda' Governorate.[7] Since July 2018, it has focused more on targeting AQAP than the Houthis, the Yemeni military or UAE-backed local security forces. This conflict between AQAP and IS shows no signs of abating. Tit-for-tat assassinations occur almost weekly, and slanging matches abound on encrypted social media wires.

NEW TRAJECTORIES

Extremism in Yemen is evolving. Several new trajectories could be identified in 2019.

First, both AQAP and IS may be increasing their links to organised crime as the war economy in Yemen booms. For AQAP, forging unholy alliances is a practical necessity that comes with the shift from being a ruler to being an outlaw in need of weapons, supplies and protection. IS defectors' testimonies suggest that IS, too, is in league with organised crime networks.[8] Disillusioned jihadists complain of their leaders doing deals with drug lords and criminal gangs, arguing over girls and being ignorant of the Quran.[9]

Second, Yemen's jihad is becoming increasingly politicised. This occurs in two opposing ways: the genuine instrumentalisation of extremists by political actors and the false attribution of obstructive acts to extremist groups. An example of the former might be the sudden resurgence of both AQAP and IS in Aden–Abyan in August 2019 (IS after an 18-month hiatus) coinciding with the assertion of southern secessionists. This suggests the involvement of external actors as *agents provocateurs*, either on the government side to help quell the secessionists or on the secessionist side to handily prove their claim to be battling terrorists.

'False flag' attacks may be designed to obscure or discredit 'legitimate' political opposition by casting it as 'terrorist', or to shield hired guns from investigation by blaming extremist groups. As a rule, if AQAP hasn't claimed it, it hasn't done it. IS central media, on the other hand, tends to adopt any act that's pushed its way.

Third, the jihad is fragmenting. This owes less to ideological differences (except between IS and AQAP) and more to practical necessity. AQAP has been heavily infiltrated by spies, driving it in December 2017 to impose a total ban on its internal mobile and internet use and release a three-part series of astonishing feature-length films titled 'Demolishing espionage' during 2018 and 2019. This fragmentation means that AQAP's official news agency is often slow to post claims, that its publication of formal statements, theological guidance and propaganda videos is much rarer and that its operational activity has more than halved in 2019 compared with its peak in 2017. This is welcome but shouldn't be mistaken for victory. It simply means the jihadists have moved underground and cut communications, making them harder to track. It could be the lull before the next storm.

CONCLUSION

Whether or not a peace deal is struck and kept, the prospects for a resurgence of extremism look worrying. Peace consultations lumber on with half-hearted participation by the main actors. Even if a peace deal *is* reached, it will leave multiple fractures throughout society. Many of those trying to survive in economically wrecked communities, disillusioned, with their deep-seated grievances unaddressed, have both weapons and battlefield experience. Perversely, therefore, it may be that the risks of conflict contagion, and with it a resurgence of militant jihad, will *increase* after a peace deal is finally brokered. Experience suggests that extremists will co-opt local anger and reframe it within broader narratives of global jihad.

Worse still, if a peace deal *isn't* reached, all the key ingredients are present for Yemen to unravel further: the proliferation of armed militias attached to old north–south fault-lines, foreign proxies building resentment through human rights violations, growing sectarianism, the perilous exploitation of extremist groups by state actors to further (and provide cover for) their own political agendas, an entire generation of dispossessed youth that has known only war, a catastrophic cholera epidemic, over 2 million children out of school, a looming water crisis, millions displaced, and millions more starving. Yemen could be at risk of complete implosion.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Promote CVE initiatives that are local, authentic and small scale and build on existing grassroots activities. We seem to have a window of opportunity, as the militants are severely degraded and currently hold no territory. Before they bubble up again (as they always seem to do in Yemen), it would be wise to pre-empt the problems that they'll seek to harness.
- Broaden peace consultations to include the many different warring sides and regional interests beyond the main three parties (the Houthis, the government, southern secessionists), as seen with the November Riyadh Agreement allowing the southerners into talks and the current Houthi–Saudi talks, both of which were unthinkable in 2018.
- Formulate transparent mechanisms for identifying stakeholder and community representatives, rather than relying on political appointees and the same old elites.
- Pressure regional partners to end patronage politics that buys sheikhs' support, thereby creating unreliable loyalties and bidding wars that hamper economic development.
- Invest now in peacebuilding and education initiatives among boys, girls and women.[10]
- Adopt authentic CVE messaging that's culturally attuned and use localised networks to amplify it rather than parachuting in preconceived models.

NOTES

1 AQAP is less likely to strike at the West from Yemen. It's noteworthy that all 273 AQAP operations in Yemen in 2017 (the year after it was ousted from Mukalla) were domestic. That number of domestic operations has since declined significantly, but could easily rise again, given the conditions.

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9 AQAP video, 'Shahadat wa-i'tirafat li-asra min Tanzim al-Dawla' (testimonies and confessions of IS captives), 9 August 2018; see also Husam al-Umawi (IS defector to AQAP), *Telegram* channel, 21 May 2016.

10 Yemeni law requires that girls receive an education. The challenge, however, is to get locals to help design it, imbue it with real-life authentic material, support it, and make it really popular and successful in a couple of places so that the next villages ask for it. Currently, big NGOs drown any grassroots activities with expensive one-size-fits-all programs parachuted in from outside and rolled out too quickly.

Mental health and terrorism

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Since ISIS rose to prominence in 2013, 63 lone-actor terrorist attacks in Western countries have been carried out by individuals inspired by Islamic State. Those events accounted for 228 civilian deaths. The most lethal was on 14 July 2016, when 86 civilians died and 434 were injured when the offender drove a 19-tonne truck down the Promenade des Anglais in Nice. Reporting on the incident implied that there was little evidence to suggest that the offender was a member of a wider terrorist organisation. Nor did anyone maintain that the offender exhibited signs of a fervent passion for extremist values before the attack. However, it was reported that they did present with one factor that has become almost synonymous with lone-actor terrorism: a history of mental health problems. In fact, of the 63 offenders involved in the attacks to date, 34 have been cited in the media as having mental health problems, and outlets have attributed their violent behaviour to their mental health.

Media reporting of mental health as a principal causal factor in the violent behaviours of lone-actor terrorists fits a consistent pattern of reporting often witnessed following other acts of violent human behaviour.[1] The assumption that mental ill-health causes violence holds instinctive appeal: it offers a clear-cut and simple explanation of causality. Attributing acts of violence to poor mental health (as conceptualised by the general public) provides an image that fits the deeply entrenched popular narrative of the crazed killer.[2] This attribution is also deeply connected to a longstanding assumption within academic discourse that the development of a coherent political ideology isn't possible among those with poor mental health.[3]

ATTRIBUTION (ERROR)

The causality attribution isn't limited to media reports and academia. In the wake of the Nice attack, Australia's inaugural Commonwealth Counter-Terrorism Coordinator, Greg Moriarty, stated that investigations following preparations for similarly inspired offences in Australia show a pattern of individuals who are:

> … not necessarily deeply committed to and engaged with the Islamist ideology but are nonetheless, due to a range of reasons, including mental health issues, susceptible to being motivated and lured rapidly down a dangerous path by the terrorist narrative.[4]

Indeed, the Centre for Counter-Terrorism Coordination was established following the recommendations from the State Coroner of NSW's inquest into the Lindt Café siege — a terrorist attack carried out by a lone actor with personalised ideological motivations and a documented history of mental health problems.[5]

Although the predominant ideological focus of counterterrorism in Australia is on individuals who espouse some form of radical Islamic ideology,[6] empirical research is consistently demonstrating that mental health problems are more prevalent than expected[7] across the entire spectrum of ideologies espoused by lone-actor terrorists.[8] Some studies report aggregate prevalence rates of mental disorder diagnoses.[9] Others disaggregate mental disorders and compare them to the societal base rate,[10] and still others compare terrorist samples with control or comparison groups.[11]

Research has shown that lone-actors are an older cohort compared to other terrorists.[12] In 2014, Paul Gill, John Horgan and Paige Deckert provided a critical discussion of this. To date it remains unclear why they're older offenders, but it is hypothesised that their grievances and ideologies are formed over long periods of perceived discrimination and stressors. Also, in epidemiology, there are some anomalies in mental disorder prevalence (there are peaks in late adolescence and middle age).[13] Notably, the public health model of disease prevention has been readily applied to other forms of targeted violence types, and one stage of such models work on the pretence of improving cohesive relationships to help immunise those who would be potential offenders. Currently, there is little empirical research on the success of such programs in terrorist offenders, although Australia's Living Safe Together program seems to be based on this model.

Despite the consistency in the identification of prevalence rates, there are very few scientific analyses that have focused on the nature of the relationship between any mental health diagnosis and terrorist behaviour, meaning that the answers to causation remain elusive. This lack of predictive empirical evidence means that civilian and political reactions to acts of mass violence in which the attacker's motivations remain elusive are continually drawn back to the assumption that the mental state of the offender caused their violence. Vital improvements in our understanding of the relationship between mental health and terrorism will be made only through developments in the research field. The attribution error isn't new, and innovative tactics by terrorists often lead to research and public discourse returning to the mental health fallacy.[14]

The following sections outline current assumptions that flow through common discourse and then assess how those assumptions have affected counterterrorism practice.

'THE TERRORIST'

To disengage from the attribution error, we first need to rethink our conceptions of what the terrorist 'is'. Lone-actors are presumed to be distinct from group-based terrorists, and the common image that springs to mind as the archetypical lone actor is Ted Kaczynski (the Unabomber). This image is also

perpetuated in the literature. Many studies treat all individuals involved in terrorism as one entity.[15] They fail to recognise the unique differences among individuals. This aggregation severely affects how we understand the motivations of these individuals, which in turn affects counterterrorism practice.

In reality, terrorists are extremely diverse. Individuals deemed to be terrorists range from those with sympathetic values to those who act violently, and from those who act without any external influence to those who are completely immersed within an organisation. People who are encapsulated by the 'terrorist' moniker each have different beliefs, roles, functions and experiences, and each of those elements changes before, during and after engagement with a radical ideology. New research that uses quantitative analyses to map behaviours over time has shown that the assumptions we make when categorising terrorists are often incorrect. Tracking behaviours across life spans shows that behaviours and experiences among categories of terrorists are remarkably similar.[16] Pertinently to the arguments in this paper, those who are classified as lone actors are, more often than not, not lonely.[17] Others are often aware of their grievances, intentions and plans.[18] This is particularly important, given the online environments that are of huge concern to academics and practitioners alike.

'THE LONER'

The above findings are novel, and research and policy needs time to adapt and catch up. Lone actors are still often deemed a distinct category of terrorists, and that's mainly due to the early empirical research base. That evidence found a consistent link between mental health problems and lone actors, fuelling the view that lone-actors are distinct from those who act within a group.[19] Static research, using data captured following incidents, has shown that lone actors are significantly more likely than both group-based terrorists and the general population to be diagnosed with mental health problems.[20] In fact, static research has continually found that there's a negative correlation between the presence of mental disorder and the degree of co-offending between terrorists.[21] Despite new findings identifying that those who act within a group do show significant mental health problems due to their engagement with terrorism,[22] the consistency in the occurrence of mental health problems in lone-actor terrorists is often assumed to be a function of the recruitment process into terrorist groups. It's readily proposed that terrorist groups target specific populations for recruitment.

Before the rise of ISIS and the uptick in lone-actor attacks in the West, the mental health status of lone actors was presumed to be a function of selective processes during recruitment, in which unsuitable individuals were prevented from joining a group and acted alone. Research has shown that perception to be incorrect.[23] However, with growing interest in online recruitment, that view has now shifted. It's now often assumed that recruiters using online platforms specifically target socially and mentally vulnerable individuals.[24] Currently, we have no data to support that assumption. In fact, the examination of autobiographical data has shown that terrorist recruitment is fluid and dependent on the needs of the group, the environment and the personal preferences of the recruiters.[25] Also, current data examining the targeted audiences of ISIS's online propaganda implies that the recruiters employ multiple different narratives across a very broad range of demographics.[26] This casting of a wide net is effective in garnering attention across multiple demographics, and avid consumers of such propaganda are likely to be those with higher rates of internet use overall.[27] Therefore, the prevalence rates of specific mental health problems in individuals espousing allegiance to ISIS may be a function of exposure due to their online behaviours.[28]

'THE IDEOLOGY'

In the current security environment, and particularly in lone actors, the line between personalised grievance and political ideology is blurring. Traditionally in research and practice, lone actors with a political ideology were seen to be distinct from those with a personalised grievance,[29] leading to different prevention and legal responses around the world. However, recent research has concluded that these two actor types, while treated differently by the criminal justice system, show remarkable similarities in many of their antecedent and preparation behaviours and experiences.[30] Those authors also concluded that the motivational distinction between actors isn't always as clear-cut as assumed. Many lone-actor terrorists often have personalised grievances that fuel their ideological standpoint.[31]

Underpinning this issue in the categorisation of offenders is the opinion that the formation of a political opinion and the development of a radical political ideology aren't possible in those with severe mental health problems. Between 2013 and 2017, many violent attacks in Europe in which the attacker made ideological statements during the attack weren't reported as acts of terrorism due to the individual's

mental state;[32] the authorities instead claimed that the attackers were known to mental health services. This shows a limitation in our understanding of how ideologies are formed. People with severe mental health problems may be particularly susceptible to radical rhetoric, as the team at the Queensland Fixated Threat Assessment Centre writes: 'Radical religious or political philosophies may resonate with this group, or the rhetoric may confirm their disordered or delusional beliefs.'[33] The formation of a political ideology, even if triggered by personal grievances, isn't mutually exclusive with mental health problems.

HOW DO WE EVOLVE RESEARCH?

All the investigations cited above have added value to the field (and thus the practice) of counterterrorism, as they empirically identify mental health problems with specific behaviours found in terrorists. However, more research is needed to clarify the exact nature and role of mental health problems in offenders. In no research to date has a definitive causal link between mental health and lone-actor attacks been identified. The presence of a mental health problem may indeed be causative, but it may also be inhibitory,[34] or even completely unrelated to someone's movement towards violence. Focusing solely on those who engage in violence on behalf of an ideology unduly narrows our understanding of the relationship between mental disorder and personality traits and extreme violence. Without further understanding of the mental health status of the pool of individuals who are at risk of committing violence, we're unable to make any firm conclusions about the causative role of mental health problems in lone-actor terrorism. This has an impact on policy and practice and affects how violence perpetrated by such people is prevented or mitigated.

HOW DO WE EVOLVE PRACTICE?

Terrorists are heterogeneous, and common misconceptions in both research and practice will be corrected only through the evolution of opinions of the role of mental health in violence. A key mitigation and prevention strategy used in this area is an assessment of the likelihood of violence. In the practices of risk and threat assessment, mental health is often assessed to examine the likelihood of the subject's ability and intent to act on intentions. Despite their frequency of use in this space, those practices focus on the prediction of behaviour and are thus deeply affected by the problem of base rates. Despite the consistency in research identifying associations between mental health and lone-actor terrorism, terrorism is a very low base-rate act, and predicting it is subject to the well-established problem of false positives,[35] even with highly sensitive measures. Within this very low base rate of activity are subsamples of those with diagnosed mental health problems. The number of people in a general population with such problems who will never consider or engage in violence far outstrips the number of violent actors. Therefore, assessment procedures, in isolation from wider, more holistic practices, aren't able to accurately prevent such incidences, and may in fact do more damage to those incorrectly identified as at risk.

When dealing with those with specific vulnerabilities, including mental health problems, a longer term and multidisciplinary approach is necessary. In Australia, multidisciplinary centres have been established and are attempting to counter the above assumptions. The centres recognise the fluidity of group membership, taking on cases ranging from isolated individuals to those more connected to formal organisations. They also focus on grievance, which removes the necessity to identify political ideologies as a precursor for inclusion in the intervention. The centres were established to treat mental health problems and introduce people into care pathways, thus serving the interests of both public health and public safety without the need to attempt to predict which individuals would have gone on to commit violent acts if they hadn't been treated. Irrespective of the person's espoused ideology, the principal concern should be to protect those at risk and help them to alter their behaviour to reduce the possibility of ideologically or grievance-fuelled violence.

This model is based on prevention, not disruption. Practical attention to the range of risk factors across a population or subpopulation[36] might be a way forward in preventing lone-actor violence, without it being necessary to determine which individuals in the population may go on to commit violence. However, the multidisciplinary centres are currently based on static quantitative analyses of a limited number of cases within each centre, and to date there's no large-scale empirical evidence base that encapsulates the wide range of people who are assessed and diverted by the centres. Further research is needed to help validate the work of the centres.

NOTES

1 E Corner, P Gill, R Schouten, F Farnham, 'Mental disorders, personality traits, and grievance-fueled targeted violence: the evidence base and implications for research and practice', *Journal of Personality Assessment*, 2018, 100(5):459–470.

2 This pervasive view continues throughout non-academic discourse, despite rapid and consistent advances in the academic field of violence and mental health.

3 K McDonald, *Our violent world: terrorism in society*, Macmillan International Higher Education, 2013; MA Wilson, A Scholes, E Brocklehurst, 'A behavioural analysis of terrorist action: the assassination and bombing campaigns of ETA between 1980 and 2007', *The British Journal of Criminology*, 2010, 50(4):690–707.

4 Brendan Nicholson, 'Counter-terrorism tsar to seek out "lone wolves"', *The Australian*, 22 July 2016.

5 State Coroner of New South Wales, *Inquest into the deaths arising from the Lindt Café siege: findings and recommendations*, Coroners Court of New South Wales, 2017.

6 Australian Security Intelligence Organisation (ASIO), Counter terrorism, Australian Government, no date, online; Australian Government, *Australian national security: Listed terrorist organisations*, no date, online; Cat Barker, *Countering terrorism and violent extremism*, Parliamentary Library, Parliament of Australia, no date, online.

7 As compared to the rates measured across general populations and to the currently accepted prevalence estimates among terrorists engaged in groups.

8 P Gill, J Horgan, P Deckert, 'Bombing alone: tracing the motivations and antecedent behaviors of lone-actor terrorists', *Journal of Forensic Sciences*, March 2014, 59(2):425–435; J Gruenewald, S Chermak, J Freilich, 'Distinguishing "loner" attacks from other domestic extremist violence: a comparison of far-right homicide incident and offender characteristics', *Criminology & Public Policy*, 2013, 12(1):65–91; M Hamm, R Spaaij, *The age of lone wolf terrorism*, Columbia University Press, 2017; MLiem, J van Buuren, H Schönberger, E Bakker, 'European lone actor terrorists versus "common" homicide offenders: an empirical analysis', *Homicide Studies*, 2018, 22(1):45–69; J van Zuijdewijn, E Bakker, 'Analysing personal characteristics of lone-actor terrorists: research findings and recommendations', *Perspectives on Terrorism*, 2016, 10(2).

9 Gill et al., 'Bombing alone: tracing the motivations and antecedent behaviors of lone-actor terrorists'; Hamm & Spaaij, *The age of lone wolf terrorism*; JR Meloy, P Gill, 'The lone-actor terrorist and the TRAP-18', *Journal of Threat Assessment and Management*, 2016, 3(1):37; M Pitcavage, 'Cerberus unleashed: the three faces of the lone wolf terrorist', *American Behavioral Scientist*, 2015, 59(13):1655–1680; van Zuijdewijn & Bakker, 'Analysing personal characteristics of lone-actor terrorists: research findings and recommendations'.

10 E Corner, P Gill, O Mason, 'Mental health disorders and the terrorist: a research note probing selection effects and disorder prevalence', *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, 2016, 39(6):560–568; A Weenink, 'Behavioral problems and disorders among radicals in police files', *Perspectives on Terrorism*, 2015, 9(2).

11 C Hewitt, *Understanding terrorism in America*, Routledge, London, 2003; Corner et al., 'A false dichotomy? Mental illness and lone-actor terrorism', *Law and Human Behavior*, 2015, 39(1):23–34; E Corner, P Gill, O Mason, 'Mental health disorders and the terrorist: a research note probing selection effects and disorder prevalence'; M Gottshcalk, S Gottschalk, 'Authoritarianism and pathological hatred: a social psychological profile of the Middle Eastern terrorist', *The American Sociologist*, 2004, 35(2):38–59; J Gruenewald, S Chermak, J Freilich, 'Distinguishing "loner" attacks from other domestic extremist violence: a comparison of far-right homicide incident and offender characteristics', *Criminology & Public Policy*, 2013, 12(1):65–91; J Gruenewald, S Chermak, J Frelich, 'Far-right lone wolf homicides in the United States', *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, 2013, 36(12):1005–1024; A Merari, *Driven to death: psychological and social aspects of suicide terrorism*, Oxford University Press, 2010.

12 This research highlighted that the average age of lone actors was over 30, which is compared to early 20s for other forms of terrorism.

13 Gill et al., 'Bombing alone: tracing the motivations and antecedent behaviors of lone-actor terrorists'.

14 Which is also fuelled by assumptions of a lack of rational thought processes and capability. For a critical argument on the conflation of mental disorder with irrationality, see P Gill, E Corner, 'There and back again: the study of mental disorder and terrorist involvement', *American Psychologist*, 2017, 72(3):231–241. However, for context, due to underlying biases, many authors (and non-academic sources) question the capacity for rational thought processes in those with mental health problems.

15 Gill & Corner, 'There and back again: the study of mental disorder and terrorist involvement'.

16 E Corner, N Bouhana, P Gill, 'The multifinality of vulnerability indicators in lone-actor terrorism', *Psychology, Crime & Law*, 2019, 25(2):111-132. Corner and Gill use probability-based analyses to map life sequences across terrorist offenders; E Corner, P Gill, 'Psychological distress, terrorist involvement and disengagement from terrorism: a sequence analysis approach', *Journal of Quantitative Criminology*, 2019, 1–28. They highlight the complex nature of behavioural sequences in movements towards radicalisation, engagement and disengagement. Although these analyses are able to offer insights into behavioural sequences, and they're able to offer practical, visual outputs that are suitable for stakeholders, their predictive value is partly constrained by the nature of the value under scrutiny. Human behaviour is highly complex, and behavioural sequences are affected by personal, social and environmental interactions, which will in turn be affected by situations.

17 N Bouhana, E Corner, P Gill, B Schuurman, 'Background and preparatory behaviours of right-wing extremist lone actors: a comparative study', *Perspectives on Terrorism*, 2018, 12(6):150–163; P Gill, *Lone actor terrorists: a behavioural analysis*, Routledge, Oxon, 20125; Gill et al., 'Bombing alone: tracing the motivations and antecedent behaviors of lone-actor terrorists'; J Horgan, P Gill, N Bouhana, J Silver, E Corner, *Across the universe? A comparative analysis of violent radicalization across three offender types with implications for criminal justice training and education*, National Institute of Justice, 2016; Meloy & Gill, 'The lone-actor terrorist and the TRAP-18.

18 B Schuurman, L Lindekilde, S Malthaner, F O'Connor, P Gill, N Bouhana, 'End of the lone wolf: the typology that should not have been', *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, 2019, 42(8):771–778.

19 Despite the emergence of violent acts carried out by lone actors that only blur the lines between group membership further. ISIS has consistently encouraged individuals to act violently on its behalf and claimed that the acts have been carried out by its 'soldiers'.

20 Hewitt examined more than 3,000 terrorist incidents in the US between 1954 and 2000, comparing lone and group actors from an array of ideological backgrounds, and identified distinct differences in mental disorder prevalence (22% vs. 8.1%); Hewitt, *Understanding terrorism in America*. Gruenewald, Chermak and Freilich compared right-wing extremists, identifying prevalence rates of mental disorder of 7.6% and 40.4% (group versus lone); Gruenewald et al., 'Distinguishing "loner" attacks from other domestic extremist violence: a comparison of far-right homicide incident and offender characteristics'. Corner and Gill concluded that lone actors (compared to group actors) were 13.49 times more likely to be mentally ill; Corner & Gill, 'A false dichotomy? Mental illness and lone-actor terrorism'. Meloy et al. compared lone-actor terrorists with those in small autonomous cells, finding that poor mental health was more commonly identified in lone actors; JR Meloy, K Roshdi, J Glaz-Ocik, J Hoffman, 'Investigating the individual terrorist in Europe', *Journal of Threat Assessment and Management*, 2015, 2(3–4):140–152.

21 Corner, Gill and Mason examined lone actors, actors who commit violence alone, but are supported by a group (solo actors), two individuals who operated without the support of a group (lone dyads), and group actors. They highlight the differences in prevalence rates; Corner et al., 'Mental health disorders and the terrorist: a research note probing selection effects and disorder prevalence'. Gruenewald, Chermak and Freilich also noted prevalence differences between lone actors who operate completely autonomously (41%), lone actors who affiliate with other active extremists (19.2%) and lone actors who operate together in small cells (3.3%); Gruenewald et al., 'Far-right lone wolf homicides in the United States'.

22 Corner & Gill, 'Psychological distress, terrorist involvement and disengagement from terrorism: a sequence analysis approach'.

23 Corner and Gill (forthcoming) highlight that no recruiter under study could recall the rejection of an individual with a mental health problem. Recruiters stressed the importance of numerous other qualities that were preferred over questioning the mental health status of a sympathiser.

24 N Malik, 'Mental health and terrorism: what are the links?', *Forbes*, 3 January 2019, online.

25 Corner and Gill (forthcoming).

26 C Winter, *The virtual caliphate: understanding Islamic State's propaganda strategy*, Quilliam, 2015.

27 More frequent online activities increase the chance of exposure to such narratives.

28 Clinical research has long demonstrated the comparatively high use of the internet among those with mental health disorders that specifically affect social and psychological development; MO Mazurek, C Wenstrup, 'Television, video game and social media use among children with ASD and typically developing siblings', *Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders*, 2012, 43(6):1258–1271. Also, Corner and Gill concluded that individuals with a diagnosis of an autism spectrum disorder were significantly more likely to demonstrate obsessive online and offline behaviours related to ideology formation and attack planning; Corner & Gill, 'A false dichotomy? Mental illness and lone-actor terrorism'.

29 Partly due to the high prevalence rates of mental health problems in those who act for personal reasons.

30 Horgan et al., *Across the universe? A comparative analysis of violent radicalization across three offender types with implications for criminal justice training and education*. Corner (unpublished) also furthers these results, noting that the similarities in attack planning were maintained when comparing mentally ill and non-mentally ill offenders. This suggests that mass murderers and lone-actor terrorists aren't as different as previously assumed.

31 Horgan et al. use the examples of Jim David Adkisson and Elloit Rodger to exemplify the similarities in grievance and ideology formation; Horgan et al., *Across the universe? A comparative analysis of violent radicalization across three offender types with implications for criminal justice training and education*. As the authors note about Adkisson, 'we can now depict Adkisson as an example of an individual whose personal life circumstances led to a series of problems that he largely blamed upon wider political processes which after a period of time built up to the extent that he decided to act violently.'

32 E Corner, P Gill, 'Is there a nexus between terrorist involvement and mental health in the age of the Islamic State?', *CTC Sentinel*, 2017, 10(1):1–10.

33 MT Pathé, DJ Haworth, TA Goodwin, AG Holman, SJ Amos, P Winterbourne, L Day, 'Establishing a joint agency response to the threat of lone-actor grievance-fuelled violence', *The Journal of Forensic Psychiatry & Psychology*, 2018, 29(1):37–52.

34 Böckler, Hoffman and Zick present a case study of a terrorist in Germany who suffered from substantial depressive symptoms during his late teenage years following problems in school. This affected his religious practice. When he dropped out of school and his depressive symptoms lessened, he resumed his religious practice and intensified it to radical levels; N Böckler, J Hoffman, A Zick, 'The Frankfurt airport attack: a case study on the radicalization of a lone-actor terrorist', *Journal of Threat Assessment and Management*, 2015, 2(3–4):153–163.

35 Krauss highlights the overprediction of potential violence by those making risk and threat assessment decisions. He notes that, even with a 90% accuracy rate for an instrument, false positives can be as high as 99,999 in 1,000,000 cases; DA Krauss, 'Predicting school violence', in FL Denmark, HH Krauss, RW Wesner, E Midlarsky, UP Gielen (eds), *Violence in schools: cross-national and cross-cultural perspectives*, 253–273, Springer, Boston, Massachusetts, 2005.

36 In this instance, specific mental health problems.

Not the cyberterrorism you thought

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'Cyberterrorism' is hard to pin down. It's a contested term, both changeable and ambiguous, wedged between the social and the technological. Such a lack of clarity is itself indicative of the nature of the current strategic environment and the disruption being wrought among our institutions, practices and societies. Cyberterrorism is both a symptom of and a distraction from the more fundamental change due to information technologies underway in the early 21st century.

Let's first consider some of the underlying concepts.

'Terrorism' has a much longer etymology than 'cyber', yet remains difficult to define.[1] The term's been stretched to cover a number of actions, behaviours and even intents. Statements that 'one man's terrorist is another man's freedom fighter' conflate means and ends. And there's the temptation, particularly among authoritarian regimes, to apply the term to any opposition: terrorism is a pejorative term.[2]

Boaz Ganor's 2018 definition—terrorism is 'the deliberate use of violence against civilian targets by a non-state actor to achieve political aims'[3]—covers the essential elements. 'Violence', in Ganor's definition, includes any act of deliberate violence, 'irrespective of the gravity of the resulting harm (other than verbal violence)'.

Appending 'cyber' to 'terrorism' does less to clarify than to conflate two social, changeable phenomena. 'Cyber' generally implies anything negatively associated with computers and the internet—not William Gibson's intent when he coined the term 'cyberspace'.[4] Still, it's not surprising, particularly in the wake of the September 2001 attacks and given the surge of technology-generated, internet-based disruption experienced since the late 1990s, that 'cyber' became conjoined with 'terrorism'.

There are indeed some shared characteristics. Terror, whether understood by Ganor or Robespierre, is used for the purpose of transformation, is directed at civilians and uses violence as a tool. Cyber, in its negative connotations, is disruptive and potentially destructive, using technology and the vulnerabilities in both the technology and people's use of technology to achieve outcomes.

But there are fundamental differences, too. In terrorism, publicity is key and immediacy is desired. Cyberterror operates in a different space, one in which attribution is difficult, is tenuous, may take months and can readily be contested. In terrorism, violence, and violence directed at civilians, are core. In cyber, it can be hard to translate electronic means into a physical reality.[5]

Information technologies are much more useful to terrorist organisations as enablers, helping facilitate terrorist operations, actions or support, whether through recruitment, coordination, funding, facilitation or publicity. The 'first person' view of the Christchurch massacre applied then current, democratised technology, just as Osama bin Laden had with his early videos.

Such use has more to do with the transformative effects of information technologies than their destructive use in a cyberattack. Jihadists grasped the potential of the internet just as well as Silicon Valley companies, both for mass communication and for tailoring and reinforcing messaging within particular groups.[6]

Richard Clark's comment that 'cyber terrorism [is] something of a red herring'[7] has considerable resonance. Cyber is part of the broader disruption of economies, societies, political systems and geopolitics emerging from the ongoing development and application of information technologies, facilitated by globalisation. Even if we could construct a coherent and stable concept of cyberterrorism, its strategic effect is likely to be lost in the noise of broader tumult.

We can think of digital disruption as having three core elements: the digitalisation of everything; the disintermediation and breaking of value chains, including societal trust and economic confidence; and domination by platforms, whether private or government.

DIGITALISATION

In 2011, venture capitalist Marc Andreessen wrote that 'software [was] eating the world'.[8] Information technologies were proceeding at such a pace that, through the active creation and storage of data and through the use of sensors converting the physical to data, human behaviours, actions, and processes could all be captured and digitalised. Once converted to data, they were mutable—able to be converted quickly through software into information, processes and business value, typically for the collectors capturing and holding such data.

This proves to be tremendously powerful. Many Silicon Valley business models are built on the idea that for a service—some of questionable value, others we wouldn't be without—companies would take whatever data they could, including personal details, location, who we connected with, on what platform, when, and other behaviours. In turn, such data can provide insights and access into the business models of competitors, intellectual property and environmental data as well as data of national security value. Growth begets more opportunity to expand—and collect.

Given the propensity to violence inherent in terrorism, suggesting that terrorists collect data seems anomalous. Yet the more successful groups do: they collect, edit and disseminate video for propaganda purposes. ISIL has proven particularly adept at using social media for this purpose, deploying propaganda as part of its war and state-building efforts.[9] In hindsight,

we shouldn't have been surprised that the same technologies used to mash the music of established artists into new forms and to improve image quality in photographs, once fully democratised, is now used for propaganda, subversion and simple maliciousness.

DISINTERMEDIATION AND FRAGILITY

This collection and use of data, plus direct and easy connection to and between people—often referred to as 'end users'—erodes and breaks traditional industries and value chains and contributes to the erosion of trust between government and society. The availability of tools, technology and access has aided and assisted a range of new, technologically adept, players, whether individuals, non-state actors or companies, to engage, track, influence, compete and potentially subvert and destroy.

But we tend to discount complexity, particularly when driven by speed to market. Our systems are both fragile and highly interconnected. Their security is typically overlooked and thus vulnerable. And human concerns such as privacy and agency are downplayed. The question has to arise as to why our digital infrastructure doesn't offer more of a target for terrorists than seems to be the case.

The complexity of systems as well as the difficulty with attribution and provenance typical of cyber, unless a kinetic attack is directed at physical infrastructure (such as a data centre or power supply), can make the terrorist 'spectacular' harder to claim. But that's not to say that terrorist groups don't exploit the vulnerabilities of the internet and ICT systems: they're among many adversaries that take advantage of the very 'brokenness' of our systems for gain.

There's also a further effect that plays into the terrorist handbook. The disintermediation of industries, value chains and institutions has had a deep effect on human relationships. The effect on communities has often proven to be one of dislocation, fragmentation and erosion. Yet, simultaneously, other bonds may be strengthened (if not tested) through social media. Such competing forces of centrifugal globalisation and centripetal localisation can assist terrorist recruitment. Democracies have yet to realise ways to harness the same trends.

PLATFORMS AND SCALE

The models of accumulation, growth and opportunity attract others, whether governments or actors seeking to exploit networks and their weaknesses, and the data collected and its use.

The early hacker ideals of the internet supposed a level of individualism and the virtues of a communitarianism enabled by technology.[10] The popularity of such themes, and the prospect of enhanced liberty and self-actualisation, continued even after the shock of the dot-com crash.[11] But, while data accumulation and availability can ease programming and open options for use, they enable strengthened control and options for surveillance. The main beneficiaries of these trends have been large tech platforms and authoritarian governments, while democratic governments struggle to keep up and, as they do, democratic norms are often overlooked.

Terrorist groups aren't inclined to collect: they're not natural accumulators or consolidators. Those are activities more aligned to business or state-building, rather than destruction. That doesn't rule out deployment as a state-proxy based on data or data accumulation. It's not hard to imagine disruptive, antidemocratic regimes that have invested in data collection and then used it to help direct state-sponsored terrorism.

But most prominent over the past few years has been the opportunity afforded terrorist groups to exploit tech platform domination of the internet for their own purposes: propaganda, recruitment, coordination and resourcing.

IMPLICATIONS

What does this mean for the prospect and practice of terrorism—the 'deliberate use of violence against civilian targets by a non-state actor to achieve political aims'?

Judging by trends so far, terrorism will continue to align with Ganor's definition—forms of violence against civilian targets by non-state actors for political gain. And technology will continue to offer a means, rather than being a target through cyber means. We should expect increased use of internet-based technologies, as they improve the tools and opportunities available to the independent player.

Recent responses by governments illustrate how this may play out. *Wired* recently reported on the effort by Europol's Internet Referral Unit to take ISIS off Telegram, to which it had decamped following the gradual closure of sites on more traditional platforms, such as Facebook and Twitter.[12] A study of the propaganda war for Mosul describes the Iraqi Government focus on a comprehensive information war against ISIL.[13] And, of course, the Chinese Government response to international and internal terrorist threats has been to strengthen internal and social control, particularly over the Uyghurs.[14]

Seemingly, the upper hand is gained most easily by those with the most data imposing the tightest control—that's opened up increased opportunities for influence by both China and Russia.[15] Not simply terrorism, but responses to terrorism, have translated into challenges to both democratic systems and their geopolitical position.

Nor is it final. Terrorist groups have proven adept at adapting to circumstance. Terrorism remains the tool of the weak, and the continued evolution and democratisation of technologies will continue to equip a range of actors with the tools to disrupt, legitimately or otherwise.

The large tech platforms are of increasing concern as third parties with unclear intent and accountability. They possess skills, capabilities and resources lacking in governments. In some areas, they provide citizens with services that were once the sole remit of government, either in the absence of government or using contractors or outsourced providers.

Governments, tech companies, other service providers and citizens will have to debate and establish forms of legitimacy and accountability that enable democratic norms of free speech, privacy and agency while protecting civilians and institutions. Those debates can't be left to the national security sector of government alone; values other than security and protection need a greater voice to retain ongoing trust between citizens and governments, including to lessen prospective alienation within communities.

We can expect debates about encryption, for example, to be reprosecuted as individuals, companies and institutions weigh up the relative costs, including to strategic positions, economic competitiveness, principles, freedoms and security.

The internet and digital technologies aid and abet terrorist activity. The trends accompanying digitalisation are also changing how governments can respond to terrorist actors, from law enforcement using new tradecraft, to information warfare and counter-propaganda, and, at the extreme end, to social control. The internet, with all its flaws, remains a means, rather than a target of attack, in and of itself.

CONCLUSION

Cyber and terrorism will continue to be conflated as governments and societies grapple with the challenges of digital disruption and an increasingly contested geopolitical environment. However, understanding the effects of information technologies on enabling terrorism yields more insights than a pursuit of cyberterrorism.

While conditions including inequality and diminished capability of and trust in institutions are likely to create breeding grounds for terrorist causes, terrorists will continue to benefit from the internet. We can expect more illicit and criminal activities perpetuated online in support of terrorist goals, facilitated by the increased availability of tools to such actors, the low cost and high returns of such activities and continuing low levels of cybersecurity maturity across a range of industry and community sectors.

Terrorist groups, as well as lone actors, will use the network effects of the internet—for communication, facilitation and coordination. The availability of tools and the democratisation of technologies will also assist the lone wolves and others on the fringes of society and even beyond more established terrorist groups. Higher value targets, and more hardened targets, are likely to remain the purview of nation-states. And antidemocratic nation-states may well deploy terrorist groups as proxies for lower end disruption operations.

Last, we should expect further terrorist activity because of the turmoil underway in the global geopolitical environment and the erosion of trust in and the capability of existing, traditional institutions and communities—including in the same ones tasked with preventing the problem.

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Terrorism

AS COMMUNICATIVE AND MISCOMMUNICATIVE VIOLENCE

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Conventional wisdom assumes that news media and groups that use terrorism have a symbiotic relationship. Brian Jenkins argued that 'terrorism is theater' in which violence sends a message to an audience and provokes a response.[1] Similarly, Walter Laquer stated that 'the media are the terrorist's best friend. The terrorist's act by itself is nothing, publicity is all.'[2] However, if the relationship between groups that use terrorism and media is so straightforward, then we would see two things: groups would claim credit for terrorism to garner publicity, media would cover all terrorism to garner attention from the public. Yet we see that groups that use terrorism often don't claim credit for their violence and—at least in the West—media often don't cover all attacks.

HOW GROUPS COMMUNICATE (AND MISCOMMUNICATE) RESPONSIBILITY FOR TERRORISM

Andrew Kydd and Barbara Walter outline strategic logics of terrorism as a form of costly signalling to an adversary through attrition, intimidation, provocation, spoiling and outbidding whereby groups convince the public that they're more worthy of support than their rivals.[3] Such rationalist explanations for violence assume that groups that use terrorism tend to take credit for their attacks, but that's often not the case.[4]

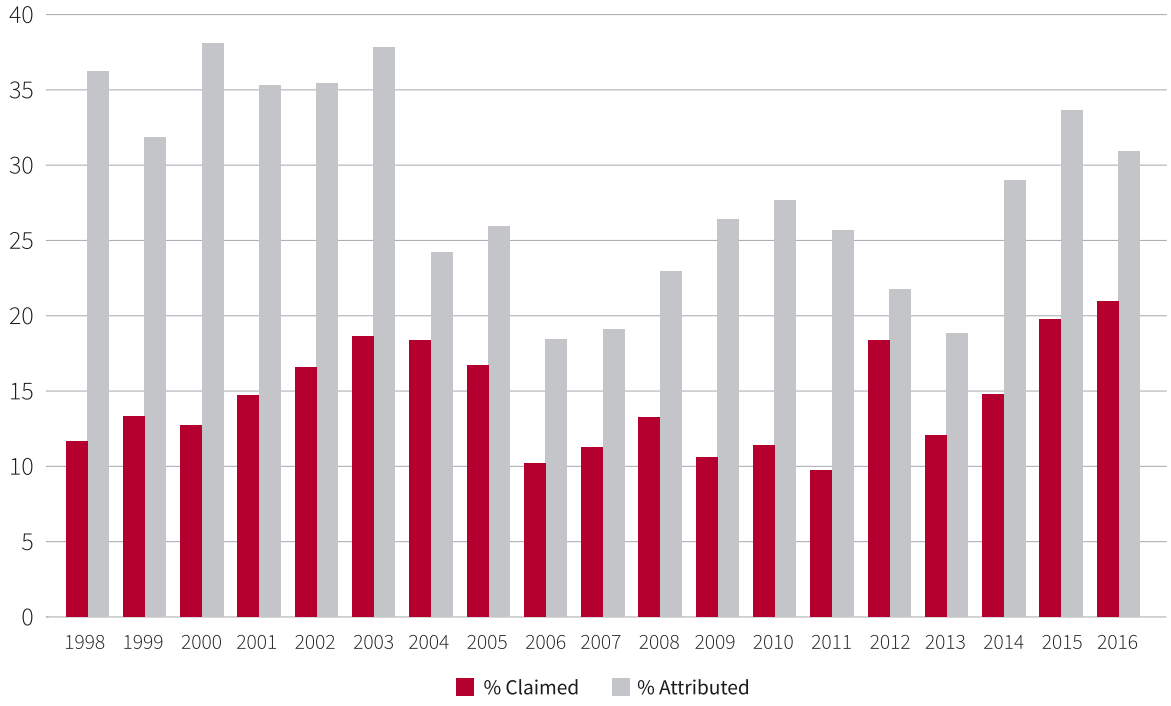
If terrorism is meant to communicate a message, then why do they frequently lie about attacks?

Claiming credit for terrorist acts is relatively cheap and easy; all it takes is a letter, phone call or a tweet. By claiming credit for an attack, a group increases the likelihood that its message is sent. Further, claiming credit for one's own work helps prevent others from falsely claiming it.[5] But the expected backlash—negative reactions from the state, rival groups and the public—also influences decisions about whether to claim. Groups responsible for attacks estimate the expected backlash using asymmetrical information on a number of factors, including the type of attack, the number of fatalities, who is killed, and the ability of each audience to punish the group.6 When the group wants publicity and expects a low risk of backlash, the attack should be claimed.[7] A minority of recent attacks (16.0%) in the Global Terrorism Database are claimed,8 while others (26.8%) are unclaimed but credibly attributed to a group (Figure 1).[9]

Situational and attack-level factors help to explain why an attack is claimed. Claims increase when:

- there are more active competitors, so claiming is necessary to differentiate the group
- the attack is on a military or diplomatic target, which takes more skill, so it signals the group's strength
- it's a suicide attack, which is the ultimate commitment to the cause.[10]

Figure 1: Terrorist attacks claimed or unclaimed but attributed, by year, 1998 to 2016 (%)



Claiming decreases when there have been other recent attacks and people are becoming intolerant of violence.[11] Attacks that kill either very few or very many people may be seen as failures or 'going too far', respectively, and claiming decreases on both ends but is higher with a mid-range body count.[12] When more civilians are killed, claiming decreases, probably from fear of backlash from the state and the public.[13]

Even when an attack isn't claimed, there's sometimes enough evidence to credibly attribute it to a particular group. Attribution of responsibility is more likely when the target is military or diplomatic, since there are both a greater incentive to identify the perpetrator and a small subset of groups that have that capability. On the other hand, attribution of responsibility is less likely when there have been more recent attacks (the environment is 'noisy') and when more civilians are killed. As with claiming, attribution of responsibility is less likely when the number of people killed is either very low or very high.[14]

In the immediate aftermath of an attack, the public and media often focus on who is responsible. Uncertainty about that can drum up fear and speculation, even though unclaimed attacks are the norm. From a policy standpoint, counterterrorism experts should treat claims with healthy scepticism. Sometimes groups claim credit for an attack that they had no involvement with—ISIS, for example, initially claimed the 2017 Las Vegas shootings.[15] While most claims are likely to be made by those responsible for them, we should consider the situational and attack-level factors that might make it appealing for a group to falsely claim credit for violence.

HOW NEWS MEDIA COVER (OR DON'T COVER) TERRORISM

Compounding public fear and misperceptions about terrorism, news media often don't cover all terrorist attacks equally. The quantity of coverage and the content of what's said vary. If one of news media's goals is to draw eyeballs to screens through their coverage of world events, which sensational terrorist attacks help to achieve, why would some attacks be covered less (if at all) or not be described as 'terrorism'?

Despite much speculation about which terrorist attacks receive more news media coverage and which are described as 'terrorism', only recently has systematic research identified some of those discrepancies. A handful of recent studies focusing on attacks and news coverage in the US have consistently found that attacks perpetrated by Muslims receive significantly more media coverage than other attacks, even when accounting for myriad other factors, such as fatalities and target types, that would also affect coverage.[16] Similarly, research on selected attacks[17] and a systematic evaluation of media coverage of US attacks[18] show that coverage of Muslim-perpetrated attacks are more likely to mention 'terrorism'. While those studies are focused on the US, it's reasonable to assume that similar trends appear in other Western countries' domestic news coverage, even after discounting the spillover of US media coverage to other countries.

On average, attacks perpetrated by Muslims receive 4.5 times more news media coverage than other attacks, and that coverage is nearly six times more likely to mention 'terrorism'.[19] These biases in media coverage can affect public perceptions of terrorism threats and potentially shift policy.[20] While research to date can't draw a causal arrow between uneven media coverage of terrorism and public views on it, we do see a number of parallels. Research with Western participants consistently shows that the public is more likely to consider an attack to be terrorism when the perpetrator is Muslim than when the perpetrator is white and non-Muslim.[21]

Beyond biases in news media coverage of terrorism, two other forms of media influence the messages that the public receives about terrorism: social media and some groups' own 'media departments'. Social media can act as an echo chamber for one's own beliefs, although that impact is probably exaggerated.[22] Perhaps more importantly, al-Qaeda, ISIS, far-right extremist groups and others use social media as recruitment platforms.[23] Bolstering those efforts, al-Qaeda's internal media department has created and disseminated content.[24] ISIS adopted this approach and in many ways perfected it by not only creating its own media content but tailoring that content and its messaging to different target audiences around the world.[25] Today, groups can use social media—and even create their own content—to craft their public image without relying upon news media as conduits.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The relationship between the media and terrorism is less clear and consistent than has long been assumed. Group can and often do lie about their violence, mainly by neglecting to claim credit for it. Claims of responsibility are rare and should be treated with some caution. Does the claim make sense, and is it in line with the group's goals? If not, does the group have something to gain by falsely suggesting that it's responsible and garnering media attention from the claim?

On the media side, the disproportionate focus on Muslims as terrorists is likely to influence public debate and, potentially, security policy. As we see an uptick in far-right terrorism, particularly in the West, too sharp a focus on Islamist extremism is troubling.[26] To address the myriad potential threats we face, counterterrorism policy experts—and to some extent the public—should strive to focus on terrorism data and research rather than media representations (and misrepresentations) of violence.

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UNDERSTANDING WOMEN AND ISLAMIC STATE TERRORISM:

where are we now?

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In March 2019, the final remnants of IS's territory in the Syrian town of Baghouz fell, leaving the group, its supporters and affiliates without any physical manifestation of their 'caliphate'. Governments around the world are grappling with the varied and complex implications of the fall of the caliphate. A range of interlocking security, human rights, legal, ethical and moral challenges that involve men, women and children who have spent the past five years knee-deep in violent extremist ideology and practice have implications domestically, regionally and internationally.

Until recently, considerations of the security threats pertaining to IS have revolved around male members,[1] who are thought to be the most dangerous due to their weapons training and battlefield experience. This has meant that current approaches to understanding violent extremism haven't adequately engaged with the female experience, which is reflected in CT and CVE responses.

Recognising the diversity in the roles of the women of IS is critical to enhancing our insight and understanding of the motivations of those who migrated to the caliphate, and the levels of agency in their decisions. With a more comprehensive understanding of the roles and motivations of women involved in violent extremism, we may be able to be more discerning in our analysis of the nature of the threat that they might or might not pose upon their return into mainstream society.

Here, I explore the roles and motivations of the IS female affiliates who travelled to the Caliphate, as well as the specific challenges posed by that cohort to policymakers and practitioners trying to develop appropriate and effective CT responses. I highlight complexities in designing and implementing appropriate CT and CVE responses to address the unique challenges posed by female affiliates of IS. To create such responses, we need a nuanced understanding of their motivations for travelling to the caliphate and a critical understanding of their roles and responsibilities there. Furthermore, we need a more comprehensive understanding of their agency across all areas of decision making. Although these women may very well pose a threat to national security, they are also likely to have been victims of violence themselves—whether sexual violence or other types of trauma while being in a conflict zone. Policymakers and practitioners responsible for integrating women within CT responses must bear in mind that women are simultaneously likely to be victims of violence and potential perpetrators of violence.[2]

MOTIVATIONS FOR WOMEN TO JOIN TERRORIST GROUPS

Between 2014 and 2018, 41,490 foreign people migrated to IS territory from 80 countries. Of those, 13% (4,761)[3] were women, and 2,541 of them came from Western nations.[4] Thousands of them remain in refugee camps in northern Syria, the most well-known of which is the al-Hawl camp, which is 'home' to around 64,000 women and children at the time of writing.[5] Included in this number are thought to be 20 Australian women and 47 children.[6] They're currently awaiting decisions from their countries of origin on whether or not they'll be allowed to return, and under what circumstances.

From a variety of sources including first-hand interviews, social media profiles, blogs and other online/offline interactions, we have learned that the push and pull factors affecting female IS affiliates appear to be quite similar to those affecting their male counterparts[7] and span a spectrum of political, economic and social grievances that transcend gender. Push-factor grievances included prolonged displacement, insufficient or inadequate economic or employment opportunities,[8] sociocultural isolation in the West, perceived (or real) persecution of Muslims, and rising Islamophobia.[9] Strong pull factors included redemption narratives, the desire to be part of a sisterhood, adventure, romance, and the desire to be part of a utopian and divinely ordained society under Islamic law and jurisprudence.[10]

Despite those common incentives and shared grievances, data collated by multiple international scholars and researchers shows that no single profile fits women who became affiliates of IS. In particular, Daniel Milton and Brian Dodwell's analysis of an IS guesthouse register illustrates great variations in the women's motivations.[11] Each nation and each individual has had a different experience. There are countless reports detailing the demographics of female migrants but from which no specific pattern or trend can be drawn in order to create a typology of affiliates. The use of reductive terms such as 'IS wives' or '*jihadi* brides' to explain these women's motivations to travel to the caliphate denies them their agency and oversimplifies the multifaceted and complex ways in which thousands of women 'joined' IS.

PATHWAYS INTO IS'S CALIPHATE

Even though sensationalised media coverage painted them as vulnerable victims manipulated by their recruiters or as lovestruck '*jihadi* brides', these women had complex experiences demonstrating there was no single route to joining IS. Cook and Vale's global dataset[12] of female IS affiliates described a variety of different pathways. For example, German women who migrated were on average three years younger than their male counterparts and were more likely to travel with their family (in over half of the cases).[13] On the other hand, data suggests that many British women and girls who travelled went independently. This observation may suggest a certain degree of autonomy[14] among British affiliates, although before drawing any definitive conclusions, far more primary data and empirical analysis is required.

Furthermore, aside from instances that involved coercion or romance-related travel, other women have cited different reasons for travel that demonstrate agency and priorities outside of marriage The well-publicised case of the 17-year-old Indonesian girl Nurshardrina Khairadhania is a good example that helpfully deconstructs gender stereotypes and myths about women affiliates.[15] Nur Dhania managed to persuade 25 members of her family, including her parents and grandmother, to join her in migrating to the caliphate.[16] She was influenced by IS's utopian promises to clear her family's debts, to provide free education, to reimburse them for their travel and to allow her to live in a fair and peaceful Islamic state while learning about religion and pursuing healthcare training. After realising that the reality did not reflect the propaganda, the family attempted to return to Indonesia. They have since been repatriated and have undergone the 'deradicalisation' procedures required by the BNPT (the Indonesian anti-terror agency). As her father had been conscripted by IS for military training, he was charged with terror-related offences and is now serving a prison sentence despite not demonstrating any interest in fighting for the group. Nur Dhania has been reintegrated into society by the Indonesian Government and is speaking out about her misguided dalliance with IS. Aside from the mandatory 'deradicalisation' procedures, she appears to have not been reprimanded further despite having managed to convince most of her family to travel with her to join IS.

Her example is interesting. The varied policy responses to the family's experience appear to demonstrate a nuanced approach to CT. However, on closer reflection, the fact that Nur Dhania's father and other male members of the family were incarcerated upon their return demonstrates the working of a 'gendered logic'[17] that relies on particular notions of masculinity and femininity. Engaging Nur Dhania in state-sponsored CT work appears to demonstrate the tendency of the state to essentialise women's politics for security purposes, which 'limits the capacity of the state to realise women's rights … delegitimating women's dissent'.[18]

Australian women who travelled to the caliphate are a diverse cohort that includes family groups with minors, some who were single and looking for romance, and some who were married and went with their husbands. They range from girls as young as 4 years old to middle-aged parents who followed their relatives to the caliphate.[19] Many of the women who are currently living in al-Hawl camp claim that they were 'duped' by their male relatives and had no choice in the matter. Perhaps some were, but others are likely to have gone of their own accord. Others have claimed that humanitarian aid work was their priority, and that they never supported or 'joined' IS but were caught up in circumstances from which they were unable to remove themselves.[20] Even though many of the women and girls, including Zaynab Sharrouf, Zehra Duman and Janai Safar, appeared to demonstrate vocal support of IS's aims and objectives via their social media platforms, it is impossible to know the degree to which their 'support' indicated a highly dangerous and radicalised individual or whether it was a product of bravado designed to create a certain type of online persona.

One interesting finding is that more than half of the Australian women travelled with or as part of family groups, and that most were already connected through a broader network outside the caliphate through family ties, marriages or friendships, making it difficult to gauge levels of coercion and agency.[21] Their familial or marital bonds may further complicate government security assessments of individuals.

The Australian Government has stripped 17 people of their citizenship since the conflict began, including Zehra Duman[22] based on conventions in place for dual nationality citizens. Australia has repatriated some minors, such as the Sharrouf children, but others remain in the camps with their mothers or other

relatives. The 2018 Australian Citizenship Amendment Bill sets out many of the provisions for the exercise of cessation power[23] and further comments from the Department of Home Affairs[24] suggest that children are to retain Australian citizenship even if their parents lose theirs. However, there remains no definitive clarity about repatriation policies or considerations of the practicalities involved in the aftermath of citizenship stripping.

In November 2019, Turkey stated that it will begin to deport IS foreign fighters—including those whose citizenship has been revoked—back to their countries of origin.[25] There are no further details about how such a policy could be enforced, which further demonstrates a lack of clarity on such a risky and complex issue.

It's important for analysts and policymakers to consider the complexities of individuals' experiences before they travelled as well as their experience in the caliphate before making decisions about whether or not they pose a threat. Policy responses considering prosecution or rehabilitation need to be assessed on a case-by-case basis.

ROLES OF WOMEN IN THE CALIPHATE

We have a relatively good understanding of the nature of female support for IS both inside and outside the caliphate. It comes from a wide array of sources, such as media reports, official IS documents and propaganda, anecdotal evidence from the battlefield, interviews with the women and academic literature on *jihad*.

The dominant media narrative of '*jihadi* brides' or 'ISIS wives' has been a problematic framing of the complex roles and responsibilities of these women. While it's true that their primary responsibility was in the domestic domain as homemakers, wives and mothers, women were integral to sustaining the caliphate's state structure in many other ways, too. IS exploited gender stereotypes of masculinities and femininities to strategically recruit men and women for specific roles and purposes and to uphold its strict standards of gender segregation outside the home. Women were tasked to carry out essential jobs, such as health care, religious instruction and policing (such as in the Al-Khanssaa Brigade).

In late 2017, women were sanctioned to take up arms.[26] Until then, combat roles were permitted only in very specific circumstances.[27] While female combatants in terrorism are nothing new, this policy change reflected pragmatism on the part of IS. On the one hand it reflected a practical requirement to boost combat support for the receding caliphate territory. On the other it reflected a rhetorical shift that indicated that jihad had reverted from an offensive to a defensive paradigm.[28] The extent to which women engaged in combat operations wasn't especially zealous, but a number of all-female cells have been uncovered across the world, including in the UK,[29] France[30] and Tunisia before and after this 'call to arms', demonstrating a keen interest of female supporters of IS in planning, organising and potentially mounting physical attacks.

As argued by Jayne Huckerby, policymakers are playing 'catch up' when it comes to their understanding of women's roles in perpetrating or preventing terrorism.[31] When women have been integrated into CT and CVE, the approach has been simplistic at best and has relied on gender stereotypes that focus on the roles of women as mothers, nurturers and carers and as inherently non-violent individuals. This has prevented the development of holistic and nuanced CT and CVE responses. Katherine Brown has argued that this 'maternal logic' depends on reinforcing particular notions of masculinity and femininity.[32]

Prevailing essentialised gender norms that position women as inherently peaceful and nurturing have been prioritised when integrating female perspectives into CT and CVE initiatives. This has encouraged governments and civil society to reinforce the roles of mother and wife, which limits women's participation in PVE and CVE to the private sphere. The valuable roles played by women around the world in all kinds of family, community, society and government efforts in building resilience, peacekeeping and peacebuilding thus go unnoticed, and ineffective CVE processes are created based on inaccurate understandings of women's participation in violent extremism.[33]

CONCLUSIONS

We need to thoroughly understand the motivations and experiences of female IS affiliates in order to make a comprehensive assessment of the nature of the threat posed by IS after the caliphate and to better engage women both as agents and targets of CT and CVE initiatives moving forward.

For all the reasons outlined above, women should be considered just as likely as men to be potential security threats, whether by carrying out attacks, radicalising others or through other forms of 'support'. However, given the gendered nature of violent extremism and terrorism, "treating men and women as equally likely to commit violence might not mean treating them the same in all instances, given the gender differences in roles, recruitment strategies, treatment and experiences … in IS."[34] Acknowledging this distinction will enable a better understanding of the roles of men and women within the caliphate, as well as the motivations for female radicalisation, both of which will usefully inform CT efforts.

As observed by Cook and Vale, when women are framed in relation to security issues, "there appears to be less political will or public acceptance to return women [back home]. In contrast, where viewed more in terms of victimhood or *naïveté*, prospects for redemption and rehabilitation may appear more in public discourses."[35] These discourses directly affect how CT and CVE measures are constructed and implemented and has been especially crucial in framing the debates around repatriation of women. Policymakers therefore need to move away from framing women's experiences in terms of binaries—that is, either as naïve victims of grooming or as lethal security threats—and move towards creating a more holistic picture of their complex experiences which would inevitably have a bearing on policy and practice moving forward.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. **Repatriate all citizens who are currently in refugee and internment camps in Iraq and Syria, especially the women and children.**

Governments should avoid knee-jerk responses that privilege the use of blunt, hard security tactics such as citizenship stripping. Although determining citizenship can at times be a grey area (for example, for minors born inside the caliphate to foreign nationals of different nationalities), countries must take responsibility for all their known citizens who became IS affiliates. The priority should be to emphasise and promote a legal approach that upholds the rule of law and human rights while simultaneously considering national security provisions, on an individual basis. In Australia's case, the numbers aren't large and are manageable: there are currently around 20 Australian women and 44 children in al-Hawl camp in Syria. The decision to leave them overseas and potentially render many of them stateless could have disadvantageous effects that may inadvertently bolster terrorist recruitment campaigns in the future.

2. **Ensure that individual, tailored, multilateral support plans are implemented with a gender-sensitive approach.**

Whether people are being repatriated from the caliphate or have been through judicial processes in their home countries, government should implement multilateral, individually tailored support plans that engage with the complex, diverse and unique experiences of the individual and their journey of radicalisation.

Gender needs to be central in all assessments and evaluations of individuals. Governments, multilateral organisations and civil society must move away from the tendency to overwhelmingly focus on male perpetrators of extremist violence, which has left significant gaps in current approaches to CT and CVE. The voices and experiences of women in this field have been overlooked and opportunities for considered CT and CVE policy design and implementation have been missed.

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Terrorism and innovation

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SALAFI-JIHADI GROUPS IN THE POST-CALIPHATE ERA

Salafi-jihadi terrorist groups are increasingly embracing flatter, decentralised and transnational structures in their campaigns, as advocated in Abu Musab al-Suri's treatise, *The call to global Islamic resistance*. This shift becomes clear when we look at the way jihadists, especially in the post-2014 period, engage in propaganda and messaging, opting to use a decentralised framework and multiple platforms.

Al-Suri rejected organisational centralisation for security reasons, arguing that it stifles innovation. He emphasised that the *umma* is vast and therefore an effective way to guide the faithful is to do so in a natural way by giving them general guidelines on how to operate but not to impose a strict structure. Al-Suri was also an early proponent of individuals (free of organisations) taking action (*jihad fardiyah*, or individual jihad), and his influence on the development of lone-actor engagement has been extensive. He allegedly inspired Abdul Nacer Benbrika, the leader of the Melbourne cell arrested as part of Operation Pendennis. He probably also inspired Bahrun Naim, an Indonesian national who had travelled to Syria in 2015 to join ISIL. Naim was killed in an airstrike in November 2018, but during his time in Syria he managed to either write or translate manuals on how to construct bombs and disseminate *Salafi-jihadi* ideas. Notably, Naim was a proponent of the autonomous cell structure as opposed to the rigid hierarchical system that others, primarily members of Jamaah Ansharut Daulah (JAD), have advocated. Although he travelled to Syria to join ISIL, he took inspiration from the online magazine of Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP), *Inspire*, which promoted the idea of an e-jihad (one doesn't need to travel to a conflict zone to learn how to fight).[1]

In the light of the fluidity that al-Suri advocates, it becomes clearer why he argued that one reason why the *jihadi* movement was failing was because of 'stodgy, hierarchical forms of political organisation, carelessness about security and indifference to long-term strategy'.[2] Al-Suri's willingness to speak truth to power is in line with the need for honesty in carrying out *jihad*. Ideologues and strategists such as al-Suri, Anwar al-Awlaki and Sayyed Imam Al-Sharif ('Dr Fadl') were drawing on the words of Khalid ibn al-Waleed, also known as Sayf-Allah al-Maslul (the Drawn Sword of Allah), who fought alongside the Prophet Mohammed, Abu Bakr and Umar ibn al-Khattab in the 7th century. Al-Waleed emphasised the importance of reflecting on one's military engagement and providing an honest assessment of why a campaign succeeded or failed.[3]

The key to al-Suri's observations was his insight into what the recruiter should do, as he emphasised that the recruiter must be:

> … qualified in doctrines of security, in matters of legalities, in cultural matters, and he must have a lot of knowledge. He must be able to affect a wide circle of people. He will select some of his acquaintances that he thinks are qualified to lead the detachments. He will speak to each one of them separately on this topic in gradual stages after he trusts them and prepares them separately with one assistant, or two maximum. He will use the methodology of the call during the period of preparation, especially this book, which is the most important research paper.[4]

Recognising the new security environment in the early 2010s, which meant that al-Qaeda was more vulnerable to coalition attacks, but also that the organisation was facing competition from other *jihadi* actors, Ayman al-Zawahiri drastically changed the strategic, organisational and tactical nature of al-Qaeda. The change manifested itself in al-Qaeda becoming less rigid as an organisation and adopting a franchising model, in which it was the principal promoter of an ideology: al-Qaedaism. Moreover, al-Qaeda encouraged local groups to engage in actions against local oppressors, claiming that such actions are part of a global campaign to bring about change. A good example of this is the way Zawahiri supported the development of *jihadi* groups in the Sinai.[5] Thus, his post-bin Laden strategy centres on a willingness to shift and change the targets (for example, al-Qaeda Central ceased to carry out terrorist attacks, letting its franchisees, such as AQAP, carry out attacks, as was the case in Paris).[6]

It appears that in 2019 other *Salafi-jihadi* organisations are on track to follow al-Qaeda's lead by encouraging others, mainly individuals who don't have a clear affiliation or tie to the organisations, to mount attacks in their names.

This shift has several implications for terrorist groups and for counterterrorism.

First, the ability of terrorist leaders to monopolise current and future processes of innovation, and action, has become weaker. The proliferation of operations by homegrown, often young, lone actors has meant that the possibilities for individual innovation become greater. With this change, official leaders are less able to rein in more outlandish, ill-thought-out and dangerous operations. Thus, when Zarqawi 'innovated' in Iraq by engaging in a mass terror campaign against the Sunni tribes, bin Laden and Zawahiri were compelled to chastise him, arguing that his actions weren't just un-Islamic but were alienating potential recruits. (In Zarqawi's view, his butchery, images of which he uploaded onto the internet for wide distribution, was the key to winning over recruits.) What was also important about the event was that neither bin Laden nor Zawahiri was able to stop Zarqawi.

Zawahiri's *General guidelines for jihad* was in some ways a response to the growing violence committed by *Salafi-jihadis* against other Muslims and others, which is why he called for restraint in attacking other Muslim sects and even non-Muslims. He argued that it was more important to engage in missionary work (*dawa*) to spread al-Qaeda's ideas and through such work win over more support.[7] His message wasn't widely embraced, as al-Qaeda had to contend first with the Islamic State of Iraq and later with ISIL, both of which made Zarqawi's butchery a key aspect of their identities and recruiting.

Second, network decentralisation has allowed *Salafi-jihadi* groups to adapt their ideology and tactics to meet local needs and wants, which again stems from Zawahiri's *General guidelines for jihad*, as he emphasised that the 'struggle is a long one, and jihad is in need of safe bases'.[8] In other words, Zawahiri read the situation that al-Qaeda was in and he adapted. Through that change, what has taken place is that Zawahiri has been able to expand al-Qaeda's network well beyond Afghanistan and Pakistan.

Third, *Salafi-jihadi* groups have had to adapt their communication (outreach) operations to influence and inspire action. They recognise that traditional and social media outlets are becoming savvier in dealing with violent content, recognising the danger that comes with dissemination. The traditional media seem to adopt a code of conduct in which, for example, they don't name the suspects in mass shootings or disseminate their 'manifestos'.

Consider events in the US in June 1995. *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post* took the controversial decision to publish a manuscript titled 'Industrial society and its future' by someone calling themselves 'Freedom Club'. The author stated that, in return for publishing the manuscript, they would cease their terror campaign. After consulting the Federal Bureau of Investigation and Attorney-General Janet Reno, the newspapers published the 'manifesto' in the hope of saving lives. It's claimed that the publication led to the arrest of Ted Kaczynski—the Unabomber.[9]

Fast forward to France in 2012. Mohamed Merah was a self-proclaimed *Salafi-jihadi* who shot and killed seven people. After his attack, Merah returned to his Toulouse apartment to edit a 24-minute video clip of his killing spree, which he then put on a USB stick and mailed to *al-Jazeera*, which refused to show the video because doing so would breach its ethical code. Nevertheless, what Merah demonstrates is the evolution of a process for the dissemination of information by violent extremists.

Kaczynski needed the traditional mainstream press to spread his message, whereas Merah opted to reach out to one outlet, which even though it refused to publish the information couldn't stop it. By 2019, the Christchurch shooter didn't need to reach out to a media outlet, as he could self-publish his actions by posting links to his live stream.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The issue of innovation and terrorism is attracting attention and interest from academic scholars and researchers. Understanding and identifying innovative terror practices in real time is difficult, as researchers aren't privy to the internal workings of terrorist groups and because there are many questions about how ideas spread. Nevertheless, *jihadi* groups innovate because they want to survive and continue their campaign. They also recognise that states are becoming better at forestalling some of their initiatives, largely by removing key actors through an effective decapitation policy.

In addressing jihadist propaganda and messaging, states have adopted inadequate measures, partly because they haven't properly understood the technology and the platforms, as well as the Swarmcast model and the multiplatform communication paradigm.[10] Current measures focus on established social media platforms, including by placing responsibility for removing violent extremist content on the tech and social media companies, which doesn't address the root of the problem of why violent extremist content continues to appeal to people. Moreover, as has become clear, terrorist groups are migrating away from established mainstream platforms, using them merely as beacons, as most proselytising takes place on secure channels.

EASY WINS

The security establishment faces an enormous challenge in assessing the threat trajectory as the *Salafi-jihadi* architecture changes.[11] If we begin by recognising that we're facing rational actors who engage in creativity and innovation and who are operating as entrepreneurs of terrorist action, that would help to ensure that we don't underestimate the threat. In other words, we must be careful not to fall prey to a failure of imagination, which was one of the findings of the 9/11 Commission. To address this issue, the security establishment must work with actors and entities that engage and embrace creativity and innovation, as one key problem faced by all big bureaucracies is

'groupthink'. Thus, it's incumbent on the security establishment to regularly reach beyond the confines of its environment and interact with academics, with people who have engaged or interacted with violent extremists and with industry to know what's coming. Using red-teaming, roundtables and other forums will ensure that the security agencies will be able to get a complete picture.

Security agencies are privy to an enormous cache of classified information. It may be useful for them to consider sharing some of it with people who aren't from the security world. The information could be disclosed in a secure location after the recipient signs an undertaking not to disclose it to third parties. The purpose here is to get 'fresh eyes' to look at it and assess it.

There must be a demand that the videogame industry develop its own form of the Global Counterterrorism Forum, as it's evident that terrorist groups are seeking to exploit videogaming to promote their agenda. We must also engage with those who sell game consoles and ensure that they recognise the potential for their equipment to be used for wrongdoing.

THE HARD YARDS

None of the legislative measures adopted by successive Australian governments come close to addressing the realities discussed in this report. They're focused on preventing mainstream platforms being used for the dissemination of violent extremist content, even though there's little empirical evidence that that form of dissemination is happening. Moreover, the measures are rather static, focusing on one type of media and not looking at the whole gamut. Consequently, there's a desperate need to recognise that disruption must address the Swarmcast model and multiplatform communication paradigm, which requires an understanding of what drives the *munasirun* (the jihadis' legion of online supporters and volunteer media operatives).

I suggest that traditional disruption doesn't work because it fails to address the disaggregated nature of the munasirun (one could also apply this to right-wing extremists), which means that identifying hubs has become more difficult and costly.

There's a need to establish a centre the sole goal of which is to collect and study content and interact with tech and social media companies on how to block and disrupt the many channels used by sympathisers of terrorist groups. We need to redirect our attention from the main terrorist actors to their sympathisers, allies and supporters, whom the terror groups rely on to distribute content and circumvent existing counterterrorism measures. The centre should be staffed by area specialists, linguists and subject-matter experts (academics) in Islam, theology and far-right activity, and by technologists.

By creating such a hub, we could adapt faster to changes in the online violent extremism world, as those working on far-right or anti-government groups could share their insights with those working on Salafi-jihadi networks. Additionally, the centre should provide regular updates to the private sector to allow tech and social media companies to adjust their policies, including, if there's a need, by suspending certain services, as YouTube did after the Christchurch terrorist attack.

The centre should work closely with the security agencies, the police, the Global Counterterrorism Forum, Tech Against Terrorism and the many other academic forums and think tanks that focus on studying terrorist groups. The centre must ensure that information flows in both directions. The security agencies shouldn't hide behind a veil of classification, as there must be two-way communication for the system to work.

BREAKING THE RULES

It's important to recognise that terrorist groups, movements and networks feed off the general dissatisfaction of many young people, who don't feel that their views and values are represented. For example, one recent study found out that in 2018 only 41% of voters were satisfied with Australia's democracy (in 2007, 86% were satisfied).[12]

Many policymakers emphasise democratic credentials as understood before the end of the Cold War. Separating democracies from totalitarian or authoritarian states doesn't resonate with many young adults, who either can't vote or feel that voting has become a futile exercise mandated by law and tradition. Policymakers must explore new ways of engaging with teens and new voters who feel marginalised and who have different concerns from the ones expressed by senior policymakers.[13]

Putting it simply, we need to reconsider the way our political system functions to ensure that the views of millennials and others are included in shaping policies. By not including them we're encouraging them to think that the current system doesn't serve their interests, which is why some want to change it.

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Forecasting active threat attacks:

A NEW CATEGORY OF RISK TO ANTICIPATE

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The risk of an armed assailant entering a public venue to shoot, bomb, stab or drive a vehicle to kill as many people as possible is of utmost concern to public safety worldwide. Generally, such attackers, as terrorists, have no direct personal relationship to their targets, which are selected for a variety of reasons. In the case of hardened strategic targets, terrorists might select them for their iconic symbolism (such as the World Trade Center towers on 9/11) or as targets of opportunity, such as shopping malls or public spaces, because they're relatively 'soft' and easier to access for an attack.

In a new attack trend, which has become increasingly pervasive, in what's termed the category of active threat, there's a direct relation between the attacker and the target, such as when an attacker intentionally targets his or her co-workers as an insider. What makes this category significant is that it also applies to terrorists, particularly those who are considered lone-actor terrorists because they don't belong to a terror group.[1]

To qualify as active threat perpetrators, such attackers are either psychologically disordered active shooters or ideologically extremist terrorists with a direct relation to their intended target, which in many cases is their workplace, and their attacks are considered to be workplace violence related.[2] Knowing their intended targets also makes them insiders.[3]

In this categorisation, at least three of the four types of violent attributes of such perpetrators need to converge to produce an active threat attacker:

- an active shooter
- workplace violence
- terrorism
- insiderhood.

The insider dimension is the most crucial, since it characterises all such perpetrators who conduct their attacks at their workplaces. Being an insider who is known to the targeted occupants makes it easier for such a perpetrator to access their hardened targets; they can thwart any security mechanism that might be in place in ways that an outsider could not. As a result, direct authorised access at the targeted area enables an active threat attacker to potentially inflict a greater number of fatalities and injuries than other types of attackers. As demonstrated in three of the six cases discussed below, the attackers' authorised access to guarded facilities enabled them to carry out mass-fatality attacks.

Another factor that characterises active threat perpetrators is that their co-workers and others associated with them are generally aware that they're psychologically troubled individuals who might be on a trajectory towards engaging in violence. However, in many cases, there's insufficient follow-up of co-workers' and associates' suspicions about such risk factors to report them to appropriate authorities in order to thwart and pre-empt the attack during the crucial pre-incident phases.

My objective here is to highlight how early warning signs of potential active threat perpetrators can be identified during the pre-incident phases in order to forecast the likelihood of their attacks and to enable pre-emptive prevention. Understanding the multidimensional nature of such perpetrators will also enable law enforcement and counterterrorism agencies to effectively anticipate the suspicious mindsets and behaviours exhibited by such individuals in their midst who might be embarking on a trajectory of violence.

ACTIVE THREAT PERPETRATORS

To understand the nature of active threat perpetrators and the types of attacks they conduct, six incidents are highlighted in Table 1.

These six incidents were selected because they represent a spectrum of active threat perpetrator-type incidents in several countries. Five of them were characterised by the four types of active threat actor, and one of them (Aaron Alexis) exhibited three out of the four types.

Table 1: Active threat incidents

Perpetrators	Incident and date	Active shooter	Workplace violence	Terrorism	Insider
Nidal Hasan	Shooting at Fort Hood, Killeen, Texas, 5 November 2009 13 killed, 32 wounded	X	X	X	X
Aaron Alexis	Shooting at Washington Navy Yard, Washington DC, 16 September 2013 12 killed, 4 wounded	X	X	–	X
Syed Rizwan Farook and Tashfeen Malik	Shooting at Inland Regional Center, San Bernardino, California, 2 December 2015 14 killed, 22 wounded	X	X	X	X
Nimer Mahmoud Ahmad Jamal	Shooting at Har Adar, West Bank, Israel, 26 September 2017 3 Israelis killed, 1 wounded	X	X	X	X
Ashraf Waleed Suliman Na'alwa, 23	Shooting at Barkan Industrial Park, West Bank, Israel, 7 October 2018 2 Israelis killed	X	X	X	X
Mickael Harpon, 45	Stabbing attack at police headquarters, Paris, 3 October 2019 4 co-workers killed, 1 wounded	X	X	X	X

NIDAL HASAN

On 5 November 2009, US Army psychiatrist Major Nidal Hasan, aged 39, carried out a continuous shooting rampage at the Fort Hood military base in Killeen, Texas, killing 13 soldiers and wounding 32 others. He had authorised access to the military base. Throughout his army medical career, colleagues and superiors expressed concern about his low job performance and extremist views. He was also described as socially isolated, stressed by his work with soldiers who were deployed overseas, and opposed to the US military's intervention in Afghanistan and Iraq.[4]

AARON ALEXIS

On 16 September 2013, Aaron Alexis, aged 34, conducted a shooting rampage at the headquarters of the Naval Sea Systems Command (NAVSEA) at the Washington Navy Yard in Washington DC. Twelve people were killed and three others were wounded. His continuous shooting spree was as an active shooter. Alexis worked for a company that provided contracted IT services to the Navy and had a secret-level security clearance, which gave him access to the guarded facility. He was shot and killed by one of the responding police SWAT officers. It's reported that Alexis had suffered from mental illness, which those associated with him had noticed, and had had several judicial misconduct charges against him in the past.[5] His direct motivation for the attack was reportedly his realisation that he was about to be fired from his job, which led him to target his co-workers at the Navy building.[6]

SYED RIZWAN FAROOK AND TASHFEEN MALIK

On 2 December 2015, husband and wife Syed Rizwan Farook (aged 28) and Tashfeen Malik (aged 29) conducted a shooting rampage at the husband's organisation's holiday party at the Inland Regional Center in San Bernardino, California. Fourteen people were killed and 22 others were wounded. The attack was terrorism-related, as the couple regarded themselves as fighters for jihad.[7] Their continuous shooting spree was as active shooters. The attack was workplace violence-related, as Farook had worked as a health inspector at the San Bernardino County Department of Public Health and deliberately targeted its departmental event at the community centre for his attack. Since he was known to his targeted co-workers, he was an insider. The couple were killed in a shootout with responding police.

NIMER MAHMOUD AHMAD JAMAL

On 26 September 2017, Nimer Mahmoud Ahmad Jamal, aged 37, a Palestinian labourer, carried out a shooting attack against security guards at the entrance gate of Har Adar (an Israeli settlement outside Jerusalem, in the West Bank), killing three Israeli security guards and wounding a fourth. The attacker was killed in a shootout with the security guards. Jamal, from the neighbouring village of Beit Surik, held a licence to work in Israeli settlements and had previously worked as a labourer for several of Har Adar's residents, who had befriended him. As a regular worker, he was known to the guards at the town's entrance gate, so he took them by surprise when he took a handgun out of his shirt and opened fire.[8] It's reported that Jamal, who had been radicalised into violent extremism, also suffered from severe personal and family problems, including using domestic violence against his wife.[9]

ASHRAF WALEED SULIMAN NA'ALWA

Ashraf Waleed Suliman Na'alwa, a 23-year-old Palestinian, worked at the Barkan Industrial Park as an electrician, giving him access to the Israeli-run factory near the settlements of Barkan and Ariel in the central West Bank. On the morning of 7 October 2018, he entered the factory with a Carlo submachine-gun, shot two Israeli co-workers and wounded a third. Escaping from the scene, he was ultimately tracked down by Israeli security services and killed while attempting to resist arrest at the village of Shuweika near Tulkarem. His motivation for the attack is unknown in open-source literature, but it's reported that he had trained for his attack for two weeks. His mother was indicted by Israeli authorities for knowing about his intended attack but not reporting it.[10]

MICKAEL HARPON

On 3 October 2019, Mickael Harpon, a 45-year-old IT worker at the police headquarters in Paris, used a kitchen knife to fatally stab four co-workers and wound another. A responding police officer shot him dead after issuing several warnings. Harpon had worked at the police headquarters for several years. He had converted to Islam some 18 months earlier and was reportedly radicalised into religious extremism. Some of his colleagues alerted managers to his suspicious opinions and behaviours, but no formal investigation was launched.[11] Reportedly, there was a 'culture of reticence' about reporting colleagues' possible radicalisation into extremism at the police workplace, driven by concerns about 'appearing racist or anti-Muslim'.[12]

FORECASTING ACTIVE THREAT VIOLENCE

In these six cases, five of these perpetrators exhibited all four of the active threat dimensions of active shooter, terrorist, workplace violence, and insidership, while one, Aaron Alexis, wasn't considered a terrorist. With five of the perpetrators considered to be domestic terrorists in their own countries, it should be noted that, at least in the US, there's no official definition of 'domestic terrorism'. For this reason, in this account domestic terrorism is defined broadly to include people who attack their compatriots for political objectives, whether or not the extremist ideologies driving them are domestically or foreign-based.

To anticipate future attacks by such multidimensional perpetrators, it's crucial to aggregate at least three of the four threat dimensions to see whether they apply to individuals of concern in order to identify them during their early pre-incident preparations. In retrospect, that should have been the case with these six perpetrators, since they were all known to their intended victims as highly problematic. This is crucial because, unless they're pre-empted, insiders are already aware of how to exploit their organisations by accessing protected facilities, evading security systems and knowing who to target, in contrast to other types of attackers without direct links to their targets.

Anticipating suspicious pre-incident activities by such active threat perpetrators that might lead to their engagement in violence requires a multifaceted forecasting approach because monitoring their activities would be more difficult if those activities are viewed in isolation. For example, it might be possible to notice an individual preparing a terrorist attack, but not one against their co-workers as an insider. This shortens the time available to prevent, pre-empt or halt their preparations. As these distinct types of threats, which were previously viewed as singular, converge, the magnitude of the overall threat therefore becomes exponentially greater (for example, by combining workplace violence and insider access with a terrorist's attack capability and arsenal of weaponry).

To forecast potential attacks by such active threat perpetrators, therefore, requires aggregating methodologies to forecast how an individual might become:

- an active shooter (such as their psychological disorder and disposition to violence)
- a terrorist (such as radicalisation into violent extremism and the acquisition of arms as a lone actor or terrorist group member)
- an exponent of workplace violence (such as vengefulness towards co-workers accompanied by the acquisition of weapons and ammunition)
- an insider (such as someone who is known to associates, including co-workers, with a possible disposition to become an active threat-type perpetrator).

A useful methodology to forecast the likelihood of at least three of the four categories of individuals becoming active threat perpetrators is to apply 'pathways to violence' models to map their possible trajectories into violence. In such models, which apply to all four categories of violent assailant, a trajectory into violence is outlined in distinct pre-incident phases:

- a trigger (a traumatic event, such as a personal, professional or ideological crisis)
- ideation/fantasy (thinking about using violence to avenge a perceived grievance, including being driven by an extremist ideology)
- crossing a threshold into preparatory activities (such as acquiring weapons and ammunition)
- approaching a target to conduct an attack.

It might be challenging to observe suspicious behaviours by such co-workers in real time. For that reason, it's becoming increasingly commonplace for organisations to establish internal threat assessment teams that are capable of aggregating the threat information that's reported to them and then following up with relevant authorities for appropriate responses. For government agencies, in particular, artificial-intelligence-based algorithms might be used to aggregate threat data on individuals of concern, including their possible ties to organised terrorist groups or loosely affiliated networks.

CONCLUSION

To pre-empt potential active threat incidents, public safety responders in government, law enforcement and the private sector need to be knowledgeable about not only how to respond to each of those threats in isolation, but to prepare, ahead of time, tailored and customised responses to comprehensively respond to several of the threats in combination.

One advantage of adopting an enterprise-wide situational awareness of the risk of a potential active threat is that it will also resolve any definitional confusion that may arise when such multi-type perpetrator incidents occur. This will help to avoid the confusion of having to come up with a single term to define them as specifically 'active shooter', 'terrorism', 'workplace violence' or 'insider' when perpetrators exhibit at least three of the four types of threats in their motivation, intent, tactics, choice of weapons and targeting, including, most importantly, easy access to their targets as insiders.

Adopting active threat situational awareness will also prevent a recurrence of incidents in which potentially risk-based behaviours by such individuals are noticed during the early pre-incident phases but are unreported. In the cases discussed in this paper, that was the case with Nidal Hasan, whose colleagues had noticed his Islamist and anti-American leanings, as well as his alienation from his military colleagues. Similarly, in the case of the December 2015 San Bernardino husband-and-wife shooters, their neighbours had noticed an unusual accumulation of weapons and ammunition in their apartment that should have been reported, at the very least, to the husband's employer. In the case of Nimer Mahmoud Ahmad Jamal, the Israeli residents of Har Adar who employed him and hosted him in their homes should have been more cognisant in noticing changes in his demeanour that might have indicated a potential turn to violence. In the case of Mickael Harpon, some of his colleagues had reported his suspicious behaviours to the police, but their reports weren't properly followed up.

In these and other cases, such early-warning risk-based mindsets and behaviours weren't reported to appropriate authorities, signalling a reluctance to get involved, a fear of being wrong and liable for a countersuit, or a lack of awareness of proper reporting mechanisms that would maintain privacy and civil liberties for all concerned.

While it's still important to be aware that a violent assailant, such as a terrorist, might attack a target while having no direct tie to it, I hope this article will raise awareness of potential incidents in which an assailant might be someone who's known to their intended target. Thus, a view that 'We know so-and-so is radicalised into extremism, but he won't attack us' should be replaced by an expanded 360-degree threat awareness picture that takes into account potential threats by violent assailants with no direct ties and those, such as the active threat actors discussed in this article, who might have direct ties to their intended targets.

For upgraded threat awareness, therefore, the construct of an enterprise-wide security focus on an imminent active threat situation—as it is for each of its singular threat types—must become pervasive for all those tasked with pre-empting such attacks in the earliest pre-incident preparation phases.

NOTES

1 For an analysis of lone-actor terrorists, see Joshua Sinai, 'Prevention of low-tech, single actor terrorist attacks in the United States', in Alex P Schmid (ed.), *Handbook of terrorism prevention and preparedness*, International Centre for Counter-Terrorism, The Hague, forthcoming (mid-2020).

2 For an overview of workplace violence, see US Department of Labor, *DOL Workplace Violence Program*, online.

3 For an overview of insider threats, see National Cybersecurity and Communications Integration Center, *Combating insider threats*, 2 May 2014, online.

4 For an account of Nidal Hasan's pre-incident warning signs, see Katherin Poppe, *Nidal Hasan: a case study in lone-actor terrorism*, Program on Extremism, George Washington University, October 2018, online.

5 For an account of Alexis's pre-incident warning signs, see Washington DC Metropolitan Police, *After action report: Washington Navy Yard*, September 16, 2013, July 2014, online.

6 Based on an interview conducted by the author with the leader of the Washington Police Department's SWAT team, who was involved in responding to the shooting, November 2019.

7 For an account of the shooters' ideological extremism, see 'San Bernardino shooting: Who were the attackers?', *BBC News*, 11 December 2015, online.

8 'Har Adar shooter trained himself for the attack—report', *The Times of Israel*, 29 September 2017, online.

9 For an account of the shooter's pathway to violence, see Dov Lieber, 'Wife of Har Adar terrorist left him weeks before shooting', *The Times of Israel*, 26 September 2017, online.

10 'Mother of W.Bank terrorist convicted for failing to prevent attack', *i24News*, 17 May 2019, online.

11 Tangi Salaün, Marine Pennetier, 'After knife rampage, French police are alert for radicalised colleagues', *Reuters*, 12 October 2019, online.

12 Salaün & Pennetier, 'After knife rampage, French police are alert for radicalised colleagues'.

About the authors

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Linda Geddes was appointed Commonwealth Counter-Terrorism Coordinator in October 2018, and Deputy Secretary Citizenship and Social Cohesion in July 2019.

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Linda has held a number of senior positions across government, including in the Department of Immigration and Border Protection, the Australian Customs and Border Protection Service, the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, the Office of National Assessments, and Defence.

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Elise Thomas is a researcher working with the International Cyber Policy Centre. She has previously worked as a freelance journalist, including writing for *Wired*, *Foreign Policy*, *The Daily Beast*, *Guardian Australia*, the *ABC*, *SBS* and others. She has also previously worked as an editorial assistant for the UN Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and as a podcast writer and researcher. She has a strong interest in the intersections of cybersecurity, information security and international politics.

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Peta Lowe is a Principal Consultant with Phronesis Consulting and Training. She's the former Director, Countering Violent Extremism for Juvenile Justice in the NSW Department of Justice. Peta has over 13 years experience working with young people who display violent and antisocial offending behaviours in both custodial and community contexts. She has worked with individuals, families and communities to address offending behaviours and criminogenic risks.

Peta graduated from Newcastle University in 2005 with a Bachelor of Social Work (Honours Class 1), from Charles Sturt University in 2010 with a Master of Social Work (Advanced Practice / Couples and Family Therapy Specialisation), from Queensland University of Technology in 2016 with a Graduate Certificate in Business (Public Sector Management) and most recently in 2018 from Charles Sturt University with a Masters in Terrorism and Security Studies (Postgraduate University Medal). Peta led the Juvenile Justice NSW responses to CVE and CT, including the assessment, intervention and management of young people charged with terrorism-related offences in the community and in custody, and agency responses to manage the risk of radicalisation to violent extremism within custodial settings. Peta is trained and experienced in the use of a number of violent extremist risk assessment tools and has conducted and coordinated assessments of juvenile-terrorism-related offenders and young people vulnerable to being radicalised to violent extremism.

Peta has presented on 'Managing the emerging risk of juvenile terrorist offenders and radicalisation in juvenile justice centres' at the Conference on the Rehabilitation of Terrorist and Radicalised Offenders in Sydney, November 2017. She was keynote speaker at the 3rd Australasian Youth Justice Conference 'Contemporary Challenges: Innovative Solutions' in May 2019 in Sydney and was a panellist discussing the key issues regarding violent extremism at the 16th National Safeguarding Australia Conference in May 2019 in Canberra. She participated as an international expert in the Juvenile Justice Expert Workshop hosted by the International Institute for Justice and the Rule of Law in March 2019 in Malta. Peta is currently focused on developing and delivering training, assessment and interventions to improve social cohesion, divert vulnerable young people from violent extremism, disengage and rehabilitate juvenile-terrorism-related offenders and reduce the risk that violent extremism poses to individuals and community safety.

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John has worked in intelligence and national security for over 25 years. He's been an intelligence professional at tactical, operational and strategic levels across a range of military, regulatory, national security and law enforcement organisations.

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Over the past 30 years, Greg has undertaken extensive research on politics and society in Indonesia, and to a lesser extent Malaysia, especially on the role of Islam as both a constructive and a disruptive force. He's been active in interfaith dialogue initiatives and has a deep commitment to building understanding of Islam and Muslim society. The central axis of his research interests is the way in which religious thought, individual believers and religious communities respond to modernity and to the modern nation-state. He also has a strong interest in international relations and comparative international politics.

Greg has a general interest in security studies and human security and a particular interest in CVE. He continues to research the offshoots of Jemaah Islamiyah, al-Qaeda, ISIS and related radical Islamist movements in Southeast Asia. He's often invited by government agencies in Australia, Indonesia, Thailand and Malaysia to teach workshops on violent extremism and terrorism.

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In addition to lecturing at numerous universities and think tanks around the world, Elisabeth's been invited to present her research to the House of Commons, the House of Lords, the UK Foreign Office, GCHQ, the MOD, the SAS, French Special Forces, NATO, CENTCOM, the US State Department, the Pentagon, the UN, the EU Council, EU ambassadors, the German Foreign Ministry, the Finnish Foreign Ministry and Parliament, and various intelligence and security audiences in Europe, Africa, the Middle East and America. She features regularly in the international television, radio and print media, including the *BBC*, *al-Jazeera*, *CNN* and various European national broadcasters.

For the past six years, she has acted as international adviser (pro bono) to a cross-tribal group in east Yemen that promotes community cohesion as a counterweight to AQAP and ISIS and is chair of a grassroots NGO in Yemen's Mahra Governorate. In 2017, she was selected as a Specialist Reserve Officer for the UK military's 77 Brigade. She first studied Arabic as an undergraduate at Oxford University, receiving the highest 1st class degree for 30 years.

Elisabeth is the author or (co-)editor of several books, including *ReClaiming Islamic tradition* (2016), *Twenty-first century jihad* (2015) and *Literature, journalism and the avant-garde: intersection in Egypt* (2006). She also conceived of and edits the 'Essential Middle Eastern Vocabularies' series, which includes the titles Security Arabic, Intelligence Arabic and Media Arabic. She's currently working on two further books: Diplomacy Arabic and Rock stars of Jihad.

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Professor Lesley Seebeck started as the CEO of the Cyber Institute, Australian National University, on 30 July 2018. Most recently, she was Chief Investment and Advisory Officer at the Digital Transformation Agency, arriving there from the Bureau of Meteorology, where she served as Chief Information Officer from mid-2014 to late 2017. She was recognised as Federal Government CIO of the Year in 2017 and in February 2019 was appointed to the Naval Shipbuilding Advisory Board.

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At Syracuse University, he taught graduate and undergraduate courses on international security; terrorism and national security; peacekeeping; international law; post-conflict reconstruction; EU politics and law; and international relations of the Middle East.

Isaac is the author and co-author of many empirical, analytical research studies that have appeared in such journals as *Defense Studies, Contemporary Security Policy, Comparative Strategy and Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* on such issues as the Pakistan Taliban, Islamic State, al-Shabaab, NATO and human security. Using his legal training, he has authored legal studies on post-conflict justice, international refugee law and national security law, which have appeared in leading journals such as the *Netherlands Quarterly of Human Rights* and the *Texas Journal of Women and the Law*.

Isaac received a BA in history with honours from the University of Buckingham (1994), an MA from the University of Kent (1995) and a PhD in international relations from the London School of Economics and Political Science (1999). He also has a postgraduate diploma in law (2000) and a Bar Vocational Course degree from BPP Law School, London. From 1999 to 2005, he was a member of the Inner Temple in London.

DR JOSHUA SINAI

Dr Joshua Sinai is a Washington DC-based consultant on CT and enterprise security risk mitigation issues. His specialisations include developing analytic toolkits for forecasting terrorism (from conventional to WMD warfare), mapping the radicalisation pathways into extremism and violence, and formulating metrics of effectiveness in government CT and CVE interventions. He's one of the developers of the concept of active threat violent assailants as they encompass some of those who engage in terrorism, active shooters, and workplace violence as 'insiders'.

Joshua's dozens of publications include *Active shooter: a handbook on prevention* (ASIS International, May 2016, 2nd edition); a chapter on 'The United States of America: domestic counterterrorism since 9/11' in Andrew Silke (ed.), *Routledge Handbook of Terrorism and Counterterrorism* (Routledge, 2018); 'Israel and combating terrorism: assessing the effectiveness of Netanyahu's combating terrorism strategy' in Robert O Freedman (ed.), *Israel under Netanyahu: domestic politics and foreign policy* (Routledge, January 2020); and 'Prevention of low-tech, lone actor terrorist attacks in the United States' in Alex P Schmid (ed.), *Handbook of terrorism prevention and preparedness* (ICCT online, The Hague, 2020). He has published numerous profiles of terrorist threats against countries and those countries' CT response measures. He has also published several hundred reviews of books on terrorism and CT-related subjects.

He earned his Masters degree and doctorate from Columbia University in political science (comparative politics).

Acronyms and abbreviations

AFP	Australian Federal Police
ANZCTC	Australia – New Zealand Counter-Terrorism Committee
AQAP	Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula
ARSA	Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army
ASG	Abu Sayyaf Group
ASIO	Australian Security Intelligence Organisation
BARMM	Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao
BIFF	Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters
BNPT	Badan Nasional Penanggulangan Terorisme (National Agency for Combating Terrorism) (Indonesia)
BOL	Bangsamoro Organic Law (Philippines)
CT	counterterrorism
CVE	countering violent extremism
EU	European Union
FF	foreign fighter
FTF	foreign terrorist fighter
HaD	Hurras al-Din
HRTO	*High Risk Terrorist Offenders Act 2016* (Cwlth)
ICT	information and communications technology
IED	improvised explosive device
IS	Islamic State
IT	information technology
JAD	Jemaah Ansharut Daulah
JI	Jemaah Islamiyah
MILF	Moro Islamic Liberation Front
NGO	non-government organisation
NPA	New People's Army
PRISM	proactive integrated support model
PVE	preventing violent extremism
RWE	right-wing extremist
SDF	Syrian Democratic Forces
THRO	*Terrorism (High Risk Offenders) Act 2017* (NSW)
UAE	United Arab Emirates
UN	United Nations
UNODC	UN Office on Drugs and Crime