Examining the Role of Religion in Radicalisation to Violent Islamist Extremism.

Abstract

In this paper, the authors apply the four-phase radicalisation model proposed by Silber and Bhatt[1] to a case study of Australia's first convicted terrorist, Jack Roche based on communication with Roche after his incarceration and on a qualitative analysis of his trial. In doing so, they examine the validity of the four-phase model to a case of 'home grown' terrorism and dissect the role of religion in the radicalisation process. To conclude, the authors find that religion plays a far lesser role in radicalisation towards violent extremism than the policy response contends and this has implications for counter terrorism programs that aim to address the drivers of violent extremism.

In the decade or so since the September 11 attacks on the Twin Towers and the Pentagon in the United States, scholarly publications on terrorism have increased by a massive 400 per-cent. Within this trend, there has been a growing focus on the processes of radicalisation and disengagement as a means of explaining how individuals become involved in terrorist activities and conversely, how they disengage from terrorist movements. Arguably, the interest in radicalisation is a factor of the policy response to terrorism that gives primacy to religion as the principal motivator to extremist violence (Stevens 2009). The counter terrorism approach of the UK, Australia and the United States incorporate strategies that specifically target Muslim communities and aim to address factors of vulnerability to radicalisation among diaspora Muslim populations. Subsequently, attempts to elaborate and explain the process by which individuals become radicalised to extremist violence have given precedence to religion (specifically Islam) as a key factor in the radicalisation process.

Such theories of radicalisation are often conceptualised without any reference to actual empirical evidence. Interviews with known terrorists can be difficult, if not impossible to conduct and even when researchers do have access to known terrorists, it cannot be assumed that terrorists are able to articulate the reasons for their actions. In this paper, the authors apply the four-phase radicalisation model proposed by Silber and Bhatt[2] to a case study of Australia's first convicted terrorist, Jack Roche based on communication with Roche after his incarceration and on a qualitative analysis of his trial. In doing so, they examine the validity of the four-phase model to a case of 'home grown' terrorism and dissect the role of religion in the radicalisation process. In conclusion, the authors find that religion plays a far lesser role in radicalisation towards violent extremism than the policy response contends and this has implications for counter terrorism programs that aim to address the drivers of violent extremism.

Radicalisation

Radicalisation is most often described as a process by which individuals and groups become socialised to a particular worldview that is considered radical or extreme. Like the literature on terrorism, the academic literature on radicalisation suffers from a lack of a cohesive definition of radicalisation and a conflation of terms. Nasser-Eddine, Garnham, Agostino, & Caluya point out that some definitions of radicalisation are so broad as to categorise all opinions that differ from societal norms as radical or extreme[3]. Other definitions conflate radicalisation with a tendency towards or support for the use of violence as a legitimate avenue for achieving stated objectives.

Bjørgo and Horgan argue that this conflation reflects a lack of distinction between the cognitive and behavioural characteristics of radicalisation and assumes that radicalisation can predict violent behaviour [4]. In the policy response to terrorism, the lack of conceptual distinction between what are considered radical values and violent behaviour has yielded an approach that defines certain sections of Muslim communities (most notably young Muslim men) as vulnerable to radicalisation and attempts to address this vulnerability through targeted programs[5]. As a consequence individual de-radicalisation programs target individual cognitive radicalisation. Abuza , among others, makes an important distinction between this kind of de-radicalisation and disengagement which targets the behavioural component of radicalisation and contends that many Jamaah Islameeah (JI) members who have undergone 'de-radicalisation' remain dedicated to the objectives of JI even after they have abandoned violence in pursuit of these objectives[6]. In short, analysis of the academic literature and policy response to radicalisation concludes that:

1. Radicalisation is often assumed to be a predictor of violent behaviour and, consequently, de-radicalisation is assumed to be an effective counter terrorism strategy;

2. There is no single path to radicalisation – individuals become involved in extremist groups for a myriad of reasons, and may become radicalised after joining the group; and

3. Cognitive radicalisation — the adherence to a set of radical beliefs — is often conflated with behavioural radicalisation – the propensity to adopt violence as a means to an end.

While some scholars argue that radicalisation cannot be appropriately deconstructed in terms of a fixed series of stages, others contend that radicalisation is a fairly ordered path with terrorism as the ultimate manifestation of radicalisation[7]. Attempts to understand radicalisation as a process therefore deconstruct radicalisation as a series of stages or phases through which the individual passes towards a worldview that legitimises violence as a justifiable and effective means of achieving group objectives. One of the most cited models of radicalisation is Silber and Bhatt's four-phase radicalisation process. In developing the framework for their model, Silber and Bhatt surveyed five homegrown terrorism cases: Madrid terrorist attack (2004), Amsterdam's Hofstad Group, London public transport bombings (2005), Australia's Operation Pendennis (2005) and Canada's Toronto 18 Case (2006). Their analysis identified common pathways and characteristics that were then applied to five homegrown terrorism cases within the United States and to an analysis of the group of individuals who led the September 11 hijackers [8].

According to Silber and Bhatt's model, radicalisation can be segmented along four phases: the pre-radicalisation phase; the self-identification phase; the indoctrination phase and finally, the jihadisation phase. The pre-radicalisation phase, otherwise referred to as 'the point of origin,' is

the period of time at the start of the radicalisation process that describes individuals prior to being exposed to 'Salafi-Islam.'

The self-identification phase is then identified as the phase when an individual is exposed to internal and external 'triggers', which may include trauma, social alienation, economic marginalisation or discrimination. These triggers could potentially cause the individual to commence a search for ontological security. This may include making drastic changes in their lives; where they re-interpret their faith, find new meaning in their lives and associate with different yet like-minded people; adopting new religious ideologies as their own [9].

The indoctrination phase occurs when the individual will increasingly intensify their belief system to the point that they wholeheartedly adopt "Jihadi-Salafi" ideologies and will adopt a world-view in which conditions and circumstances exist whereby action (militant jihad) is justified to support and further the cause.

Finally, the Jihadisation phase occurs when members of a 'select' group usually appoint themselves as 'warriors in a holy war' and thus see it as a religious duty to begin planning, preparing, and undertaking a terrorist attack[10].

Silber & Bhatt state that each phase is unique, autonomous, and demonstrated by a definite line of demarcation. They also state that individuals do not necessarily carry out, or follow each and every stage of the radicalisation process through a linear sequence of progression and individuals may in-fact abandon the path of radicalisation at any point [11]. Sageman supports the view that the radicalisation process does not necessarily follow a straightforward progression, but acknowledges that individuals who complete the entirety of the radicalisation process are more than likely to proceed to the planning and implementation stages of terrorist acts [12].

Notably Silber and Bhatt's model exclusively identifies jihadi-salafist ideology as an extremist religious/political ideology. Criticisms of Silber and Bhatt's model point out the political bias in denoting radicalisation exclusively as a process of involvement in Islamist terrorism. Nasser-Eddine et al., argue that by limiting their sample to Islamist terrorism, Silber and Bhatt ignore other violent extremist groups such as militant Christians. Further, the pre-radicalisation phase is described as the 'point of origin' of individuals who are 'unremarkable', with 'ordinary' jobs, 'ordinary' lives, and with minor, if any, criminal history[13]. In essence then, the pre-radicalisation phase can describe any average person prior to the adoption of radical Islamic views. Other criticisms of the model take issue with the authors' construction of Salafi ideology as the primary vehicle of radicalisation. Azzam makes the point that Salafi Islam is not necessarily violent Islam [14]; an argument supported by Sageman [15]and Al-Lami [16].

In response to these criticisms, the New York City Police Department re-issued Silber and Bhatt's report with a statement of clarification recognising that al Qaeda inspired terrorism is not the only contemporary terrorist threat. . While the statement of clarification asserts that the report focuses exclusively on radicalisation towards Islamist inspired terrorism, it also defends the selection of al Qaeda terrorism as the focus of Silber and Bhatt's study. In response to criticisms about the prescriptions in the early stages of Silber and Bhatt's model, the author's note that: "In all of the case studies, early steps in this process happened in parallel with individual's greater devotion to their religion and greater observance of rituals, However, during the early stages radicalisation, the behaviours associated with a greater degree of religiosity, in and of themselves, cannot be used as a signature of someone potentially becoming a terrorist."[17] This clarification, though an important one, fails to provide further insight into the relationship between religion and radicalisation in Silber and Bhatt's model. In particular, it fails to clarify how the pre-radicalisation phase serves as an actual point of origin to radicalisation. The individual case studies presented in this phase describe the majority of the terrorist candidates in Silber and Bhatt's case studies as well integrated, gainfully employed and not overtly religious.

By constructing Salafi Islam as the primary vehicle of radicalisation, Silber and Bhatt's model fails to make an important distinction between the religious and secular factors and gives undue and empirically unsupported precedence to religious orientations in the radicalisation process. Positioning Salafi Islam as a primary factor in radicalisation recreates the political discourse that juxtaposes extremist interpretations such as Salafi Islam against 'moderate' interpretations and drives a policy response to promote 'moderate' Islam based on an assumption of vulnerability to radicalisation by virtue of religion.

Aly argues that radicalisation models that give primacy to religion conflate a range of motivations, issues and historically specific contexts into a single interpretation and treat the political agenda of al Qaeda and affiliated groups, Islamist ideology, Arab- Western historical relations and jihadist objectives as one. She differentiates between secular and religious factors in radicalisation. Secular factors are associated with political, economic or social context in which radicalisation occurs including:

1.	Dissatisfaction or anger at US foreign policy (in particular its political relationship with Israel and its interventions in Afghanistan and Iraq);

2.	Economic conditions in which terrorist financing activities are profitable and viable; and

3.	Social or political conditions that create widespread dissatisfaction among domestic populations.

Religious factors on the other hand are based on violent interpretations of Islamic texts combined with:

1. A strong belief in jihad between the Islamic and Western worlds;

2. Individual and group dedication to violent jihad as an obligation for all Muslims; and

3. Dedication to establishing a pan Islamic state through violent conflict [18].

Despite criticisms of the four-phase radicalisation model, Silber and Bhatt's report for the New York Police Department, *Radicalisation in the West: the Homegrown Threat*, continues to be one of the most influential documents for understanding radicalisation. In the next sections of this paper, the authors present a case study of Australia's first convicted terrorist, Jack Roche, and apply the four-phase model to this case. In doing so we are not particularly interested in expanding the critique of the four-phase model outlined earlier in this paper. Nor are we intending to disprove the model through the examination of a single case study. Rather the objective is to present the Roche case in order to critically examine the role of religion in radicalisation. In this context, the four-phase model with its particular focus on jihadi-salafist ideology is an appropriate model for testing the assumption that cognitive radicalisation (the adherence to radical jihadi-salafist ideologies) is a useful predictor for violent behaviour. The case study presented here draws heavily on information extracted through numerous interviews and personal communications with Roche. One of the authors, Jason-Leigh Striegher, was a primary case officer for Roche subsequent to Roche's incarceration. It should be noted that this is not an exhaustive case study. It will however highlight the radicalisation process of Roche from a man of relative obscurity to a man of notoriety — Al Qaeda's right-hand man in Australia, and Australia's first individual imprisoned for terrorism related offences [19].

The Jack Roche Case

George Paul Holland, now known as Jack Roche was born 31st of October 1953 into a military family in the United Kingdom. At the age of 18 he enlisted in the Royal Army Medical Corps (RAMC) and was discharged from the army just 18 months later as a result of a personal indiscretion[20]. After his discharge, Roche spent a number of years travelling throughout Europe and married his first wife in 1978. Shortly afterwards, Roche and his then wife moved to Sydney where his life took a turn for the worse resulting in increased problems with alcohol and plunging him into a destructive downward spiral eventually contributing to the demise of his marriage. According to Roche these life events left him with feelings of emptiness and isolation triggering a search for ontological security. In 1992 Roche converted to Islam and spent several years in

Indonesia learning about his newly acquired religion.

In 1997, Roche joined JI in Australia. In 2000 Roche travelled to Afghanistan where he met with senior Al Qaeda leaders (including Osama Bin Laden) and received military training including a 10-day explosives course. During his training, Roche was presented with orders to conduct surveillance exercises on Israeli interests in Australia. Upon returning to Australia, Roche made several calls to Australian authorities in an attempt to divulge his experiences and warn them of a planned attack while continuing to carry out his orders. Observers and commentators of the Roche case draw attention to the failure of Australian agencies to act on Roche's warnings. Some analysts described Roche as naïve and likened his case to that of shoe bomber, Richard Reid[21]. By all accounts Roche cooperated with Australian authorities following his arrest, divulging critical information about his contacts within JI and his meetings with Al Qaeda.

In November 2002, Roche was arrested under suspicion of conspiring to bomb the Israeli Embassy in Canberra in 2000. In 2004 he was convicted under the Crimes (Internationally Protected Persons) Act 1976 and sentenced to nine years in prison effective from the date of his arrest. Roche subsequently appealed the sentence on the grounds that it did not take into account the extent of his full cooperation with Australian authorities. The Court of Criminal Appeal rejected his appeal and Roche served the full term of his sentence — he was released on 07 May 2007.

Pre-Radicalisation

Prior to his move to Sydney and the subsequent downward spiral into alcoholism, Jack Roche led a fairly unremarkable life. The two decades or so following his divorce and prior to his conversion to Islam, are consistent with Silber and Bhatt's pre-radicalisation phase in which the individual is not exposed to jihadi-salafist ideologies. Roche states that at this stage in his life "I would frequently write myself off." He explains how, as a result of the obvious effects of his drinking binges and 'hard nights', he was often approached and questioned by a number of his Indonesian Muslim friends and colleagues who would enquire about his continued abuse of his 'mind, body and soul'[22]. This stage of Roche's life represents the pre-radicalisation phase described by Silber & Bhatt, as there was no evident change in Roche's religious views.

As described by Roche, "they [his Muslim friends and colleagues] were realistically the first people I felt that genuinely cared about me." Finding individuals that to date he considers 'good people' who truly cared for his welfare helped him find the acceptance and sense of belonging that he perceived to be missing in his life, and unavoidably forced him to question himself, his

purpose in life, and his personal code of ethics and values. Roche contends that up until the point of meeting and socialising with his Muslim community, he felt a void in his life that was exacerbated by his drinking issues and subsequent divorce [23].

This effectively would leave him in a vulnerable position where finding acceptance in a new 'community' and embracing a new faith and ideology would start him on the path to radicalisation. According to the model of radicalisation posited by the FBI the pre-radicalisation stage involves a number of stimuli that potentially expose people to radicalisation [24]. In Roche's case, religious, familial and social deprivation may have been the catalysts that drove him in the direction of pre-radicalisation. This view is also supported by Gill who states that potential catalysts can be religious or personal in nature[25].

Roche elaborates on how conversations with his Indonesian friends enticed him to Islam in a number of ways. Firstly, the Indonesian's apparent concern for him was endearing considering his state of mind and personal dissatisfaction with his life at the time. Secondly, his friends' apparent contentment in their faith proved particularly appealing to Roche at the time. It was at this point that Roche describes his "wanting to know more about the Islamic faith" and "what the appeal" was for them to "feel so at peace with their lives"[26].

Roche however asserts that his Indonesian friends and colleagues were not necessarily particularly concerned with Roche's conversion to Islam. Rather, he perceived their friendship to be a genuine concern for his welfare and well-being. These friends would tell him not to rush into Islam, but to learn about it before he considered embracing it. It is plausible that Roche felt an 'emotional pull' [27] to embrace Islam due to his fragile state at the time and was further enticed by the positive, non-pressuring approach of his 'moderate' Muslim friends.

On the 4th of March 1992, Roche embraced Islam. Silber and Bhatt's model which defines the pre-radicalisation phase on the basis of environmental (Muslim/ethnic communities) and demographic (Muslim, male) characteristics effectively marks conversion as a point of origin for the radicalisation process. However, the FBI model differentiates between intrinsic and extrinsic motivational orientations for conversion. Intrinsic motivations are triggered by internal frustrations with current religious faith resulting in the individual converting as an attempt to resolve inconsistencies in their faith interpretations. Extrinsic motivations may result in protest conversions where an individual attempts to resolve feelings of deprivation or may be a form of acceptance seeking. Importantly, the FBI model qualifies that the pre-radicalisation phase must also include a stimulus and opportunity: "Not all Muslim converts are extremists...Converts who proceed through the radicalisation process are often driven by and extremist with home they have

come into contact" [28].

After his conversion to Islam, Roche developed was further motivated to undertake a considerable amount of research about Islam by studying theological texts. He would also withdraw from activities associated with his pre-Muslim life and increase his contact with like-minded moderate Muslim communities. Although exploring and embracing Islam, finding enthusiasm to research Islamic texts, and discovering a new social identity can be seen as part of the radicalisation process ascribed by Silber & Bhatt, Roche stresses that his interest in his new found faith and his commitment to practising Islam were part of his quest for personal fulfilment: "Once I embraced Islam, I would follow it honestly and faithfully if I was going to be truthful to myself" [29].

Identification/Self-Identification

Despite finding some sense of ontological security in Islam, Roche's apparent re-invention fell short of providing answers to the array of personal issues he was hoping for and he would marry and divorce again. According to Roche, it was this, his second divorce, that triggered a new direction in his life- one that would eventually lead him down a 'radical road' to Afghanistan. Silber and Bhatt's describe the identification phase as:

the point where the individual begins to explore Salafi Islam, while slowly migrating away from their former identity—an identity that now is re-defined by Salafi philosophy, ideology, and values. The catalyst for this —religious seeking is often a cognitive event, or crisis, which challenges one's certitude in previously held beliefs, opening the individual's mind to a new perception or view of the world.[30]

Importantly, Silber and Bhatt's identification phase highlights the presence of a personal or political crisis as a catalyst for religious seeking behaviour which may include becoming alienated from one's former life and developing an affiliation with an extremist social group.

During his divorce Roche met and befriended Abdur Rahim Ayub whom Roche would later discover was a member of JI. It is worth mentioning, JI in Australia was still in its infancy during this time and not really "on the law enforcement radar"[31]. Abdur Rahim Ayub (Rahim) appeared to be part of a tight-knit friendly social group, which again appealed to Roche considering the struggles he was going through with his divorce. The brotherly assistance and care offered by Rahim forged the basis of a strong friendship and prompted Roche to relocate in order to be in closer contact with Rahim[32]. This move would assist in cementing Roche's affiliation and friendship with Rahim and his JI social network. The FBI confirms that most recruiting is

accomplished by personal friends who have established bonds with the extremist group itself or one of its members in the pre-radicalisation phase[33]. Gill concurs, stating that recruitment into a terrorist organisation usually happens incrementally and through friendship ties. It could also be argued that Rahim was deliberately targeting/grooming Roche for membership and later operations within the JI [34].

Sustained exposure to and immersion in the religious ideologies of the JI group directed Roche to reinterpret his previously 'moderate' interpretations of Islam, ironing out any inconsistencies with the extremist interpretations of Rahim's group. Roche describes visiting the houses of the JI social network, and their collective reinforcement of JI ideologies. Discussions on the injustices against Muslims around the world were a common topic of conversation subsumed into the broader religious narrative of the group. [35]

According to the FBI model, the re-interpretation of faith is a key aspect of pre-radicalisation (as opposed to Silber and Bhatt's pre-radicalisation phase). In the pre-radicalisation stage, "an individual who initially converts to gain acceptance may reinterpret his faith if the group he joins is comprised of Islamic extremists"[36]. By his own account, Roche reinterpreted his knowledge of Islam to accommodate the more extremist interpretations promoted by his newfound social network. According to Roche, meeting Rahim and moving closer to him was a critical tipping point, "if one were to look at my life as a process of becoming radicalised"[37].

Incrementally Roche completely withdrew from his 'mainstream' Muslim friends, and begin to deepen his relationship with Rahim's group. Silke argues that individuals in such a position become increasingly isolated from their old friends and family and increase their dependence on, and their loyalty towards, their new group [38]. Roche highlighted that this new group was indeed very important to him and that he completely internalised their religious and ideological views as part of group socialisation. Overwhelmingly, it was the social function of the group that would draw and sustain Roche's interest and loyalty. According to Silke social identity plays a substantial role in explaining one's involvement in terrorism; a view shared by Roche. Sageman's analysis of terrorist groups affirms that "joining the global Islamist terrorism social movement was based to a great degree on friendship and kinship"[39]. Indeed, much of the literature concurs that membership to a violent extremist or terrorist group is more likely to be a factor of the group's social function than its particular ideology. Thornberry, Krohn, Lizotte, Smith & Tobin for example conclude that membership of delinquent gangs is more a function of group loyalties than ideological sympathies[40].

Eighteen months after moving closer to Rahim, Roche moved to Indonesia. There he taught

English to the local population, and undertook further Islamic studies. He also married for the third time in September 1994 [41].

On his return to Sydney in November 1995, Roche continued his commitment to the faith and contributed to articles by the Islamic Youth Group (Nida'ul Islam) under the name of Khalid Saifullah. According to Roche, during this period, members of Muslim communities began interacting with him as a knowledgeable figure earning him a status within JI and local Muslim communities and providing him with a greater sense of purpose and belonging.

Roche's dedication to Islamic studies would draw the attention of Riduan Isamuddin, a.k.a. Hambali, a JI Operational Chief in Indonesia who requested through Rahim and his twin brother Abdur Rahman Ayub (Rahman) a meeting with Roche in Indonesia. This request would ultimately reinforce Roche's status within the JI organisation, and Roche later would reflect on this occasion stating "I was not just a normal run of the mill guy anymore, I actually did belong to something that was worthwhile and happening" [42].

Roche described his excitement at the prospect of being recognised as a figure head among his group and that he felt as though he was embarking on a real adventure. This suggests that Roche could now be considered fully embedded in the identification stage, and that he was well on his way to becoming indoctrinated.

Indoctrination

Silber and Bhatt describe the indoctrination stage as "the stage in which an individual progressively intensifies his beliefs, wholly adopts jihadi-Salafi ideology and concludes, without question, that the conditions and circumstances exist where action [militant jihad] is required to support and further the Salafist cause"[43].

In 2000 Roche travelled to Indonesia to meet with Hambali and Imam Samudra (another well known JI member). Roche describes how the meeting took place in the back rooms of a small Mosque, which resembled a military communications centre. He describes the meeting as "somewhat like a casual interview" during which Hambali and Samudra discussed the prospect of meeting the 'Sheikh'. According to Roche, he was completely unaware of the identity of the 'Sheikh' — later revealed to be Osama bin Laden[44].

At the conclusion of the meeting it was decided that Roche would travel to Afghanistan to undertake training. In order to facilitate the plan, Hambali provided Roche with money to pay for his expenses along with a handwritten note in Arabic. These events: travelling to Indonesia; being *interviewed* by Hambali and Sumudra; and being assigned to train in Afghanistan, would in

effect promote Roche to an active member of the organisation — a significant step in the indoctrination stage.

On the 25th of March 2000, Roche arrived in Karachi Pakistan where he met with others selected for military training in Afghanistan. From there Roche travelled to Quetta (North-West Pakistan) where the cohort were met by members of the Taliban, and transported to Kandahar Afghanistan. In Afghanistan Roche handed the written note given to him by Hambali to another convert (Abu Mohammed – Christian Ganczarski), who passed it to a member of Al-Qaida and then on to Osama Bin Laden — the Sheikh. By his own account, Roche had yet to comprehend the enormity of the situation and he describes his surprise when how, over a meal, he looked up to find Osama Bin Laden sitting across from him[45].

During Roche's time in Afghanistan he undertook military style training and a 10-day explosives course. He also saw — albeit from a distance — Osama Bin Laden with Ayman Al-Zawahiri and other prominent members of Al-Qaida. The FBI asserts that indoctrination activities often involve activities that encourage self efficacy and allow individuals to recognise their own aptitude as a jihadist[46].

During his stay in Afghanistan, Roche was questioned about Israeli interests in Australia. In May 2000, Roche returned to Australia via Kuala Lumpur Malaysia. Whilst in Malaysia, Roche would again meet with Hambali at the Concord Hotel, who gave him advice and finances to enable him to carry out his assignment — surveillance of potential Jewish targets and setting up a terror cell in Australia. According to Roche, Hambali was not just an important conduit to JI but also served as a spiritual leader. A 'spiritual-sanctioner' normally facilitates the indoctrination of an individual and it is important that a spiritual leader is also a trusted religious authority [47].

Jihadisation

Upon his return to Australia, Roche proceeded with his assignment, however, he maintains that he had reached a point of no return. Roche describes feeling substantial doubts about the validity and rationalisation — according to his understanding of the justification of Jihad in Islam — for his assignment. According to Roche, he also experienced a sense of being unable to withdraw his commitment to completing his assignment and a belief that his overall movements were being monitored by members of JI in Australia. Despite having grave misgivings about his actions Roche continued to carry out his assignment for fear of being physically harmed by JI[48].

At the same time however, Roche insists that he attempted to draw government attention to his plans but received no consideration from the agencies he attempted to contact. At this critical time, Rahim and Rahman's friendship with Roche began to fracture as, according to Roche, Rahim and Rahman were frustrated with the JI leadership and their attention to Roche, as they wanted control of a terrorist cell in Australia[49]. Rahim and Rahman instructed Roche to abort the original plans of conducting surveillance and setting up a cell. Roche then travelled to Indonesia where he met with then leader of JI — Abu Bakar Bashir. Bashir confirmed the original orders for Roche's assignment. While Roche completed the task of carrying out surveillance activities on Jewish interests in Australia, he disengaged from JI; did not establish a JI cell in Australia; and did not undertake any violent activities — he was arrested two years after having abandoned those plans.

Roche describes his process of radicalisation as a gradual process that occurred over a number of years and claims that the final stages of his radicalisation seemed to transpire rapidly. Silber & Bhatt affirm that though there is no timeframe where an individual will transcend from the pre-radicalisation phase to the Jihadisation phase, the Jihadisation phase is often started and finished in a relatively rapid time frame[50]. Roche himself states: "I was drawn in bit by bit, given information in dribs and drabs. It wasn't until I got to Afghanistan I realised they had this whole thing organised way before I came into the picture"[51].

Case Analysis

The case of Jack Roche provides an opportunity to explore the role of religion in the four phases of radicalisation described by Silber and Bhatt. It also offers empirical evidence for examining the difference between cognitive radicalisation and violent behaviour and the role of religion in each. Roche never completed the task set for him by his 'peers' in Al Qaeda or JI. In fact, during the final stages of his radicalisation, he began to disengage cognitively and behaviourally from his assignment. While some commentators have constructed Roche as a naïve and reluctant militant, there is also much to be said about Roche's own agency in not only discontinuing the activities assigned to him, but also actively attempting to draw the attention of the authorities to his actions. That is not to suggest that Roche is insincere in his assertion that he was unaware of the gravity and enormity of his involvement in a planned terrorist operation (particularly in the early stages of his involvement), but rather that Roche, by his own accounts, became very much aware of the consequences of carrying out the tasks assigned to him during the later stage of his indoctrination. Of further interest is the fact that Roche continued to hold views that could be considered 'extremist' even after deciding not to carry out his tasks. He has described his personal conviction to fight alongside his 'Muslim brothers in their struggles' and contends that,

had he remained overseas, he would have more than likely fought alongside the Taliban or Palestinian Mujahideen. Thus while Roche disengaged behaviourally with terrorism, he retained the radicalised worldview through which he views himself as a 'potential *soldier*' fighting against perceived injustices. In Roche's own terms he was strongly opposed to killing innocent civilians in his own country — but not to fighting in a justifiable war — and it was his apprehension to harm innocent Australians that ultimately guided his decision to disengage from terrorism.

Similarly Roche did not visibly change his religious convictions. As such it appears that, according to the four-phase model of radicalisation, he progressed to the jihadisation phase but stopped short of actioning this phase. Roche believed that there are conditions and circumstances in which militant jihad is justified (such as Afghanistan and Palestine) — a belief that is consistent with the indoctrination phase. He also saw himself as a 'warrior in a holy war'- a belief consistent with the jihadisation phase. The Roche case suggests that individuals can still adopt an interpretation of jihad as violent holy war, but rationalise this thought by distinguishing between justifiable theatres of holy war such as Afghanistan or Palestine and the unjustifiable killing of innocent civilians in Western democracies. It is this rationalisation of jihad that prompts behavioural action. Where the individual rationalises that jihad can be legitimately carried out to cause the death of innocent civilians, he or she may be more likely to action a terrorist attack against innocent civilians.

Roche's case also illustrates the role of religion in the radicalisation of individuals to commit violent acts. While this case is specifically concerned with Islamist terrorism and ideologies, it can help us to understand the role of religion in other cases of religious terrorism. Roche's case asserts that religion is not necessarily the primary motivator for individuals to join extremist case. For Roche, Islam at first and then later the radical ideologies of JI served more of an ontological and social function than a religious purpose. He was first attracted to Islam as a means of addressing significant issues in his life, which prompted him to search for ontological security. Later, prompted by his divorce and a crisis of self, he turned to the JI group as means of asserting his identity, gaining a sense of belonging and enjoying a sense of status within a select group. Ultimately Roche's activities in Australia in which he carried out surveillance on the Israeli embassy in Canberra had less to do with his belief in the Islamist ideologies that were espoused by members of his inner circle. Rather, as Roche himself explains, they were a factor of his commitment to the group and then, later, because he feared being watched and targeted by the group. Thus it was not religious beliefs that prompted and sustained Roche's level of activity — his behaviours — but group loyalty and the personal benefits associated with group membership.

That said, there is no doubt that religion does play a role in radicalisation. Aly has previously described the role of religion in radicalisation as a vehicle for group bonding, a moral template for constructing in-group/ out-group boundaries, a legitimising ideology that is used to authorise the use of violence and the narrative basis for collective victim identity[52]. In Roche's case, religion initially fulfilled a significant psychological and social need. Later, as he became more and more involved with the JI network, the particular brand of Islam promoted by this group differentiated them from the broader population of moderate Muslims and provided authority for the use of violent jihad. Importantly, Roche recalls a significant amount of time devoted to discussing the injustices of Muslims around the world. Discontent with foreign policy and a belief that Islam is being undermined by the actions of the Western coalition led by the United States are significant factors that have been highlighted in various cases of terrorism. Mohammed Siddique Khan, one of the four youths who mounted suicide attacks on the London public transport system in July 2005, left a chilling message that explicitly and clearly articulates his rationale for the terrorist attacks:"Until we feel security, you will be our targets...Until you stop the bombing, gassing, imprisonment and torture of my people we will not stop this fight. We are at war and I am a soldier. Now you too will taste the reality of this situation."

Conclusion

The case of Jack Roche described in this paper highlights some important elements of radicalisation and offers some insights into the role of religion in the process of radicalisation. While the policy response to terrorism tends to give primacy to religion and ideology as the main driving forces of radicalisation, Roche's trajectory from 'moderate' Muslim convert to JI member suggests that sustained exposure to extremist ideologies and close interaction with radicalised individuals may be key triggers for the radicalisation process. The presence of other motivational factors such as a crisis of faith, traumatic experiences or general dissatisfaction may or may not predispose individuals to radicalisation. In Roche's case his first divorce and the subsequent downward spiral into alcoholism were not significant factors in his radicalisation. Rather these life events combined with exposure to a community of moderate Muslims prompted Roche to explore, and eventually adopt Islam as a way of finding personal salvation and a new social identity. We cannot also assume that Roche's second divorce, in and of itself, was a significant life event that triggered his radicalisation process. The tipping point in Roche's radicalisation process was his contact with and then growing friendship with JI members in Australia. Sustained exposure to extremist ideologies combined with incremental withdrawal from 'mainstream' groups and acknowledgement from his new social group were key factors in

Roche's process of radicalisation. The combination of these three factors fulfilled psychological and social needs, and pre-disposed Roche for indoctrination and jihadisation.

The case of Jack Roche's radicalisation also suggests that religion plays a far lesser role in radicalisation than Silber and Bhatt's model proposes. It may be argued that had Roche continued on his path of studying and practicing 'moderate' interpretations of Islam and had he not met and befriended Abdur Rahim Ayub (Rahim), he would not have become radicalised. Consideration of this argument offers new insights into Silber and Bhatt's pre-radicalisation phase which appears to presume that any person who adopts Islam is somehow predisposed to radicalisation.

Another significant insight offered by the analysis of the Roche case is the rationalisation of jihad and the distinction between justifiable and unjustifiable theatres of jihad. Roche failure to execute the final outcome of his radicalisation process cannot be attributed to any significant changes in his religious beliefs. Rather, it is his rationalisation of justified and unjustified jihad that prevented him from morally engaging with behaviours that would target innocent civilians in Australia. This particular point provides some important insights into the process of radicalisation and it would be useful to test this insight with reference to other cases.

As a final note, it is imperative to consider that evidence confirms that there is no single pathway to radicalisation and no distinct pattern to profile an individual throughout any of the stages of radicalisation[53]. While Roche's case study provides some interesting insights into radicalisation, it is by no means the only path that ideologically driven individuals take.

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