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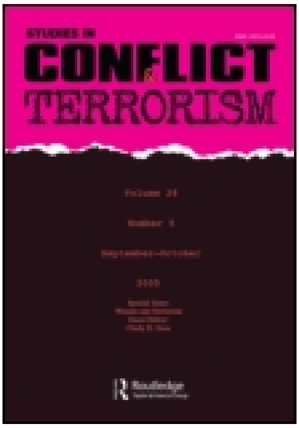

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Examining the Role of Religion in Radicalization to Violent Islamist Extremism

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Examining the Role of Religion in Radicalization to Violent Islamist Extremism

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In this article, the authors apply the four-phase radicalization 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 radicalization process. To conclude, the authors find that religion plays a far lesser role in radicalization toward violent extremism than the policy response contends and this has implications for counterterrorism programs that aim to address the drivers of violent extremism.*

In the decade or so since the 11 September 2001 attacks on the Twin Towers and the Pentagon in the United States, scholarly publications on terrorism have increased by a massive 400 percent. Within this trend, there has been a growing focus on the processes of radicalization 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 radicalization is a factor of the policy response to terrorism that gives primacy to religion as the principal motivator to extremist violence. The counterterrorism approach of the United Kingdom, Australia, and the United States incorporates strategies that specifically target Muslim communities and aim to address factors of vulnerability to radicalization among diaspora Muslim populations. Subsequently, attempts to elaborate and explain the process by which individuals become radicalized to extremist violence have given precedence to religion (specifically Islam) as a key factor in the radicalization process.

Such theories of radicalization are often conceptualized without any reference to actual empirical evidence. Interviews with known terrorists can be difficult, if not impossible to

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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 article, the authors apply the four-phase radicalization 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 radicalization process. In conclusion, the authors find that religion plays a far lesser role in radicalization toward violent extremism than the policy response contends and this has implications for counterterrorism programs that aim to address the drivers of violent extremism.

Radicalization

Radicalization is most often described as a process by which individuals and groups become socialized to a particular worldview that is considered radical or extreme. Like the literature on terrorism, the academic literature on radicalization suffers from a lack of a cohesive definition of radicalization and a conflation of terms. Nasser-Eddine, Garnham, Agostino, and Caluya point out that some definitions of radicalization are so broad as to categorize all opinions that differ from societal norms as radical or extreme.[3] Other definitions conflate radicalization with a tendency toward 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 behavioral characteristics of radicalization and assumes that radicalization can predict violent behavior.[4] In the policy response to terrorism, the lack of conceptual distinction between what are considered radical values and violent behavior has yielded an approach that defines certain sections of Muslim communities (most notably young Muslim men) as vulnerable to radicalization and attempts to address this vulnerability through targeted programs.[5] As a consequence individual de-radicalization programs target individual cognitive radicalization. Abuza, among others, makes an important distinction between this kind of de-radicalization and disengagement that targets the behavioral component of radicalization and contends that many Jamaah Islameeah (JI) members who have undergone "de-radicalization" 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 radicalization concludes that:

1. Radicalization is often assumed to be a predictor of violent behavior and, consequently, de-radicalization is assumed to be an effective counterterrorism strategy;
2. There is no single path to radicalization—individuals become involved in extremist groups for a myriad of reasons, and may become radicalized after joining the group; and
3. Cognitive radicalization—the adherence to a set of radical beliefs—is often conflated with behavioral radicalization—the propensity to adopt violence as a means to an end.

While some scholars argue that radicalization cannot be appropriately deconstructed in terms of a fixed series of stages, others contend that radicalization is a fairly ordered path with terrorism as the ultimate manifestation of radicalization.[7] Attempts to understand radicalization as a process therefore deconstruct radicalization as a series of stages or phases through which the individual passes toward a worldview that legitimizes violence as a justifiable and effective means of achieving group objectives. One of the most cited models of radicalization is Silber and Bhatt's four-phase radicalization 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 11 September hijackers.[8]

According to Silber and Bhatt's model, radicalization can be segmented along four phases: the pre-radicalization phase; the self-identification phase; the indoctrination phase; and finally, the jihadization phase. The pre-radicalization phase, otherwise referred to as "the point of origin," is the period of time at the start of the radicalization 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 marginalization, 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 likeminded 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 *Salafi-jihadi* ideologies and will adopt a worldview in which conditions and circumstances exist whereby action (militant *jihad*) is justified to support and further the cause.

Finally, the jihadization 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 and 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 radicalization process through a linear sequence of progression and individuals may in fact abandon the path of radicalization at any point.[11] Sageman supports the view that the radicalization process does not necessarily follow a straightforward progression, but acknowledges that individuals who complete the entirety of the radicalization 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 *Salafi-jihadi* ideology as an extremist religious/political ideology. Criticisms of Silber and Bhatt's model point out the political bias in denoting radicalization exclusively as a process of involvement in Islamist terrorism. Nasser-Eddine and colleagues argue that by limiting their sample to Islamist terrorism, Silber and Bhatt ignore other violent extremist groups such as militant Christians. Further, the pre-radicalization 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-radicalization 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 radicalization. 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 recognizing that Al Qaeda–inspired terrorism is not the only contemporary terrorist threat. While the statement of clarification asserts that the report focuses exclusively on radicalization toward 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 authors 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 radicalization, the behaviors 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 radicalization in Silber and Bhatt's model. In particular, it fails to clarify how the pre-radicalization phase serves as an actual point of origin to radicalization. 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 radicalization, 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 radicalization process. Positioning *Salafi* Islam as a primary factor in radicalization 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 radicalization by virtue of religion.

Aly argues that radicalization 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 radicalization. Secular factors are associated with political, economic, or social context in which radicalization occurs including:

1. Dissatisfaction or anger at U.S. 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 radicalization model, Silber and Bhatt's report for the New York Police Department, *Radicalization in the West: The Homegrown Threat*, continues to be one of the most influential documents for understanding radicalization. In the next sections of this article, 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 article, 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 radicalization. In this context, the four-phase model with its particular focus on *Salafi-jihadi* ideology is an appropriate model for testing the assumption that cognitive radicalization (the adherence to radical *Salafi-jihadi* ideologies) is a useful predictor for violent behavior. 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 radicalization 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 offenses.

The Jack Roche Case

George Paul Holland, now known as Jack Roche, was born 31 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.[19] After his discharge, Roche spent a number of years traveling throughout Europe and married his first wife in 1978. Shortly afterward, 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 traveled 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 the "shoe bomber," Richard Reid.[20] 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 7 May 2007.

Pre-Radicalization

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-radicalization phase in which the individual is not exposed to *Salafi-jihadi* 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."[21] This stage of Roche's life represents the pre-radicalization phase described by Silber and 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 socializing with his Muslim community, he felt a void in his life that was exacerbated by his drinking issues and subsequent divorce.[22]

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 radicalization. According to the model of radicalization posited by the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) the pre-radicalization stage involves a number of stimuli that potentially expose people to radicalization.[23] In Roche's case, religious, familial, and social deprivation may have been the catalysts that drove him in the direction of pre-radicalization. This view is also supported by Gill who states that potential catalysts can be religious or personal in nature.[24]

Roche elaborates on how conversations with his Indonesian friends enticed him to Islam in a number of ways. First, the Indonesian's apparent concern for him was endearing considering his state of mind and personal dissatisfaction with his life at the time. Second, 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."[25]

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"[26] 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 4 March 1992, Roche embraced Islam. Silber and Bhatt's model, which defines the pre-radicalization phase on the basis of environmental (Muslim/ethnic communities) and demographic (Muslim, male) characteristics, effectively marks conversion as a point of origin for the radicalization 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-radicalization phase must also include a stimulus and opportunity: "Not all Muslim converts are extremists. … Converts who proceed through the radicalization process are often driven by an extremist with whom they have come into contact."[27]

After his conversion to Islam, Roche 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 likeminded 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 radicalization process ascribed by Silber and Bhatt, Roche stresses that his interest in his newfound faith and his commitment to practicing 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."[28]

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.[29]

Importantly, Silber and Bhatt's identification phase highlights the presence of a personal or political crisis as a catalyst for religious-seeking behavior that 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."[30] 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.[31] 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-radicalization phase.[32] Gill concurs, stating that recruitment into a terrorist organization 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.[33]

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.[34]

According to the FBI model, the re-interpretation of faith is a key aspect of pre-radicalization (as opposed to Silber and Bhatt's pre-radicalization phase). In the pre-radicalization stage, "an individual who initially converts to gain acceptance may reinterpret his faith if the group he joins is comprised of Islamic extremists."[35] 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."[36]

Incrementally Roche completely withdrew from his “mainstream” Muslim friends, and began 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 toward, their new group.[37] Roche highlighted that this new group was indeed very important to him and that he completely internalized their religious and ideological views as part of group socialization. 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.”[38] 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, and Tobin for example conclude that membership of delinquent gangs is more a function of group loyalties than ideological sympathies.[39]

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.[40]

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 organization, 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.”[41]

Roche described his excitement at the prospect of being recognized as a figurehead 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.”[42]

In 2000 Roche traveled 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 center. 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.[43]

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: traveling 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 organization—a significant step in the indoctrination stage.

On 25 March 2000, Roche arrived in Karachi Pakistan where he met with others selected for military training in Afghanistan. From there Roche traveled 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 Qaeda 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.[44]

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 Qaeda. The FBI asserts that indoctrination activities often involve activities that encourage self-efficacy and allow individuals to recognize their own aptitude as a *jihadist*.[45]

During his stay in Afghanistan, Roche was questioned about Israeli interests in Australia. In May 2000, Roche returned to Australia via Kuala Lumpur Malaysia. While 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.[46]

Jihadization

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 rationalization—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.[47]

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.[48] Rahim and Rahman instructed Roche to abort the original plans of conducting surveillance and setting up a cell. Roche then traveled 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 radicalization as a gradual process that occurred over a number of years and claims that the final stages of his radicalization seemed to transpire rapidly. Silber and Bhatt affirm that although there is no timeframe where an individual will transcend from the pre-radicalization phase to the jihadization phase, the jihadization phase is often started and finished in a relatively rapid time frame.[49] 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."[50]

Case Analysis

The case of Jack Roche provides an opportunity to explore the role of religion in the four phases of radicalization described by Silber and Bhatt. It also offers empirical evidence for examining the difference between cognitive radicalization and violent behavior 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 radicalization, he began to disengage cognitively and behaviorally 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 behaviorally with terrorism, he retained the radicalized 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 radicalization, he progressed to the jihadization 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 jihadization phase. The Roche case suggests that individuals can still adopt an interpretation of *jihad* as violent holy war, but rationalize this thought by distinguishing between justifiable theaters of holy war such as Afghanistan or Palestine and the unjustifiable killing of innocent civilians in Western democracies. It is this rationalization of *jihad* that prompts behavioral action. Where the individual rationalizes 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 radicalization 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 behaviors—but group loyalty and the personal benefits associated with group membership.

That said, there is no doubt that religion does play a role in radicalization. Aly has previously described the role of religion in radicalization as a vehicle for group bonding, a moral template for constructing ingroup/outgroup boundaries, a legitimizing ideology that is used to authorize the use of violence and the narrative basis for collective victim identity.[51] 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 article highlights some important elements of radicalization and offers some insights into the role of religion in the process of radicalization. While the policy response to terrorism tends to give primacy to religion and ideology as the main driving forces of radicalization, Roche's trajectory from "moderate" Muslim convert to JI member suggests that sustained exposure to extremist ideologies and close interaction with radicalized individuals may be key triggers for the radicalization 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 radicalization. In Roche's case his first divorce and the subsequent downward spiral into alcoholism were not significant factors in his radicalization. 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 radicalization process. The tipping point in Roche's radicalization 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 acknowledgment from his new social group were key factors in Roche's process of radicalization. The combination of these three factors fulfilled psychological and social needs, and pre-disposed Roche for indoctrination and jihadization.

The case of Jack Roche's radicalization also suggests that religion plays a far lesser role in radicalization 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 radicalized. Consideration of this argument offers new insights into Silber and Bhatt's pre-radicalization phase that appears to presume that any person who adopts Islam is somehow predisposed to radicalization.

Another significant insight offered by the analysis of the Roche case is the rationalization of *jihad* and the distinction between justifiable and unjustifiable theaters of *jihad*. Roche's failure to execute the final outcome of his radicalization process cannot be attributed to any significant changes in his religious beliefs. Rather, it is his rationalization of justified and unjustified *jihad* that prevented him from morally engaging with behaviors that would target innocent civilians in Australia. This particular point provides some important insights into the process of radicalization 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 radicalization and no distinct pattern to profile an individual throughout any of the stages of radicalization.[52] While Roche's case study provides some interesting insights into radicalization, it is by no means the only path that ideologically driven individuals take.

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