Studies in Conflict & Terrorism, 38:253–274, 2015

ISSN: 1057-610X print / 1521-0731 online
DOI: 10.1080/1057610X.2014.994349

Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group

Homegrown Terrorism in Canada: Local Patterns, Global Trends

JOHN McCOY

Department of Political Science
University of Alberta
Alberta, Edmonton, Canada

W. ANDY KNIGHT

Institute of International Relations
The University of the West Indies
St. Augustine, Trinidad

The article examines how global trends related to militant Islamism have influenced patterns of homegrown terrorism in Canada. It seeks to understand how an evolving movement has shaped three case studies, two cases of homegrown terrorism, the case of Momin Khawaja, the "Toronto 18" plot, and the emerging trend of extremist travelers. Recognizing the notable gap in the literature, a growing number of cases of homegrown terrorism and extremism in Canada suggest that further study is required. The article asks why Canadians choose to participate in this movement and why militant Islamist movements are actively recruiting them.

Modern terrorism is highly dynamic, and this is especially true in the aftermath of the 11 September 2001 attacks on the United States. After 9/11 the immediate concern for Western states and their security services was Al Qaeda, a group whose structure, membership, and territorial distribution has been debated among scholars. By the mid-2000s those concerns were broadened to the threat of "homegrown terrorism," or small networks of individuals who were directly affiliated to, or at least identified with Al Qaeda's brand of militant Islamism. In the early 2010s yet another shift in the nature of militant Islamism is taking place—as failed and failing states are stimulating the creation and growth of groups who often, but not exclusively, identify with the Al Qaeda brand. These conflict hotspots—ranging from Libya, Mali, Somalia, Yemen, Iraq, and most especially Syria, have drawn individuals from not only local communities but increasingly from abroad—including members of the so-called Muslim diaspora and a number of religious converts from the West.

The objective of this article is to identify how larger trends in the larger Al Qaeda movement have shaped cases of homegrown terrorism in a single Western state—Canada.

Received 12 October 2014; accepted 28 November 2014.
Address correspondence to Dr. John McCoy, Department of Political Science, 10-16 Henry Marshall Tory Building, University of Alberta, Edmonton, AB, T6G 2H4, Canada. E-mail: jsmccoy@ualberta.ca

In mapping these trends the article will ask how an evolving wave of modern terrorism has impacted a largely peaceful, economically prosperous, and multicultural state. It will examine how the strategies, ideas and tactics that define Al Qaeda have been moderated in a localized environment. In doing so it focuses on a country that has received little attention in the field of terrorism studies. The hope is that such a study can help to shed light on why the current wave of modern terrorism is drawing in an increasing number of Canadians, and Westerners in general. Understanding how terrorist movements are changing and adapting global strategies in local environments, and why individuals from the West are attracted to these movements, may help states and terrorism studies scholars find more efficacious approaches to counterterrorism.

The need to study homegrown terrorism in Canada is even more urgent given the events of late October 2014. In two separate terrorist attacks that occurred two days apart the idea that Canada was relatively insulated from the phenomenon of homegrown terrorism was shattered. In the first attack Martin Couture-Rouleau, a recent religious convert, deliberately targeted and struck two Canadian Armed forces personnel with his vehicle in the town of St-Jean-sur-Richelieu in the province of Quebec. The attack resulted in the death of a 28-year veteran of the Canadian Armed Forces, Warrant Officer Patrice Vincent. Couture-Rouleau was killed after the incident by police officers: he had been known to the Royal Canadian Mounted Police's (RCMP) Integrated National Security Investigations unit in Montreal as a radical supporter of the Islamic State (IS).[1]

That second attack was carried out by Michael Zehaf-Bibeau, a 32-year-old Canadian citizen with a record of petty crime. During the attack Zehaf-Bibeau shot and killed a Canadian Armed Forces reservist, Corporal Nathan Cirillo, who was standing on ceremonial sentry duty at the Canadian National War Memorial in the nation's capital, Ottawa. Shortly thereafter, Zehaf-Bibeau entered the center block building of the Canadian Parliament on an apparent suicide mission, where he was shot and killed by Paul Vickers, the Sergeant-at-Arms of the House of Commons of Canada. According to the RCMP, Zehaf-Bibeau made a video shortly before the attack outlining his political and ideological motives for his actions, which are said to be tied to anger over Canadian foreign policy.[2] The attack on the very heart of Canadian democracy, on the ramparts, such as they were, of an open-to-the-public seat of government, has led to questions in the media, among politicians, and the Canadian public about how to respond to the emergent security threat of "lone wolf" terrorism without sacrificing "Canadian values."

To carry out an analysis of homegrown terrorism in Canada the article will look to specific case studies or terrorist plots in the post-9/11 environment—including Mohammed Momin Khawaja (hereafter referred to as Momin Khawaja), a software engineer who had worked for the Canadian federal government and was sentenced to life in prison for his role in a bombing plot in the United Kingdom, and arguably the most prominent case of homegrown terrorism in Canada—the "Toronto 18" plot of 2006. Finally the analysis will examine an emerging trend— the increasing number of "extremist travelers" originating from Canada who are participating in terrorism and political violence in conflicts like Syria and Iraq. The three cases are selected as representative of early, mid and more recent examples of manifestations of the Al Qaeda movement, and its offshoots in the Canadian context after 9/11.

The article will begin by briefly looking at patterns of participation in terrorism in Canada after 9/11 and how militant Islamist or "*jihadist*"-based terrorism became the chief concern for Canadian security officials. Second, it will outline some of the key global trends in this particular brand of terrorism during this period. Third, it will examine

the selected case studies and conclude with an analysis of how larger trends in the Al Qaeda movement have shaped cases of homegrown terrorism and political violence in Canada.

Terrorism and Political Violence in Canada Post-9/11

Immediately after the 9/11 terrorist attacks on American soil some American commentators and politicians were quick to label Canada as a "haven" for terrorists. Reinforcing this view of Canada as a "safe haven" for terrorists and terrorist groups, Stewart Bell has outlined how, prior to 9/11, Canada was a convenient base for terrorist groups, ranging from Hezbollah, Tamil Tigers, and Al Qaeda that used Canada as an "offshore base."[3] By the mid-2000s, in the wake of the 2004 Madrid transit bombings and the 7/7 attacks in London, the Canadian government and the Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS) shifted their attention to the potential threat posed by homegrown terrorist networks.[4] CSIS's main objective became to counter "terrorism inspired by the ideology of al-Qaeda," and the "radicalization of citizens or residents."[5] In its 2007–2008 annual report, the intelligence agency outlined its concerns over "Islamic extremism" and vowed to step up surveillance on individuals living within Canada's borders "who support the use of violence to achieve their political goals."[6]

In more recent years there have been concerns expressed by the Canadian government over the participation of citizens in a series of conflicts in failed and failing states, most especially in the ongoing civil war in Syria—where it is estimated that roughly 16,000 foreigners are fighting with militant groups.[7] In 2013 the case of two young Canadian men Xristos Katsiroubas and Ali Medlej, who were killed in the siege of the Amenas gas plant in Algeria, brought attention to the issue of Canadian participation in political violence abroad.[8] That case helped to highlight the increasing presence of Canadian citizens in conflict zones like Somalia, Syria, and Iraq, including individuals who were joining ultra-extremist groups like the Islamic State. Subsequently, since 2013, the issue of "extremist travelers" has emerged as a central concern for the Canadian government and its security services.[9] An oft cited fear for Western governments, including Canada, is that travelers will return to Canada imbued with an extremist ideology and the training and experience needed to carry out attacks at home.

It should also be noted, that according to some estimates, Canadian extremist travelers are over-represented, relative to some Western States in conflicts like Syria. According to a study conducted in December of 2013 by the International Centre for the Study of Radicalisation (ICSR) there are as many as 2,800 individuals from Western states fighting in Syria.[10] In October 2014 U.S. intelligence officials estimated that roughly 1,000 foreign fighters continue to enter Syria on a monthly basis.[11] Establishing reliable and comparable numbers on extremist travelers at the national level is difficult—there exists a number of differing estimates generated by national intelligence organizations, police and security government agencies, and nongovernment think tanks. Aside from the estimates generated by intelligence agencies, two of the more rigorous studies on the presence of foreign fighters in Syria have come from the International Centre for the Study of Radicalisation (ICSR) and the Soufan Group. Demonstrating the potential range of uncertainty in these estimates, in a study carried out in December 2013 by ICSR, it estimated that somewhere between 9–100 Canadian foreign fighters were present in Syria, somewhere between 17–60 Americans, 23–205 Australians, and between 43–366 individuals from the United Kingdom.[12]

Using combined data from the Soufan group and ICSR, *The Washington Post* estimated that between December of 2013 and October of 2014, 70 Canadians traveled to Syria as extremist travelers. In comparison they estimate 130 Americans, 250 Australians and 488 individuals from the United Kingdom traveled to Syria during that same period.[13] Given that the U.S. population (roughly 320 million) is roughly nine times that of Canada's (roughly 35 million), there are approximately five times more Canadians per capita than Americans traveling to Syria, based on the figures provided by the *Washington Post*.[14] However, when compared to states with smaller populations like Australia (roughly 25 million), or to Western European states like the United Kingdom (roughly 64 million), the Canadian numbers are notably lower. Overall, these figures suggest that Canada occupies a sort of middle ground among Western states that are generating extremist travelers.

Aside from the attacks of October 2014, and the trend of extremist travelers, there have been a number of homegrown terrorist plots that directly targeted Canadian citizens. This includes, but is not limited to, high profile cases such as the "Toronto 18" plot, the 2006 Transatlantic "liquid explosives" plot that targeted two Canada bound Air Canada passenger jets, the case of Momin Khawaja from Ottawa, the 2013 Via Rail terror plot that allegedly sought to derail passenger trains near Toronto, and also in 2013 the arrests of two individuals who were accused of planning to detonate improvised explosive devices at the province of British Colombia's legislative buildings during annual Canada Day celebrations. Canada has also been singled out as a potential target by Al Qaeda for its active participation in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) International Security Assistance Force in Afghanistan, and subjected to threats from members of the IS.

Therefore, while terrorism and political violence are not new phenomena in Canada,[15] there are growing concerns related to the susceptibility of an increasing number of Canadians who may embrace the more militant variants of political Islam and carry out attacks within Canada. The next section of the article will examine how this ideology has shaped terrorism in the post-9/11 world and how the movement is stimulating terrorism at the global level.

Global Trends in Political Violence: An Evolving Al Qaeda Movement

By the late 1990s, in the wake of the African embassy bombings in Kenya and Tanzania that killed more than 200 people, the capability of Al Qaeda to carry out mass casualty terrorist attacks became glaringly obvious to Western security actors. In those attacks, and in the attacks of 11 September 2001, the group demonstrated its ability to project power globally, with far reaching consequences for global politics as a whole. Al Qaeda has proved dynamic and resilient—lasting longer than the average age of a wave of modern terrorism as defined by David Rapoport—roughly a generation.[16] The focus of this article is how this movement has influenced patterns of terrorism and political violence in Canada in the post-9/11 environment. To answer this question requires some understanding of the group itself, and as demonstrated by ongoing debates among scholars, our understanding of Al Qaeda is somewhat opaque.

Prominent experts in the field of terrorism studies, including Bruce Hoffman, Peter Bergen, and Rohan Gunaratna see Al Qaeda as a formal, hierarchical organization with networks operating globally, including in the West.[17] This organization is said to have existed, at least in some form, from the late 1980s until today. However, others, such as Jason Burke, are opposed to this organizational understanding. Rather, Burke views the idea of Al Qaeda as a distinct and formal organization as largely a myth—one that was constructed by states and terrorism studies experts as a means of conceptualizing a

defined adversary, and corresponding to this, a traditional counterterrorism response.[18] For Burke, Al Qaeda is best conceived as a movement—one that brings together like-minded individuals who share a common ideology and goals. From this perspective Al Qaeda is today best thought of as an *idea*.

As in many academic debates, the reality likely lies somewhere in between these two positions, and a larger review of their validity is outside of the scope of this article. However, what is increasingly apparent, to even relatively casual observers, is that Al Qaeda is no longer just a centralized organization represented by its current leader Ayman al-Zawahiri. Today, Al Qaeda is best thought of as a political and terrorist *movement* that is able to attract individuals and groups who seek to radically alter both local and global political conditions: individuals who wish to attach themselves to a struggle against the military, economic, and ideational power of the West, most especially the United States. The appeal of this ideology is apparent in its ability to attract a wide array of individuals to a brand of militant Islamism: including members of the "Muslim diaspora" in the Western world; a growing number of religious converts seeking to identify with an ideology; and even organizations who have primarily local grievances, for example Jabhat al-Nusra in Syria, who seek to gain a form of *legitimacy* by linking themselves to the Al Qaeda brand.

But how has this global movement influenced patterns of terrorism in the West? One of the most compelling answers given to this question comes from Marc Sageman, the author of *Leaderless Jihad: Terror Networks in the Twenty-First Century*. For Sageman, what is termed homegrown terrorism today is part of a "leaderless *jihad*," a phenomenon that is not possible without globalization and the technologies of the twenty-first century, most especially the Internet. While not the sole driving factor in this trend, it is the Internet that has opened up the informal media, chat rooms, and other communicative avenues that allows the small, often independent networks of the leaderless *jihad* to form. It allows the small minority of individuals who advocate for, or choose to identify with, the Al Qaeda brand to find each other, encourage each other, plan and carry out acts of violence, and celebrate those acts as a community.[19] By the mid-to-late-2000s the leaderless *jihad* was said to be most apparent as it was associated with terrorist attacks in Madrid, London, and many more failed plots. Thus, during this period, when Al Qaeda central was said to be in decline during the War on Terror, the leaderless *jihad* became the primary security threat to Western states.

But Sageman's understanding of the evolution of the Al Qaeda movement is not uncontested. For example, Bruce Hoffman believes that Al Qaeda central remains the primary threat to the United States and its allies. He argues that virtually all of the terrorist attacks targeting the West that emerged from 2002–2009 "emanated from core Al Qaeda or from allies and associates acting on its behalf."[20] He also argues that Al Qaeda central, while weakened in the aftermath of 9/11, has re-grouped to take advantage of important trends in the Muslim world—such as the political and social instability created by the Arab Spring. Additionally, following on some of the revelations that came from the intelligence gathering at Osama bin Laden's compound in Pakistan, it seems that Al Qaeda remains resilient and should remain the priority of counterterrorism efforts.[21]

Having recognized this perspective, there does seem to be strategic direction in the group's evolution, and in part this direction can be identified in the writings of central members of the movement. Notably, the "leaderless *jihad*" trend is reflective of a conscious long-term strategy pursued by senior members of the Al Qaeda movement. Specifically, this strategy can be found in the work of Mustafa Setmariam Nasar—a senior

Syrian militant with Spanish citizenship who lived for an extended period in London and now resides in a Syrian prison.[22] According to Paul Cruickshank and Mohannad Hage Ali, "no other individual has done more to conceptualize Al Qaeda's new strategy after 9/11."[23]

The core of Nasar's strategy can be found in his 1,600-page manifesto "The Call for Global Resistance," a document that has been widely circulated within the larger militant Islamist community. In "The Call" he outlined how after 9/11 Al Qaeda would have to shift to a model of *individual terrorism* that would replace Al Qaeda's old hierarchical structure that he believed was vulnerable to counterterrorism measures—posing an existential threat to the organization. Nasar recognized that, with the loss of Al Qaeda sanctuaries and training facilities in Afghanistan, the organization would have to evolve into a more loosely affiliated movement, and he hoped that this individual terrorism model could embolden a new generation of would-be militants who were looking for paths into the organization.[24]

To achieve this strategy, Nasar envisioned mass mobilization of youth similar to what took place during the "Palestinian Intifada but on a broader basis which includes the Islamic world, with its arm reaching the home of the American invaders and their infidel allies from every race and place."[25] Nasar also identified the importance of inspired leadership, or "builders" as he put it, in mobilizing these small networks. On this point he stated that this individual should be "an active individual with a security, cultural and religious eligibility, able to influence a wide circle of friends."[26] To mobilize these individuals and small groups he sought to distribute his writings and opinions globally and to incite Muslims by "highlighting Jewish-Crusader oppression of Muslims," and focusing on the "degeneracy of the Western world."[27]

Admittedly, objectively measuring the direct influence of Nasar's strategy is difficult. What is known is that Al Qaeda central's current leader Ayman al-Zawahiri has discussed Nasar's strategy favorably in his own work *Exoneration*. Moreover, his strategies have been sighted and reproduced extensively online, in Al Qaeda's English language magazine, *Inspire*, and distributed among members of Al Qaeda regional affiliates.[28] With these observations in mind, Cruickshank and Ali believe that Al Qaeda's trajectory in the mid-2000s "has evolved in remarkably similar lines to Setmariam's vision."[29] These findings suggest that the emergence of the leaderless *jihad* at this time may be representative of a conscious strategy undertaken by key strategists in the preexisting Al Qaeda network.

But how are individuals in the West physically drawn into this global movement? What are the direct paths to radicalization, recruitment, and participation in homegrown terrorism? A review of existing scholarly research reveals that there are a number of potential avenues through which individuals in the West are being drawn into participation in movements like Al Qaeda. The Internet (virtual networks), the role of charismatic preachers, universities, and prisons have all been identified as potential vehicles or sites for indoctrination and recruitment. In particular charismatic preachers, operating both in physical spaces (of mosques, prayer rooms, and private homes) and virtual spaces (through the distribution of online sermons and electronic communication) have been identified as playing important roles in stimulating homegrown terrorism. Mia Bloom has previously observed that extremist spiritual leaders in the West "exert decisive influence on individuals who at certain points decide to participate in extremist activities espousing a violent ideology."[30]

In the early twenty-first century some of the most prominent charismatic preachers are individuals who are embedded in both Western and Islamic cultural traditions. Arguably the most high-profile of these figures is American born and educated

Anwar al-Awlaki who was a member of Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP). Before being killed in a controversial U.S. drone strike he received significant attention because of his ability to influence individuals from the West and the larger Muslim community to participate in terrorism.[31] Like many individuals in a globalized world, Anwar possessed a "hybrid identity"—he was distinctly situated in two cultural traditions—in the United States, where he was born in New Mexico, and his family's native Yemen. His family was privileged and successful with roots in a powerful South Yemeni tribe. His father was a Fulbright scholar who served as a prominent member, Minister of Agriculture, of President Ali Abdullah Saleh's government, and Anwar went on to emulate his father's educational success, studying engineering at Colorado State University.[32]

Anwar's most meaningful role in the larger Al Qaeda movement was as a charismatic preacher who released a number of influential online video and audio sermons aimed at English-speaking audiences. The most widely known of these sermons is his six-hour-long English audio lecture the "Constants on the Path of Jihad," where he re-interprets the late Saudi ideologue Yusuf el-Ayeri's famous *jihadist* text. According to J. M. Berger, that lecture "has become a classic of radicalization in the West, not just because of al-'Awlaqi's formidable language skills, but also his creative interpretation of the original text with expanded religious stories and real-life examples."[33] The appeal of that lecture and the appeal of Anwar's message to his target audience in the West in general, was not only this ability to place established *jihadist* literature in a religiously literate narrative, but also to offer clear examples of how his ideology can apply to real life experiences of Westerners.[34] Evan Kohlmann, a member of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) who has studied Anwar for years, believes the preacher's effectiveness came from his own experience as a Muslim living in the West and his ability to use that understanding to speak directly and convincingly to his target audience.[35]

Anwar's role in the Al Qaeda movement also demonstrates how efficiently the movement has been able to mobilize the resources of globalization and twenty-first-century technology. In pursuing his goal to foment terrorism in the West, he employed not only his online sermons but also e-mail communication, published in Al Qaeda's English-language magazine *Inspire* and engaged with individuals in discussion forums and chat rooms. It was through these sorts of environments that he motivated individuals like Major Nidal Hasan who killed 13 individuals at Fort Hood in Texas in 2009 and the failed Christmas day passenger jet bomber Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab.[36] Thus, according to Berger, "Although 'Constants' does not directly address the concept of 'lone wolf' terrorism, its principles logically empower such acts, especially its globalization of *jihad* (which is not dependent on a 'particular land')."[37] As figures like Anwar al-Awlaki demonstrate, the Internet is without doubt a powerful medium for connecting Westerners to militant Islamism—giving them a sense of community, belonging, and empowerment, while drawing them into a globalized terrorist movement.[38]

There are even examples of individuals who had significant impact on homegrown terrorism through *anonymous* online activities. Take for example Younis Tsouli, an individual known through his Web-based identity as Irhabi 007. Tsouli is a 22-year-old West Londoner who hacked into various computers across the West, disseminated propaganda for Al Qaeda and taught those sympathetic to his message how to use their online presence to support the larger movement. Tsouli helped to propel "jihadists into a 21st-century offensive" by disseminating, via the Internet, propaganda videos featuring attacks and beheadings, as well as manuals on bomb and weapon making—effectively establish a model for future online operators.[39]

Following on the insights provided from examinations of cases like Anwar al-Awalki and Tsouli, understanding the role of the Internet, and how it bridges these worlds together, is essential for dissecting how the larger Al Qaeda movement has influenced local patterns of terrorism in the West. On this subject Peter Neumann has identified how one of the most effective ways in which the Internet is employed by terrorists is through its communicative uses. The Internet has made it far easier than in previous periods of modern terrorism, to disseminate ideological materials in a secure and anonymous space that circumvents the kind of censorship that is found in mainstream media sources.[40] These are not new observations in terrorism studies literature. However, Neumann observes something important in his work, that there has been an evolutionary track in the movement's use of the technology.

During the earliest stages of this usage, starting in the 1990s, groups employed static websites that allowed the dissemination of information in a way that bypassed censorship but did not allow for wider online discussions and interactions.[41] By the late 1990s groups moved into Internet discussion forums available through mainstream platforms like Yahoo and AOL and eventually established independent forums allowing them to escape the oversight found on mainstream platforms. These forums created what Neumann refers to as "virtual town squares, where people met, bonded, and talked to each other—and where even the most controversial issues could be debated without fear of retribution."[42] This adaptational usage continued in the early-to-mid 2000s as multimedia video was distributed over broadband networks. It made available to a much wider audience graphic imagery of violence involving suicide attacks, beheadings, combat between U.S. and coalition troops and militants, and videos framed as atrocities carried out by Western troops that were designed to illicit an emotional response in the Muslim world. Together these developments corresponded with the emergence of the leaderless *jihad* and the phenomenon of "online radicalization."

During this same period, social networking emerged, allowing for greatly expanded video-sharing, instant-messaging, and blogging. This facilitated the distribution of the narrative of the Al Qaeda movement far more widely; it allowed for more expressive interaction among like-minded individuals, for instance through video communication and sharing; and it allowed the narrative to reach new demographics, women for example, who were previously isolated from the movement by cultural mores.[43] According to Neumann the cumulative effect of these forums and exposure to violent multimedia materials is that "people acquire a skewed sense of reality so that extremist attitudes and violence are no longer taboos but—rather—are seen as positive and desirable."[44] These findings demonstrate how an evolving online platform has contributed to the dynamism of a global political movement—a movement that views these communicative avenues as critical to its global appeal and its ability to access Western audiences.

Another space in which individuals have become indoctrinated into the Al Qaeda movement is within failed states and conflict zones. This trend was particularly pronounced in the earliest stages of the Al Qaeda movement when the first "Arab-Fighters" traveled to Afghanistan in the 1980s. Recently the trend of individuals traveling abroad for indoctrination and participation in political violence has re-established itself. In its latest Public Report, CSIS reiterated its position that terrorism related to Al Qaeda remains a primary focus stating, "In Canada, terrorism emanating from Al Qaeda–inspired extremism remains a serious threat. Despite recent successful operations targeting Al Qaeda Core, the Service continues to see support for AQ causes in Canada."[45] But in that same report CSIS goes on to list a more specific concern,

> . . . the increasing number of Canadian citizens or residents who leave the country to participate in terrorist activities abroad . . . [and] the spectre that such individuals will return to Canada more deeply radicalized than when they left. Most troubling, if they participate in a foreign conflict or train with a terrorist group, they might return with certain operational skills that can be deployed themselves or taught to fellow Canadian extremists.[46]

Of course, as already suggest above, this trend is not a localized trend experienced solely by Canada. Moreover, following on the Montreal and Ottawa attacks of October 2014—now added to the concerns over extremist travelers—is that violent extremists need not travel abroad to gain the necessary motivations or skills to carry out attacks. Indeed, these "lone wolves" may act on their own accord, inspired by the message and calls for action from groups like IS. Already Western states, their security services and law enforcement agencies are measuring the results of these trends. In the next section the article will examine the three case studies and ask how they may be reflective of these larger trends in the Al Qaeda movement.

Case Studies: The 2004 Momin Khawaja Terrorism Case

The space afforded by this article does not allow a detailed survey of post-9/11 political violence in Canada. Therefore, selected cases are representative of the most prominent cases of homegrown terrorism in Canada, and are representative of early, mid and more recent examples of the presence of the Al Qaeda movement in Canada after 9/11. The first case study under examination is that of Momin Khawaja. In Canada, Khwaja's case represents the first significant example of homegrown terrorism after the attacks of 9/11. Khawaja has the dubious distinction of being the first individual to be formally charged and prosecuted under the 2001 Anti-Terrorism Act (ATA). In Khawaja's case he was convicted under Canada's ATA for participating in the activities of a terrorist group based primarily in the United Kingdom from 2003 to 2004.

Khawaja was born in Ottawa in 1979 and spent some of his childhood years in Libya, Saudi Arabia, and Pakistan. He spent his formative years growing up in the quiet Ottawa suburb of Orleans where he was said to have had a normal childhood and enjoyed hockey.[47] Khawaja spent his teenage years attending Sir Wilfred Laurier high school in Ottawa and later attended Algonquin College where he studied computer science. During high school he was said to enjoy typical teenage activities such as partying with his friends, "clubbing" and listening to rap music.[48] After completing his training at Algonquin he worked as a software developer under contract with the Government of Canada's Department of Foreign Affairs. It was during this time that Khawaja became more serious about his own religious beliefs. He became active in youth programs at the Bilal mosque in Ottawa where he had worked as a volunteer teacher.[49]

During this period his interest in politics and foreign policy grew—by 2000 he became particularly concerned with the plight of the Palestinians. These concerns came to a head with the outbreak of the Second Intifada, and soon he began comparing the situation of Palestinians to his own comfortable suburban existence.[50] After 11 September 2001 and the U.S./NATO intervention in Afghanistan his interest in politics grew and he began exploring online militant Islamist literature. He read the writings of Abdullah Azzam and began visiting militant Internet chat rooms where he met likeminded young people.[51] According to the Supreme Court of Canada, during this period Khawaja became enamored with Al Qaeda, or "obsessed with Osama bin Laden," as the court put it. In one

email written by Khawaja and later found by law enforcement officials he called for a *jihad* against non-Muslims and spoke of how he wished he could kiss "the blessed hand" of bin Laden. In another inflammatory excerpt he wrote, "There can be no peace, no negotiations with the Kuffir [unbelievers]."[52] Around this time Khawaja took an interest in paintball and guns, which he began purchasing and collecting legally, and by 2002 made the decision to turn his interest in *jihad* into direct action.[53]

In 2002 he traveled to Pakistan with the intent to fight with the Taliban. According to the testimony of Mohammed Junaid Babr, a chief witness at his trial, he met Khawaja at the airport when he arrived in Lahore and he believed that "He [Khawaja] had come to fight in Afghanistan."[54] Again, in 2003 Khawaja traveled to Pakistan and according to evidence given at the trial of his co-conspirators in Britain, he established a connection with a network of "*jihadi*" sympathizers.[55] There he is reported to have attended a training camp located in the Malakand region in the Northwest Frontier Province of Pakistan that was set up by Mohammed Babar (an alleged American Al Qaeda operative), who went on to be the fixer for Khawaja's terrorist cell.[56]

The plot that emerged from the network established in Pakistan was foiled by Britain's domestic security service MI5 and involved the use fertilized bombs that were to be blown up at gas and power utilities, a nightclub, a construction firm and possibly a major shopping center. The bombs would have made use of roughly 600 kg of ammonium nitrate fertilizer and had the potential to kill hundreds of people. In Britain nine individuals who were said to be angry about British and American foreign policy were arrested in the case (five were sentenced to life in prison). Khawaja represented the sole Canadian arrested.[57]

The group's ringleader, Omar Khyam, had previously bragged about his connections to Al Qaeda (a connection that seems to be supported by MI5 evidence) and he was in personal contact with at least two members of the 7/7 attacks in London in 2005. It was revealed at Khawaja's trial that he had first met Omar Khyam online where he went by the name Ausman in Internet chat rooms. As in many of the other cases of homegrown terrorism Khawaja and his co-conspirators had first met and discussed their ideas and ideological views on the Internet—an environment that, as pointed out by Sageman, can act as an "echo-chamber" for young men who seek to build empowered personas.[58] Similar to Khawaja, the five Britons who were convicted in the plot had volunteered to fight in Afghanistan with Al Qaeda but were told they would be of more use in the West.[59] Altogether the links to Al Qaeda seem well established—with British security officials concluding that the group was linked back to "senior al-Qaeda figures in Pakistan and Afghanistan."[60]

At his trial in Canada it was outlined how Khawaja had actively encouraged and participated in the terrorist plot. According to the courts he was committed to bringing "death, destruction and terror to innocent people ... [and] apparently remorseless."[61] Khawaja's own lawyers even admitted that he had at least wanted to kill Western soldiers in Afghanistan.[62] In 2004 Khawaja was sentenced to 15 years in prison—later increased to life in prison by the Supreme Court of Canada. When the 29 year old Khawaja was arrested, materials were seized from his home including a transmitter-receiving device that could be used as a bomb detonator, assault rifles, 640 rounds of ammunition, and "*jihadist*" literature.[63]

The 2006 "Toronto 18" Plot

The most well-known example of a homegrown terrorist plot in Canada is the "al-Qaeda inspired" group of 18 individuals who were planning a series of attacks in the province of Ontario and were subsequently arrested in June 2006. In point of fact Sageman has cited

the 2006 plot as an example of the "leaderless jihad."[64] Of the group's 18 members, 14 were adults and four were youths when they were charged in 2006—of that original 18 members, seven had their charges dropped or stayed, four were found guilty, and seven pleaded guilty to terrorism related charges.[65] Today, with the release of court records, and a number of successful prosecutions, what is clear is that some group members had the ambition, the will, and arguably the capacity to carry out a spectacular bomb attack in Canada's most populous metropolitan area.

The group was made up of two connected networks operating in separate suburban Toronto satellite communities—Mississauga and Scarborough. Emulating the *modus operandi* of many of the Al Qaeda–inspired attacks of the mid-2000s, the group planned a series of multiple high casualty attacks on high profile targets. In the more credible element of the plot, what group members reportedly referred to as the "Battle of Toronto," the group sought to bomb the Toronto Stock Exchange, the headquarters of CSIS, and a military base.[66] The group planned to carry out the attacks on 11 September 2006—a clear indication of the movement they saw themselves as part of. The bombs were to contain metal chips and detonated in the center of the city at 9 a.m. in order to inflict the greatest number of causalities during the city's busy morning period.[67] Scientific review of the potential impact of the explosions revealed that the bombs would have most likely have resulted in mass casualties and at least the partial collapse of targeted buildings.[68]

An examination of the Toronto 18 presents a picture of a group that was clearly shaped by the group's ringleaders—Zakaria Amara and Fahim Ahmed. Ahmed played a central role in recruiting members of the Toronto 18 and fomenting their indoctrination process. Amara played a key role in the planning of the more credible element of the 2006 plot—the multiple bombings in Toronto. Together Amara and Ahmad represented the core of the group with Ahmad representing the charismatic leader and Amara the planner and organizer.[69] In many of the accounts that have emerged of the two Amara is portrayed as the far more serious and capable terrorist—in comparison Ahmed has been characterized by journalists, academics, his defense attorney Dennis Edney, and even Justice Fletcher Dawson during his sentencing (he received 16 years in prison for his role in the plot), as a "wannabe" whose rhetoric was not matched by credible planning to carry out terrorist attacks.[70]

Fahim Ahmad was born in Afghanistan where he experienced the country's civil war first hand before moving to Canada in 1994.[71] He has been described as a gregarious and charismatic young man who had influence over his peers. Zakaria Amara was born in Jordan in 1985 and spent some of his early childhood years in Saudi Arabia and Cyprus. In 1997 at the age of 12 he moved with his family to Canada.[72] Amara is, by all accounts, a very intelligent young man who had been an honor student and was highly devoted to religious study. His ability to quote religious text was said to draw respect from his peers. He even had ambitions to attend a religious school and traveled to Saudi Arabia for an interview for the Islamic University in Madinah—but was rejected.[73] There has been some speculation that this event also may have played a role in his turn toward more militant religious literature.[74]

Fahim Ahmad's connection to Amara takes the form of an established long-term friendship founded in their teenage years. They shared commonalities such as their experience as first generation Canadians, common interests in rap music and political concerns related to the suffering of Muslims in conflicts around the world. Their friendship began at Meadowvale Secondary School (where the two friends also met fellow Toronto 18 member Saad Kalid). Together with Kalid, the three young men formed a gang-like association they called the "Brothers of Meadowvale." At that school the friends became

influential members of the Muslim Student Association, which was reportedly created to help disaffected youth.[75] Importantly, according to Isabel Teotonio, a reporter for the *Toronto Star* who covered the case extensively, that association proved "fertile for the seeds of extremism and militancy."[76] Later the "Brothers" attended the local Salaheddin Islamic Center which had a reputation as being radical and was led by a controversial imam—Aly Hindy.[77] Fellow attendees have reported that soon after their arrival at the Centre the group began dressing in military fatigues. In these venues the core leadership recruited fellow group members.

By December of 2005 the group attended a training camp north of Toronto that was organized by Ahmad. At that camp the group underwent physical, psychological, and ideological training. They watched videos and listened to sermons including Anwar al-Awlaki's "Constants on the Path of Jihad" and Ahmad himself gave a sermon where he referred to how the group was "like Al-Qaeda, though not officially Al-Qaeda, but had the same aims, objectives and methods."[78] Group members were also given the video *shuhada al-Muwajahat* (Martyrs of the Confrontation) in which Osama bin Laden glorified the 11 September 2001 attacks.[79]

That same year Amara and Ahmad split over personal disagreements resulting in the formation of two distinct branches and plots among the larger group.[80] The split seems to have been prompted by Amara's perception that Ahmad was not fully committed to the planned attacks. The end result was that the more sensational but less credible plot to attack the Canadian Parliament and take Canadian politicians, including the prime minister, hostage and behead them (centered on Ahmad's group) was separated from the more credible Toronto bomb plot (centered on Amara's leadership). Amara went on to established a safe house and storage facility for bomb materials, acquired necessary funds (roughly $30,000 Canadian dollars) and bombmaking manuals and eventually moved to purchase the ammonium nitrate fertilizer for the bomb. Amara proved to be an efficient operator and actively tried to cover the group's activities. When police moved in they found informational videos on bombmaking, packaging for a remote control for a cell phone, and business cards and t-shirts for their "student farmer" organizational cover the group planned to use in order to purchase the fertilizer.[81]

As in prior cases the Internet seemingly played an important role in the group's shift from radicals to committed militants as group members communicated with Irhabi 007, watched *jihadi* videos, and networked with other like-minded individuals in Western countries. Fahim Ahmad had an established presence in the extremist websites where he was known as the "Soldier of Allah," among other aliases. It was during his online activities that Ahmad came to the attention of CSIS who questioned him on multiple occasions and put him under surveillance. The group communicated with the British based man named Aabid Khan, also known as "Mr. Fix-its" (a known facilitator for Lashkar-e-Tayyiba in Pakistan) and individuals in Bosnia who were planning attacks in Sarajevo.[82] There were also connections with Georgia residents Ehsunul Islam Sadequee and Syed Haris Ahmed who traveled to Toronto to discuss targets for terrorist attacks in Washington, D.C. and were later convicted of terrorism charges in the United States.

Although the group was connected with similar networks and individuals in the United States, Britain, and Bosnia, the planning and organization of the attacks seem largely self-generated. On this point Michael Zekulin notes that the group, "made efforts to acquire technical know-how to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of their attack. However, the source of the information came from within the group itself and there is no evidence to suggest they made efforts to contact any others despite the obvious

connection they had with another like-minded group."[83] Thus, there is no evidence of formal connections to groups such as Al Qaeda central.

In terms of motive, the group's primary political aim, similar to what was seen in attacks like the Madrid transit bombings of 2004, was to directly influence foreign policy. Specifically, the goal was to drive Canadian forces out of Afghanistan. It should be noted that by the mid-2000s the Canadian mission was entering a new active phase of combat missions culminating in Operation Medusa in the fall of 2006, which marked the most intense combat the Canadian Armed Forces had seen since the Korean War.[84] These events melded with the timing of Amara and Ahmed's own turn toward militancy and their growing concern with the plight of Muslims around the world.

An Emerging Trend: Canadian "Extremist Travelers"

The final case study of the article examines an emerging trend—Canadians who become "extremist travelers" and actively seek to participate in political violence and terrorism abroad. Highlighting the growing threat posed by these travelers, the Canadian Department of Public Safety released a report in 2014 outlining the priority that security and government officials now place on the issue.[85] As recognized above there are a number of existing, sometimes differing, estimates on the number of Canadian extremist travelers in states like Syria. According to Canadian security agencies there are an estimated 130 Canadians actively participating in a variety of conflicts abroad. The RCMP is currently monitoring at least 90 suspected extremists who they believe may have intentions to become extremist travelers.[86] The Canadian government has also acknowledged that roughly 80 Canadians have returned after traveling abroad for some "terrorism related purposes."[87]

Here there are a number of potential cases to choose from, but this section will primarily focus on the "Calgary Network"—a group of five young men who traveled to Syria and Iraq to participate in *jihad*. The city of Calgary has emerged as a significant source for extremist travelers in Canada—in 2014 Calgary Police estimated that at least 30 local residents have traveled abroad to participate in foreign conflicts.[88] The exact nature of the personal connections between the network, namely Abdi Farah Shirdon, Damian Clairmont, Salman Ashrafi, Greg Gordon, and his brother Collin Gordon, remain somewhat unclear. But what is known is that the young men attended the Islamic Information Society of Calgary, a small religious center located in the ground floor of a downtown apartment building (Westview Heights) where they all lived.[89] CBC has reported that the network departed roughly around the same time (late 2012) to join the conflict in Syria.[90]

One public face of the Calgary Network is Farah Mohamed Shirdon, a young Calgary man who died in the summer of 2014 fighting for IS. Shirdon had been a student at Calgary's polytechnic school the Southern Alberta Institute of Technology (SAIT) before traveling to Syria. Notably he came from an established and well-educated Somali family: his paternal uncle, Abdi Farah Shirdon, was a former Prime Minister of Somalia who ironically had been a target of the militant group al-Shabab.[91] Shirdon gained significant media attention in Canada when he appeared in an inflammatory online video burning his Canadian passport and issuing threats to Canada and other "oppressors" stating, "We are coming, and we will destroy you."[92]

Shirdon's death in Iraq followed the deaths of fellow Calgary residents Salman Ashrafi, who died fighting with IS, and Damian Clarimont who was said to be part of the Al Qaeda affiliated group Jabhat al-Nusra. Salman Ashrafi is reported to have carried out a spectacular suicide bombing in Iraq that killed 46 people under the banner of IS. Ashrafi had been a post-secondary student—attending the University of Lethbridge where he

studied management and social responsibility and organized anti-racism rallies. After university he had gone on to a promising career in Calgary's oil industry.[93] The nature of his transformation from successful post-secondary student and young professional to terrorist remains a mystery. The Canadian national news service CBC News has reported that Ashrafi may have played a leadership role in this group. On one occasion he is said to have instructed fellow members, "that the only way to live with non-Muslims was to either convert them or subjugate them, and failing that migrate to a land of Islam."[94]

The remaining two members of the Calgary network—brothers Greg and Collin Gordon—are recent converts to Islam who are fighting with IS.[95] Like Shirdon, Collin Gordon was a student at SAIT, and also attended Thompson River University (TRU) in British Colombia where he studied business. Collin played volleyball and founded a Social Club at TRU.[96] Like Ashrafi, Collin was not a socially isolated or marginalized young person, and it remains a mystery to his family and peers how the brothers underwent such a dramatic transformation from socially popular post-secondary students to committed militants.

Collin Gordon's participation with IS, as with many other extremist travelers, has been revealed in part through his active use of social media including Facebook. In social media Collin uses his *nom-de-guerre* (Abu Ibrahim Kanadi) and actively engages in propagandist work for IS.[97] Collin has also been operating on Twitter where he commented that the beheading of the American James Foley by IS was "the perfection of terrorism."[98] In another photo posted on social media Collin is seen watching a lecture by Musa Cerantonio—an Australian national who and charismatic speaker who actively propagated an extremist message online.[99]

Since the revelations about the Calgary network have come to light city officials and members of the local Muslim community have been speculating about what has caused the city to become a center for young people traveling abroad. One outspoken local religious figure, Imam Syed Soharwardy, has stated publically that charismatic preachers in the city have been actively recruiting young men to fight abroad. The imam has warned university administrators and police about "lecturers" who may be exploiting vulnerable young people in the community, specifically in post-secondary institutions.[100] However, to date the precise pathway to radicalization for this group is unknown.

Outside of the Calgary network there are a number of other high profile cases of Canadians traveling abroad to fight in conflicts like the Syrian Civil War. For example, André Poulin, a convert to Islam from Timmins Ontario, drew international attention when he was featured in one of the first online recruitment videos produced by IS. In that video Poulin refers to himself as an average Canadian who enjoyed watching hockey and fishing. The video, entitled "The Chosen Few of Different Lands" features picturesque footage of the Canadian countryside that is juxtaposed with images of the war in Syria.[101] The video is clearly aimed at recruiting Canadians and other Westerners through comparing life in Canada to what is portrayed as a righteous battle in the Middle East. Poulin states in the video: "I had money. I had a good family . . . I watched hockey, I went to the cottage in the summertime," but then goes on to reject his former life referring to Canada as, "*dar al-kufr*"—a country of disbelief.[102]

In "The Chosen Few Video" the battle in which he was killed (the siege of the al-Minakh airfield in Syria) is shown, ending with a graphic picture of his corpse and a message that he died a martyr.[103] Since his death it has since come to light that Poulin was a troubled young man. He had multiple arrests in Canada for making violent threats, theft, carrying a weapon, and harassment.[104] According to police records and the testimony of friends and associates he was learning how to build explosives online, and explored

becoming a Communist or an anarchist before settling for a conversion to Islam and a life as an extremist.[105] After that conversion he quickly developed an alternative persona, referring to himself as "Uncle Umar" and became active online.[106]

Analysis

What do these cases tell us about how the larger Al Qaeda movement has shaped cases of homegrown terrorism and political violence in Canada? Take the case of Momin Khwaja, which represents an example of homegrown terrorism that emerged shortly after 9/11 when Al Qaeda central was said to be a more coherent entity. In effect he self-radicalized; there is little public evidence of the role of charismatic preachers or senior figures fomenting his initial radicalization. Khawaja sought out extremist literature on and offline, sending him down the path to direct participation as he traveled to Pakistan on multiple occasions. In the end his persistence "paid off," his travels led to the establishment of a network with like-minded Britons and connections to Al Qaeda central, who were eager to take advantage of an ambitious young Westerner to pursue their political aims. Thus, the case of Khawaja, and the larger plot that he was a part of, is an example of a sort of marriage of convenience between a largely self-generated case of "individual terrorism" and an active organization in Pakistan in the early-to-mid-2000s.

There is also a degree of foreshadowing in the Khawaja case related to more recent trends in Canada. After 9/11, Khawaja was one of the first noteworthy examples of an individual who turned a self-directed exploration of an ideology into a physical journey abroad, where he sought to establish himself as a militant. In this sense Khawaja is an example of an early extremist traveler. Inflamed by political events half a world away, for example the Second Palestinian Intifada and the war in Afghanistan, he took it upon himself to join the Al Qaeda movement. Similarly today, young Canadians are drawn by the events of the Syrian Civil War and the emergence of a powerful new group (IS) claiming to have established a caliphate, a claim that looms large in the minds of some Islamists. Once these extremist travelers arrive in Syria and Iraq, IS, Al Qaeda and a host of militant groups are eager to use their energy for their own strategic purposes.

The example of the Toronto 18 also reflects some of the broader trends identified above. The group was emulating the model of an Al Qaeda–inspired group, choosing a date for the attack and tactics (multiple high impact bombings) that would clearly identify them with the Al Qaeda brand. However, unlike the network that Khawaja was part of, it had no connection to Al Qaeda central—representing a more organic outgrowth of the Al Qaeda movement and matching closely to Sageman's "leaderless" model. The group was partially radicalized online, for instance through watching the sermons of Anwar al-Awlaki, and through the radical student religious groups, mosques and religious centers that they attended. They connected with prominent online extremists like Younes Tsouli and Aabid Khan, and also with like-minded networks in the United States and Bosnia. In this sense they demonstrated the relatively small confines of the active Western militant Islamist movement in the mid-2000s.

Agency played a formative role in this group—demonstrating the important role of leadership in the "leaderless *jihad*." Without Zakaria Amara and Fahim Ahmed the plot would not have existed, and certainly without Amara it would have been far less credible. The two young men were able to bring together a broad base of its membership displaying different demographics in terms of age, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status. With Amara's agency in particular they were able to create a group that threatened to carry out a devastating terrorist attack. This realization shows the potential threat posed by the

individual terrorism model and the importance of what Mustafa Setmariam Nasar referred to as "builders"—religiously, charismatically, and tactically capable leaders who can mobilize resources and individuals looking for a cause.

The final case study is an emerging trend, but what has become clear is that an increasing number of young people in Canada are drawn to a political and terrorist movement represented by the ultra-extremist Islamic State—a group so violent that its forbearer, Al Qaeda, has disowned it. But how specifically has this trend influenced local patterns of participation in political violence? The case of the Calgary network is telling; it represents a highly diverse group of seemingly well integrated young men—many of whom seemed to have bright futures. The process through which they were radicalized remains unclear, despite speculation by community members that there are charismatic preachers operating in Calgary.

Therefore, an associated question that is commonly explored in terrorism studies and radicalization literature—of why young people are drawn to this movement, is notoriously difficult to answer. As shown by Gaetano Joe Ilardi in his article "Interviews with Canadian Radicals" it is difficult to identify commonalities in individuals' paths to radicalization. From Ilardi's sample of interviews with "Canadian radicals" he concludes that, "Ultimately, these men's stories demonstrate that the radicalization experience is anything but straightforward in the sense of there being a single and unambiguous motivation that spurs individuals on."[107] The case studies employed in this article support these findings.

But what the Calgary network and associated cases do reveal is that for an increasing number of extremist travelers, groups like IS have, through their sophisticated use of propaganda, attracted individuals with little to no connection to conflicts in Syria and Iraq to participate in political violence and terrorism. The prominent use of extremist travelers in IS propaganda provides an illuminating example of the connection between the Canadian case and larger trends in militant Islamism. Group's like IS draw part of their legitimacy from the perception that they are a *global force*—one that can call on the agency of Westerners who reject their own cultural norms and mores. In some cases, like Salman Ashrafi of the Calgary network, the strategic usefulness of these individuals for groups like IS may lie in their role as glorified martyrs and suicide bombers, while in other cases, such as Abdi Farah Shirdon, they are deemed useful as charismatic spokespersons. In return extremist travelers become the *cause célèbre* of a powerful political and terrorist movement.

In order to distribute their narrative, groups like IS use widely available technology to create videos of high production quality and distribute those videos globally. As Neumann has identified, today's online world creates an immersive experience where people acquire a skewed sense of reality—where extremism and extreme violence are no longer taboo—but rather desirable.[108] The narratives, testimonials and martyrdom videos of Canadians, and Westerners in general, reinforce the desirability and relatability of this worldview for some individuals.

Some of the most powerful imagery found in the movement's propaganda shows the dramatic break Westerns make with their former lives as they embrace a transformative experience into a new and powerful identity. We see these images vividly in Abdi Farah Shirdon burning his Canadian passport or in André Poulin's video narrative where he renounces his former safe and comfortable existence in Canada and embraces his new life, or more accurately "glorious" death, as a martyr. These are images of profound individual transformation that provide an example, a promise of a similar experience for others, for Westerners who seek to make a distinct break from their former lives. The title

of Poulin's martyrdom video "The Chosen Few of Different Lands" captures two of these ideas. First, that Westerns have the opportunity to belong to something unique, something that will garner them fame and notoriety—appealing ideas for young people in the West today. Second, the idea that IS is able to call on the agency of those of "Different Lands" projects an idea of an organization with global ambitions.

The choice of Westerners as the spokespersons for groups like IS is not random, rather this is a strategic choice. Westerners in general, especially those who can effectively speak to individuals situated in Western cultural traditions, have already demonstrated their usefulness for groups with global aims: as we see in the case of the late Anwar al-Awalki and AQAP. Westerners who are indoctrinated in these movements act as a bridge to would be recruits through placing an ideological message in examples that Westerners can understand and find appealing. In the past, spokespersons like Anwar demonstrated their ability to draw committed new members into the larger movement, and generate a difficult form of terrorism for Western security actors to address—the phenomenon of the "lone-wolf" terrorist: unfortunately, a phenomenon that Canada is now all too familiar with after the events of October 2014.

Also of note in the case studies is the growing trend of converts joining the larger Al Qaeda movement. Previous studies have indicated that, of those who are arrested and charged with terrorism-related offenses in Canada, roughly one quarter to one third of Canadian terrorists are converts.[109] Studies have also identified some consistency in terms of individual profile and motivating factors amongst this group where some form of personal crisis seems to precipitate participation, as do run-ins with the criminal justice system, drug and alcohol abuse, and poverty.[110] Following on the observations above, for converts groups like IS may offer those looking for a distinct break with their former troubled lives a new and empowered identity, a life of notoriety, and a starkly different life to what they have known in Canada. Part of the answer to why these individuals join this movement can be found in their online videos, "tweets," and Facebook posts. Namely, they join groups like Al Qaeda and IS because of what they have to offer—a new sense of purpose and/or belonging.

Finally, there remains the question of whether there is anything specific about Canada that makes it vulnerable to the wider militant Islamist narrative. Prior to the events of October 2014 and the upsurge in extremist travelers in the early 2010s, there was speculation that Canada was relatively insulated from homegrown terrorism and extremism. There were hopes among some that cases like Khawaja and the Toronto 18 were isolated incidents. But it can be observed that beginning in the mid-2000s, when Canada entered into a more active period of military engagement in Afghanistan, and with today's participation in the international coalition targeting Islamic State, would-be homegrown terrorists are turning their attention inward, a trend that was established shortly after the Khwaja case. Certainly these grievances were expressed in the case of the Toronto 18, the Via Rail plot of 2013, and the most recent "lone-wolf" attacks in October 2014. Subject to explicit threats from Al Qaeda and the Islamic State, Canada has become a prominent target for the larger militant Islamist movement. Moreover, the numbers of extremist travelers coming from Canada is noteworthy and suggests that the appeal of the militant narrative may be greater than is seen in some states (e.g., the United States).

As suggested above, identity plays an important role in the radicalization process as individuals reject their former identity. For much of the world, and for a majority of Canadians, Canada represents a largely peaceful and prosperous country: a "classic settler society" where immigrants are welcomed as an integral part of the identity of a diverse and tolerant multicultural state.[111] The question of why some individuals so dramatically

reject this identity in favor of extremism and militancy is difficult to answer, especially when a number of individuals who join the wider Al Qaeda movement have been successful in their personal and professional lives. Ultimately, these identity-based questions, specifically why individuals seek to resolve whatever inner turmoil they are experiencing through such a drastic choice, must be explored through further psychological and anthropological study. In the end, what this article has demonstrated is the increasingly insidious nature of an evolving Al Qaeda movement, of how the changing ideas, tactics and strategies that have defined the movement since 9/11 have impacted cases of homegrown terrorism and political violence in Canada. From the Al Qaeda central directed terrorism of the period immediately after 9/11, to the leaderless *jihad* period of the mid-2000s, and the early 2010s with the emergence of the Islamic State and the phenomenon of extremist travelers, these global trends in the wider movement have been reflected in patterns of homegrown terrorism and political violence in Canada.

Today the Al Qaeda movement and its offshoots like IS, are inexorably tied to some of the hallmarks of globalization: to heightened migration and mobility between North and South, to diasporas exhibiting hybrid identities and to the virtual communities born of a rapidly evolving online world. Today, states and international organizations engaged with terrorism are faced with the reality that terrorism, that conflict in general, is less and less containable locally. In Canada, along with all Western states affected, or infected, by the Al Qaeda movement and its offshoots, security officials are faced with a similar dilemma—how can we address this threat, and can we do it without sacrificing values and principles that define the Canadian state? The larger Al Qaeda movement, virus-like, has mutated and adapted to globalized systems and local societies marked by variable social, political and technological trends. It is infecting the Western world, and its host, ironically, is a technology that is, by its very nature, a global and egalitarian system where borders are rendered largely inconsequential. Thus part of the answer to this dilemma is that counterterrorism should be refocused on a key battleground—the war of ideas fought in a rapidly evolving medium.

Notes

1. Mark Gollom and Tracey Lindeman, "Who is Martin Couture-Rouleau?," *CBC News*, 21 October 2014. Available at http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/who-is-martin-couture-rouleau-1.2807285 (accessed 19 November 2014).

2. CBC News, "Ottawa Shooting: Michael Zehaf-Bibeau Made Video, Police Say," *CBC News*, 26 October 2014. Available at http://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/ottawa-shooting-michael-zehaf-bibeau-made-video-police-say-1.2813798 (accessed 19 November 2014).

3. Stewart Bell, *Cold Terror: How Canada Nurtures and Exports Terrorism Around the World* (Etobicoke: Wiley, 2004).

4. Ian MacLeod, "CSIS Focuses on Homegrown Terrorism Threat," *Ottawa Citizen*, 14 March 2008. Available at http://www.canada.com/ottawacitizen/news/story.html?id = 09fe30f3-84ad-458e-b8e7-8add2a9fc8c7 (accessed 8 April 2008).

5. Ibid.

6. Canadian Security Intelligence Service, *Public Report 2007–2008* (Ottawa: Communication Branch, 2008).

7. Greg Miller, "Foreign Fighters not Deterred by Air Strikes against ISIS as 1,000 Continue to Stream to Syria Each Month," *The National Post*, 31 October 2014. Available at http://news.nationalpost.com/2014/10/31/foreign-fighters-not-deterred-by-airstrikes-in-middle-east-as-1000-continue-to-stream-to-syria-each-month/ (accessed 20 November 2014).

8. John McCoy and W. Andy Knight, "Why do Young People Become Extremists?," *Edmonton Journal*, 17 April 2013.

9. The Canadian Press, "Some 130 Canadians are Helping extremists abroad, CSIS chief says," *The Globe and Mail*, 3 February 2014. Available at http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/

politics/some-130-canadians-are-helping-extremists-abroad-csis-chief-says/article16679539/ (accessed 26 June 2014).

10. Nadim Roberts, "The Life of a Jihadi Wife: Why One Canadian Woman Joined ISIS's Islamic State," *CBC News*, 7 July 2014. Available at http://www.cbc.ca/m/news/#!/content/1.2696385/ (accessed 8 July 2014).

11. Greg Miller, "Foreign Fighters not Deterred by Air Strikes against ISIS as 1,000 Continue to Stream to Syria Each Month," *The National Post*, 31 October 2014. Available at http://news.nationalpost.com/2014/10/31/foreign-fighters-not-deterred-by-airstrikes-in-middle-east-as-1000-continue-to-stream-to-syria-each-month/ (accessed 20 November 2014).

12. Aaron Zelin, "ICSR Insight: Up to 11,000 Foreign Fighters in Syria; Steep Rise among Western Europeans," ICSR, 17 December *2013*. Available at http://icsr.info/2013/12/icsr-insight-11000-foreign-fighters-syria-steep-rise-among-western-europeans/ (accessed 14 September 2014).

13. The Washington Post, "Foreign Fighters Flow to Syria," *The Washington Post*, 11 October 2014. Available at http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/foreign-fighters-flow-to-syria/2014/10/11/3d2549fa-5195-11e4-8c24-487e92bc997b_graphic.html (accessed 20 November 2014).

14. Estimates based on per capita figures expressed per one million population.

15. See, for example, David Charters, "The (un)Peaceable Kingdom? Terrorism and Canada before 9-11," *IRPP Policy Matters* 9(4) (2008).

16. David Rapoport, "The Four Waves of Modern Terrorism," in Audrey Cronin and James Ludes, eds., *Attacking Terrorism: Elements of a Grand Strategy* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press 2004), p. 48.

17. See, for example, Rohan Gunartna. *Inside al-Qaeda: Global Network of Terror* (New York: Berkley Books, 2002); also Peter Bergen and Paul Cruickshank, "Revisiting the Early Al Qaeda: an Updated Account of its Formative Years," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 35 (1) (2012); and Bruce Hoffman, "Al Qaeda's Uncertain Future," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 36(8) (2013).

18. Jason Burke, *Al-Qaeda: The True Story of Radical Islam* (New York: I.B. Tauris & Co, 2004).

19. Marc Sageman, *Leaderless Jihad: Terror Networks in the Twenty-First Century* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008), pp. 110–123.

20. Hoffman, "Uncertain Future," p. 638.

21. Ibid., p. 639.

22. Paul Cruickshank and Mohannad Hage Ali, "Abu Musab Al Suri: Architect of the New Al Qaeda," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 30(1) (2007), p. 1.

23. Ibid., p. 2.

24. Brian Jackson and Bryce Loidolt, "Considering al-Qa'ida's Innovation Doctrine: From Strategic Texts to 'Innovation in Practice,'" *Terrorism and Political Violence* 25(2) (2013), p. 292.

25. Cruickshank and Ali, "Architect," p. 9.

26. Ibid., p. 10.

27. Ibid., p. 8.

28. Jackson and Loidolt, "Innovation Doctrine," pp. 287–288.

29. Cruickshank and Ali, "Architect," p. 9.

30. Mia Bloom, "Maghreb Immigrants becoming Suicide Terrorists: A Case Study on Religious Radicalization Processes in Spain," in Ami Pedahzur, ed., *Root Causes of Suicide Terrorism: The Globalization of Martyrdom* (London: Routledge, 2006), p. 195.

31. Fawaz Gerges, *The Rise and Fall of al-Qaeda* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), p. 130.

32. Gilbert Ramsay and Sarah Marsden, "Radical Distinctions: A Comparative Study of Two Jihadist Speeches," *Critical Studies on Terrorism* 6(3) (2013), p. 394.

33. J. M. Berger, "The Enduring Appeal of Al-`Awlaqi's 'Constants on the Path of Jihad,'" *Combating Terrorism Center at West Point*, 31 October 2011. Available at https://www.ctc.usma.edu/posts/the-enduring-appeal-of-al-awlaqi%E2%80%99s-%E2%80%9Cconstants-on-the-path-of-jihad%E2%80%9D (accessed 17 September 2014).

34. Ibid.

35. Michelle Shephard, "The Powerful Online Voice of jihad," *Toronto Star*, 18 October 2009. Available at http://www.thestar.com/news/world/2009/10/18/the_powerful_online_voice_of_jihad.html (accessed 17 September 2014).

36. Peter Neumann, "Options and Strategies for Countering Online Radicalization in the United States," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 36(6) (2013), pp. 431–432.

37. Berger, "Enduring Appeal."
38. Bruce Hoffman, Lee Hamilton, Brian Jenkins, Paul Pillar, Xavier Raufer, Walter Reich, and Fernando Reinares, *State of the Struggle* (Washington, DC: Council on Global Terrorism, 2006).
39. Rita Katz and Michael Kern, "Terrorist 007, Exposed," *Washington Post*, 26 March 2006, p. B01.
40. Neumann, "Options and Strategies," p. 434.
41. Ibid.
42. Ibid., p. 434.
43. Ibid., pp. 434–435.
44. Ibid., p. 436.
45. Canadian Security Intelligence Service, *Public Report 2011–2013* (Ottawa: Government of Canada, 2014), p. 11.
46. Ibid., p. 27.
47. BBC News, "Khawaja: The Canadian Connection," *BBC News*, 12 March 2009. Available at http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/6152440.stm (accessed 7 July 2014).
48. Ottawa Citizen. "Decent into jihad," *Ottawa Citizen*, 29 October 2008. Available at http://www2.canada.com/ottawacitizen/features/khawajatrial/story.html?id=de553fba-9a7e-4abd-8adf-76a1fa86a70a (accessed 8 July 2014).
49. Ibid.
50. Ibid.
51. Ibid.
52. Richard Brennan, "Accused made Bomb Detonator, Crown Says," *Toronto Star*, 24 June 2008. Available at http://www.thestar.com/news/canada/2008/06/24/accused_made_bomb_detonator_crown_says.html# (accessed 11 December 2014).
53. CBC News, "Al-Qaeda's Canadian Recruits 'Highly Prized': Report," *CBC News*, 14 May 2005. Available at http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/al-qaeda-s-canadian-recruits-highly-prized-report-1.547857 (accessed 6 July 2014).
54. Brennan, "Accused made Detonator."
55. BBC News, "Canadian Connection."
56. Ottawa Citizen, "Decent."
57. Terry Pedwell, "Top Court Rejects Terrorism Appeal," *Toronto Star*, 6 April 2007, p. A13.
58. Sageman, *Leaderless Jihad*, p. 87.
59. Peter Walker, "Fertilizer Bomb Plotters Jailed for Life," *The Guardian*, 30 April 2007. Available at http://www.theguardian.com/uk/2007/apr/30/terrorism.world (accessed 8 July 2014).
60. BBC News. "Five get Life over UK Bomb Plot," *BBC News*, 30 April 2007. Available at http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/6195914.stm (accessed 8 July 2014).
61. Toronto Star, "Stern Signal on Terrorism," *Toronto Star*, 15 December 2012, p. IN6.
62. Christie Blatchford, "Canada Now has an Unmistakable Message to Would-Be Terrorists," *The Globe and Mail*, 18 December 2010, p. A2.
63. Richard Brennan, "Weapons, Cash Found in Terror Suspect's Home," *Toronto Star*, 8 July 2008, p. A4.
64. Sageman, *Leaderless Jihad*, p. 139.
65. CBC News, "Toronto 18 Ringleader gets 16 Years," *CBC News*, 25 October 2010. Available at http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/toronto/toronto-18-ringleader-gets-16-years-1.926935 (accessed 9 August 2014).
66. Isabel Teotonio, "Toronto 18 Attack was to Mimic 9/11," *Toronto Star*, 23 June 2009. Available at http://www.thestar.com/news/gta/2009/06/23/toronto_18_attack_was_to_mimic_911.html (accessed 15 August 2014).
67. Isabel Teotonio, "Life Term for Terror Ringleader," *Toronto Star*, 19 January 2010. Available at http://www.thestar.com/news/crime/2010/01/19/life_term_for_terror_ringleader.html (accessed 14 August 2014).
68. Isabel Teotonio, "Toronto 18," *Toronto Star*, 3 July 2010, p. IN1.
69. Teotonio, "Toronto 18," p. IN1.
70. Megan O'Toole, "Toronto 18 Ringleader Fahim Ahmad Faces up to 18 Years in Prison," *The National Post*, 28 September 2010. Available at http://news.nationalpost.com/2010/09/28/toronto-18-ringleader-fahim-ahmad-faces-12-years-in-prison/ (accessed 16 August 2014).
71. Michael Zekulin, "A Growing Disconnect: Can the Contemporary Terrorism Literature Explain Domestic Homegrown Terrorism?" (Ph.D. Diss., University of Calgary, 2012).

72. Teotonio, "Toronto 18," p. IN1.
73. Ibid.
74. Omar el Akkad and Greg MacArthur, "The Transformation of Zakaria Amara," *The Globe and Mail,* 6 June 2006. Available at http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/national/the-transformation-of-zakaria-amara/article4302177/?page = all (accessed 14 August 2015).
75. Zekulin, "Growing Disconnect."
76. Teotonio, "Toronto 18," p. IN1.
77. Ibid., p. IN1.
78. Zekulin, "Growing Disconnect."
79. Ibid.
80. Ibid.
81. Ibid.
82. Teotonio, "Toronto 18," p. IN1.
83. Zekulin, "Growing Disconnect."
84. Robert Murray and John McCoy, "From Middle Power to Peacebuilder: The Use of the Canadian Forces in Modern Canadian Foreign Policy," *American Review of Canadian Studies* 40 (2) (2010).
85. Public Safety Canada, *2014 Public Report on the Terrorist Threat to Canada* (Ottawa: *Government of Canada*, 2014).
86. Gollom and Lindeman, "Who is."
87. Ibid.
88. Manisha Krishnan, "Terrorism Expert Says Isolation Driving Calgarians to Join ISIL," *Calgary Herald*, 17 August 2014. Available at http://www.calgaryherald.com/news/Terrorism+expert+says+isolation+driving+Calgarians+join+ISIL/10125070/story.html (accessed 2 September 2014).
89. Stewart Bell, "Calgary Islamic Centre, once Frequented by Youths Who went to Fight in Syria, Speaks out against Extremism," *National Post*, 19 June 2014. Available at http://news.nationalpost.com/2014/06/19/calgary-islamic-centre-once-frequented-by-youths-who-went-to-fight-in-syria-speaks-out-against-extremism/ (accessed 3 September 2014).
90. CBC News, "Suicide Bomber Killed in Iraq Part of Wider Jihadi Base in Calgary," *CBC News*, 3 June 2014. Available at http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/suicide-bomber-killed-in-iraq-part-of-wider-jihadi-base-in-calgary-1.2663890 (accessed 2 September 2014),
91. CBC News, "Farah Mohamed Shirdon of Calgary, Fighting for ISIS, Dead in Iraq, Reports Say," *CBC News*, 15 August 2014. Available at http://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/farah-mohamed-shirdon-of-calgary-fighting-for-isis-dead-in-iraq-reports-say-1.2737749 (accessed 1 September 2014).
92. Ibid.
93. CBC News, "Suicide Bomber Killed."
94. Ibid.
95. CBC News, "Calgary Muslims Shocked ISIS Recruits Lived among Them," *CBC News*, 29 August 2014. Available at http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/calgary/calgary-muslims-shocked-isis-recruits-lived-among-them-1.2751035 (accessed 3 September 2014).
96. CBC News, "Gregory and Collin Gordon, Calgary Brothers, Join Ranks of Canadians Fighting for ISIS," *CBC News*, 28 August 2014. Available at http://www.cbc.ca/news/gregory-and-collin-gordon-calgary-brothers-join-ranks-of-canadians-fighting-for-isis-1.2749673 (accessed 3 September 2014).
97. CBC News, "Calgary Brothers."
98. Ibid.
99. Ibid.
100. CBC News, "Suicide Bomber Killed."
101. Michael Schmidt, "Canadian Killed in Syria Lives On as Pitchman for Jihadis," *New York Times*, 15 July 2014. Available at http://www.nytimes.com/2014/07/16/world/middleeast/isis-uses-andre-poulin-a-canadian-convert-to-islam-in-recruitment-video.html?_r = 0 (accessed 4 September 2014).
102. CBC News, "Andre Poulin, Jihadi from Timmins, Ont., Confirmed Dead in Syria," *CBC News*, 16 January 2014. Available at http://www.cbc.ca/news/andre-poulin-jihadi-from-timmins-ont-confirmed-dead-in-syria-1.2499801 (accessed 4 September 2014).
103. Schmidt, "Canadian Killed."

104. CBC News, "Jihadi from Timmins."
105. Schmidt, "Canadian Killed."
106. CBC News, "Jihadi from Timmins."
107. Gaetano Joe Ilardi, "Interviews with Canadian Radicals," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 36(9) (2013), p. 734.
108. Neumann, "Options and Strategies," p. 436.
109. Ilardi, "Interviews," p. 716.
110. Ibid., p. 717.
111. Keith Banting, "Canada," in Christain Joppke and F. Leslie Seidle, eds., *Immigrant Integration in Federal Countries* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2012), p. 82.