Australian Islamic State-inspired terrorists

Dr Russ Scott
Forensic Psychiatrist
Brisbane Australia
Hassan Khalif Shire Ali

born in Somalia
family came to Australia over 20 years ago
not austere Muslims
attended Werribee Virgin Mary Mosque

didn’t finish grade 12
driving offences, failed to appear in court
estranged from his family

in 2015, stopped at Melbourne airport
passport cancelled by ASIO
Khaled Sharrouf

2005 arrested during Operation Pendennis
served four years
took sons to Syria

7 year old son
holding a severed head
2016 Christmas Day terror plot
explosives, killing spree
Federation Square, Melbourne

Hume Islamic Youth Centre, Coolaroo
Features of Australian Islamic State-inspired terrorists

Introduction
• define radicalisation
• leakage
• broadcast intent

Five young Australian domestic Islamist terrorists
• compare, common features – attack planning

Association between mental illness – terrorism
Radicalization

process by which beliefs and motivations of an individual or group
• changes to “an extremist viewpoint”
• willing to countenance or engage in violence in pursuit of their goals

Islamist radicalization
identify with “an imagined global Muslim community”
global injustice against Muslims
• jihadist propaganda on internet, social media
Radicalization trajectory - common themes (Nuemann)

perception of grievance
• conflicted identities, injustice, oppression, social exclusion
• make an individual receptive to extremist ideas

adopt extremist narrative or ideology
• speaks to the grievance
• compelling rationale for what needs to be done

social and group dynamics
radicalisation often in a dense, small network of friends
articulated by credible/charismatic leader
Three Australian citizens arrested
20 November 2018
devotees of Anwar al-Awlaki
Features of 12 convicted of terrorist-related offences (Porter & Kebbell)

- ideas, attitudes that legitimised violence against westerners
- obligation to engage in “jihad” (holy war)
- defend their faith “against infidels”
  - “martyrdom” (dying for jihad, great reward, forgive sins, entry to paradise)
  - “retaliation” against political, military policies of the West
  - Australia’s troop commitments to the coalition forces in Afghanistan and Iraq
- looking for purpose, acceptance, justification for criminal lifestyle
- attitudes that support use of violence, superiority over kuffar (“non-believers”)
Leakage, broadcast intent

behaviours, ‘would-be’ lone actor intentionally or unintentionally divulges motivation, capability or resolve to commit a terrorist attack

(Meloy & O’Toole)

foiled terrorist attacks in America

• 80% initially discovered by law enforcement agencies, general public

(Strom, Hollywood et al)

• terrorist incidents preceded by two activities, authorities register

(Smith Damphousse & Roberts)

even skilled terrorists leave clues to their violent intentions (Hamm)

• poor “tradecraft”

• deliberately attract notoriety
Operational security

behaviours by which lone actor terrorist minimizes likelihood of detection whilst planning, preparing an attack

study of attack planning and preparation of 55 lone actor terrorists

infrequent operational security (Schuurman, Bakker, Gill & Bouhana)

• 86% communicated radical, extremist convictions to others including family members, friends, strangers online
• 58% indicated involved in suspicious, potentially violent activities
• 1/3 communicated desire to commit unspecified attack
• 49% came in contact with authorities during planning, preparation phase

69 “post-9/11” “lone actor terrorists”

• 70% broadcast intent before initiating the attack (Hamm & Spaaij)
Islamic State
captures Mosul, Iraq
12 June 2014
Islamic State, Caliph Ibrahim

Abu Bakr al Baghdadi

4 July 2014

Grand Mosque, Mosul, Iraq
Islamic State - Sunni fundamentalists

destroying mosques, sacred sites
slaughtering Shi-ite Muslims
Islamic State videos - beheading of captured American journalists
August 2014
Operation Appleby
18 September 2014
foiled a plot to “commit violent acts”
Islamic State spokesperson Abu Muhammad al-Adnani
22 September 2014

“true believers ... across the world”
defend Islamic State against the “dozens of nations ... gathered against it

If you can kill a disbelieving American or European – especially the spiteful and filthy French – or an Australian, or a Canadian, or any other disbeliever from the disbelievers waging war, including the citizens of the countries that entered into a coalition against the Islamic State, then rely upon Allah, and kill him in any manner or way however it may be.”
Bay’ah (oath of loyalty) to al-Baghdadi or the ‘caliph’

regular features of Islamic State attacks
pledge of loyalty to an individual
• not to an organisation

recorded in a number of ways
• text message, social media
Martyrdom video
Jake Bilardi, 18 year old from Melbourne
drove explosive-laden truck into Iraqi army unit, west of Baghdad
Abdul Numan Haider
18-year-old
refugee from Afghanistan

Al-Furqan Islamic Centre
Neil Prakash
Abu Khaled al-Cambodi
Islamic State recruiter
Abdul Numan Haider
23 September 2014
shot dead by counter-terrorist officers

**shahada** “There is no God but Allah and Mohammed is the messenger of God”
Sevdet Besim
born January 1997
Albanian-Australian parents
attended Al-Furqan Centre
befriended
   Neil Prakash
   Abdul Haider
Sevdet Besim
oath of allegiance to al-Baghdadi
martyrdom message
**Dabiq, Islamic State on-line propaganda**
Rumiyah, Islamic State on-line propaganda

9th edition – “Just terrorist targets” no negotiation

“The objective of hostage-taking in the lands of disbeliever ... is not to hold large numbers of the kuffar hostage in order to negotiate one’s demands.

Rather, the objective is to create as much carnage and terror as one possibly can until Allah decrees his appointed time and the enemies of Allah storm his location or succeed in killing him.

This is because the hostile kafir only understands one language and that is the language of force, the language of killing, stabbing and slitting throats, chopping off heads, flattening them under trucks, and burning them alive ...”
ANZAC Day 2015
run down, behead a policeman
Sevdet Besim
martyrdom message

“In the name of Allah the beneficent, the Merciful, a while ago world leaders declared war on Islam and Muslims, invading lands, dividing us into separate nations, installing puppets, killing and torturing Muslims.

This war had always had an impact on me, however recently my brother Numan (may Allah accept him) carried out his attack, this opened my eyes up to the reality of who the enemy is. Since then a growing feeling within me had led me to decide to carry out my own.

To establish my jihad in Australia, to fight the oppressors, those who have implemented man-made law, to fight to make Allah’s word known and the highest, to defend Islam and put fear into those who are enemies to Allah and his religion Insha’Allah.”
Omar al-Kutobi
Muhammad Kiad
Omar al-Kutobi
Muhammad Kiad

oath of allegiance to al-Baghdadi
Islamic state flag
martyrdom message
Farhad Jabar
2 October 2015
15 year old school boy
shot, killed Curtis Cheng
police headquarters, Parramatta
Farhad Jabar

“Soon by the will of God ... your nights will turn into nightmares, your days into hell.

By the will of Allah I have come today to put terror into your hearts and soon the majahideen will do the same, by the will of Allah.”
Features of Islamic State-inspired terrorists

down-load extremist sermons, speeches
access on-line Islamic State propaganda
view violent extremist videos - bombings, shootings, beheadings
network, communicate with other jihadists by encrypted apps
develop on-line or social media “foot-print”
broadcast an intent (“leakage”) to commit a terrorist attack
pledge loyalty to Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi (caliph of Islamic State)
use images of Islamic State flag
leave a terrorist or propaganda message
martyrdom message or video
Association between terrorism, mental illness

very limited research

substance use disorders, depression, PTSD, personality disorders
  • anti-social and narcissistic personality disorder

most case series, studies - significant limitations
  • low base rates, long observational periods
  • small sample size
  • unreliable collateral history from informants
  • poorly worded, broad definitions
  • selection, hindsight biases
  • ‘psychological autopsies’ (Lankford)
Interviews, assessments of captured terrorists

confirmation bias
elaborate features reflecting:
  • malingering
  • mental state
detained in custody

suicide bombers
lone actors
small terrorist cell
Mentally disordered persons

over-valued ideas, paranoid delusions
  • religious, political content
  • may arm themselves, make threats

also vulnerable to being targeted, manipulated
  • encouraged to commit a dramatic violent act
  • otherwise characterised as “rational,” purposeful, organised (Bhui & Wessely)
Typology of domestic terrorist attacks

three functional categories
• directed
• enabled
• inspired
Directed domestic terrorist attacks

November 2015

Paris
Enabled domestic terrorist attacks

July 2017 Sydney
Khaled Khayat, bomb concealed in meat mincer
Inspired domestic terrorists

no direct contact with terrorist organisation
access propaganda material, statements, directions of the organisation
attacker inspired to action in support of the aims of that terrorist organisation

closer forensic examination
may appear to be an ‘inspired attack’
violent act actually motivated by personal issue
narrative that attacker has created, has been created for them
post hoc formulations.
Lindt Café siege Martin Place, Sydney
December 2014
not a terrorist attack – grievance fuelled violence
Australia is under attack by the Islamic State. There are 3 bombs in three different locations: Martin Place, Circular Q and George Street.

I want to contact other brothers and ask them NOT to explode the other two bombs but I can't contact because they don't carry phone with them.

They have radio with them, I can say that through Radio ABC.

The plan is to request Tony Abbott to call them or me, and to have a debate while it is broadcast live on ABC National Radio.

So that's why they have radio, and the best way to contact them is by my voice message to announce that they should not explode the bombs. They listen to me anything I tell them.

The device placed inside the Radios is another way of exploding the bombs.
Monis – terrorists demand?

Monis appeared careful to avoid doing anything to precipitate a forced resolution by police

psychiatrist: Monis’ original demands ... fatuous and implausible

leader of a terrorist cell

other operatives poised ready to detonate bombs around Sydney would desist once Monis had a “debate” with the Prime Minister broadcast on national radio
Man Haron Monis – no pledge of loyalty to *al-Baghdadi, the caliph*

**oath of loyalty**
- regular feature of Islamic State attacks
- pledge to an individual, not to an organisation

**17 November 2014**
Monis’ brief web-site pledge
- allegiance only to “God”
- never referred to al-Baghdadi by name

**no terrorist message**
- did not broadcast his intent before the siege
- no “political, religious or ideological message”
- never pressed any demands
Man Haron Monis – no on-line, social media “foot-print”

• never downloaded videos, speeches from radical Salafist clerics or Islamic State
• posted all his messages, correspondence on his web page
• no evidence of on-line or social media “foot-print”
• no use of encrypted apps
• only 12 followers on Twitter

no “martyrdom video”
• no propaganda message for Islamic State
Man Haron Monis – pretences

• repeated, confected information linked to high profile events

• ambiguous messages calculated to attract the attention of the media

• sham protests, offensive letters
  • “liberal cleric refugee” from Iran
  • “anti-war” protestors
  • “persecuted” by the government
Man Haron Monis – at the time of the siege

**convictions** - sending offensive letters to families of Australian soldiers
appeal dismissed by the High Court

**sexual offences as “spiritual healer”**
• on bail, multiple charges

**domestic violence**
lost custody of Australian-born children

**accessory to murder** of former partner

“**Muslim cleric” - fraudulent**

internet, websites and social media
• no evidence of contact with *Islamic State* or other terrorist organisation
  • 12 followers on Twitter
Monis Man Monis – greatest fears

• extradited back to Iran to stand trial for fraud offences
• charged with further sex offences from “Spiritual Healing” business

at the time of the Lindt café siege
• charged with 43 sexual offences
• alleged against six victims
• likely convicted of multiple offences, long prison sentence

attention-seeking
create the persona of victimized anti-government activist, protestor
Channel 7 investigation on *Today Tonight* programme
complained to Channel 7
complained to Australian Communications and Media Authority
• program invaded his privacy, “caused danger” to his life

speculation:
*major grievance against Channel 7*
• *Lindt Café chosen as site of final protest*
• *located opposite studio of Channel 7*
Monis arrested – offences related to murder

15 November 2013
Monis and Droudis arrested
Monis - accessory before and after the fact of murder

- refused police bail
- did not apply for bail
- remanded to custody
Charged with a further 37 sex offences

10 October 2014, further 37 sex offences
• 22 counts of aggravated sexual assault
• 14 counts of aggravated indecent assaults
  • alleged against six women
  • "spiritual clinic" 2002 – 2010

DPP did not oppose bail

Coroner: “... in no instance was an application made to review or re-visit
  the grants of bail made in favour of Monis”
National Security Hotline
9 - 12 December 2014
18 calls, e-mails related to Monis
drawing attention to Facebook page

“oppression and terrorism of United States
.... and its allies including Australia ...”

AFP, ASIO assessment
no desire or intent to engage in terrorist
no indication of an imminent threat
did not meet threshold for prosecution under new anti-terrorism legislation
Haron Monis – a radicalised Islamist terrorist?

clairvoyance, astrology, numerology, ‘black magic’ - inconsistent with Muslim faith

• difficult to reconcile Monis’ narcissistic personality traits with radical Islamist ideology, subordination to the demands of a caliph
• no evidence of any genuine religious zeal, commitment
• no witness to Monis in solemn prayer, devotion
• no deep attachment or commitment

Monis’ florid, confected protests
• alienated genuine pacifist, anti-war activists
no sophisticated understanding of Islamic theology

- mixed up Sunni, Shi-ite, Salafist, Sufist, other terminology

picture of **Osama Bin Laden**:  

("Shi-ites ... the enemies of Islam")
Why take a list of Muslim prisoners to the siege?

note found in Monis’ pocket
• contact details of lawyers
• list of in-mate “master index numbers” of Muslim prisoners in Long Bay Correctional Centre

Monis’ objective:
conduct a dramatic siege
enhance his standing after he was imprisoned
cast himself as a “lone wolf” jihadist
admired and respected, at least by Muslim inmates
Lindt café siege – not a well-planned attack

crudely written demand note
backpack bought previous day
speaker box with wires
black flag, Arabic writing - shahada (not synonymous with jihadists)
didn’t have Islamic State flag

• referred to “Islamic State” only in first sentence
• no explicit connection with any terrorist objective
• never used any vernacular of Islamist jihadists
Why the Lindt café?

Lindt café on Martin Place - no political or religious significance
directly opposite Channel 7 studio - great personal significance

• Monis vilified as “fake sheik” in 2009
• many protests against channel 7

siege of over 16 hrs
no terrorist agenda
armed with 20 cartridges
fired only five times
deliberately killed one hostage
Covert listening devices

NSW Police Technical Branch of NSW Police not able to establish any audio or visual surveillance inside the café

Australian Federal Police provided covert surveillance devices

at 9.05 pm, Monis:

“That news shows that police ... have decided not to do anything wrong and to finish everything peacefully, because they are emphasising at this point that they are confident they can finish it peacefully.”

at 11:13 pm, Monis:

“... hopefully by morning, everyone home ... After Tony Abbott calls, everyone happy, go home ...”
No terrorist plan or objective

immediate aims - draw attention to himself rather than any cause

hand-written note, ordered Tori Johnson to read

• referred to “Islamic State” only in the first sentence
• only to announce an “attack” on Australia

no explicit reference to any Islamist aim, objectives
no reference to “unbelievers”
no jihadist dogma

demanded “debate” the Prime Minister live on air
Monis - malignant narcissist – as advised by the consultant psychiatrist

arrogant, grandiose and callous escape of five hostages
psychiatrist: may react to the humiliation of a ‘narcissistic injury’
-> intense fury (‘narcissistic rage’)

unemployed, middle-aged divorcee domestic violence
lost custody of children multiple historical sex offences murder of his ex-wife
envision long prison sentence experienced a profound humiliation
Lindt Café siege – Martin Place, Sydney
Questions, comments, debate

R Scott and R Shanahan “Man Haron Monis and the Sydney Lindt Cafe Siege - Not a Terrorist Attack”

*Psychiatry, Psychology and Law, 2018*  
doi.org/10.1080/13218719.2018.1479941
Man Haron Monis

? connection with *Hizb-ut Tahrir*

“Party of Liberation”
Man Haron Monis

19 September 2014
at demonstration organised by *Hizb-ut Tahrir*
NSW Coroner’s Findings
“A Terrorist Incident” – an alternative hypothesis

“Whether Monis was motivated to act by public calls from the leaders of Islamic State for followers to undertake atrocities is impossible to know. His pledge of allegiance to the [Islamic State] “Caliph” four weeks before the siege suggests this might have been the case.

However, equally, he may have been on a personal crusade: frustrated by being dismissed when he adopted relatively benign means of protesting. He may have decided to use [Islamic State] to make himself seem more dangerous; did he cloak himself in the [Islamic State] rhetoric so he would not be mocked or ignored but feared?

Unlike other [Islamic State] terrorists, Monis did not immediately kill those he had taken hostage, but that is equally consistent with his belief that his best chance of achieving his political ends was by prolonging the siege.

Even with the benefit of expert evidence, it remains unclear whether Monis was motivated by [Islamic State] to prosecute its bloodthirsty agenda or whether he used that organisation’s fearsome reputation to bolster his impact.”
Bhui, James & Wessely (2016) ‘Mental illness and Terrorism’ British Medical Journal doi 10.1136/bmj.i4869


