



**ENEMIES WITHIN:
Confronting Homegrown Terrorism in Canada**



ALEX WILNER

September 2008

Atlantic Institute for Market Studies

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The nature of global terrorism has evolved. The arrest of a number of Canadians in Toronto in 2006 for allegedly planning to kill fellow citizens is but one case of a growing trend of homegrown terrorism. (As this paper goes to publication, the “Toronto 18” case continues to unfold. On September 25, 2008, an unnamed member of the group who was still a youth at the time of the arrests was found guilty under Canada’s anti-terrorism law.)

Consider that none of the young men rounded up in Ontario was a foreign national, had been specifically recruited by al-Qaeda, had acquired any training in a terrorist camp in Afghanistan, Pakistan, or elsewhere, or had been dispatched to attack Canada by Osama bin Laden, Ayman al-Zawahiri (al-Qaeda’s deputy), or any other al-Qaeda leader. For all intents and purposes, the group was autonomous, self-generated, and independently trained. Worse, its members were Canadian, through and through.

While the threat of homegrown terrorism in Western states is not new, the rise of al-Qaeda- and jihadi-inspired Muslim homegrown terrorism is. With a little encouragement, individuals predisposed to support al-Qaeda’s radical Islamic ideology form small yet intricate cells and networks. From there, it is a short step to the sort of “al-Qaeda-inspired terrorism” the Toronto Group allegedly sought. Moreover, Canadians are not alone. Since 2001, our friends and allies in Denmark, Germany, the United States, the United Kingdom, Australia, and elsewhere in Europe and Asia have been challenged by the same phenomenon.

Understanding how to combat homegrown terrorism will require an innovative, multifaceted, and coordinated strategy. This paper offers four such strategies.

First, the Canadian government should gain a better understanding of the particular pathways that lead ordinary Canadians to embrace and employ violence against fellow nationals. By appreciating what drives the radicalization process, Canadians will be in a better position to influence and impede its development.

Second, Canada should more readily monitor local elements that preach, incubate, and foster ideologies of hatred and violence. While self-radicalization is possible, an embrace of terrorism and violence is more often than not fortified by ideological or practical guidance from above. Community leaders who advocate and promote violence against Canadians should be deterred from doing so.

Third, Ottawa should consider using the Internet not only to uncover, track, and impede terrorist infrastructure and planning in Canada, but also to disseminate the rationales that underpin Canada’s



defence and foreign policy. The Internet is not only a useful counterterrorism tool, but also an apparatus for contradicting extremist viewpoints while arming moderate ideological factions.

Finally, if and when a homegrown terrorist group or plot is uncovered, the Canadian government should use all of its facilities to disrupt and foil the threat. To do so effectively and expeditiously, Canada should retain a robust intelligence-gathering and policing capability and uphold the inter-agency and international cooperative relationships it will need to manage terrorist threats whenever and wherever they may arise.

INTRODUCTION

On the morning of June 3, 2006, Canadians woke to the news that the country's security services had succeeded in thwarting a major terrorist threat. In a series of raids that involved more than 400 police and security personnel working together across a number of locations in southern Ontario, 17 suspects were apprehended.¹ An eighteenth arrest was made two months following the initial operation.

The so-called Toronto Group, it is alleged, had intended to attack the Parliament Buildings, storm CBC offices in Toronto, take hostages, and even behead the prime minister.² In preparation, the suspects allegedly had ordered, received, and stored three metric tonnes of ammonium nitrate — an easily accessible fertilizer that doubles as a bomb ingredient when mixed with the right components.³ By comparison, Timothy McVeigh — the Oklahoma City Bomber — used merely one-third that amount of ammonium nitrate in his 1995 truck bombing of the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building that killed 168 people. It is not difficult to imagine the amount of destruction the Toronto Group might have inflicted had it been able to carry out its plans.

The Toronto Group supposedly had been preparing its attacks for months. It was fond of travelling to the wilds of Ramara Township, roughly 150 kilometres north of Toronto, for week-long training excursions in makeshift survival camps (Wattie 2006). “This group posed a real and serious threat,” RCMP Assistant Commissioner Mike McDonnell stated the day of the raids. “It had the capacity and intent to carry out attacks. Our investigation and arrests prevented the assembly of any bombs and the attack [from] being carried out.”⁴

Of the 18 suspects, three — all youths under age 18 when apprehended — had their charges stayed in 2007. Another four were released in April 2008, although three of them were required to sign “peace bonds” allowing the court to impose “strict conditions” on an individual “if it deems there are reasonable grounds to believe a terror-related offence will be committed.” In March 2008, the trial of the remaining suspects — accused of participating in and aiding the activity of a terrorist group — began in Brampton, Ontario, marking the first time individuals had been charged under Canada's anti-terrorism legislation, introduced in 2001 following the 9/11 attacks (Teotonio 2008a, 2008b).

1 See “Two youths freed in bomb plot case,” *CBC News*, July 31, 2007; Leong (2008); Teotonio (2008c).

2 “Suspects accused of wanting to behead PM, lawyer claims,” *CBC News*, June 6, 2006; “CBC building in Toronto may have been target,” *CBC News*, June 6, 2006.

3 According to reports published by the *Toronto Star* and the CBC, RCMP officers intercepted a shipment of ammonium nitrate destined to the group and substituted it with a “harmless powder” before the delivery was made. See “Indepth: Toronto bomb plot: Ammonium nitrate,” *CBC News*, June 5, 2006; and Teotonio (2008).

4 “Indepth: Toronto bomb plot,” *CBC News*, January 9, 2008, updated.



On the surface, the Toronto bust seems like another of the many successful counterterrorism operations conducted worldwide. Indeed, since al-Qaeda's devastating attack on New York and Washington, DC, dozens of plots have been uncovered, disrupted, and foiled from Germany to Yemen. But the Toronto case differs from many of these plots in being an example of the emerging phenomenon of *homegrown terrorism*. Consider that none of the young men rounded up in Ontario was a foreign national. All the adult suspects — the remaining teenagers cannot be identified under the *Youth Criminal Justice Act* — were Canadian citizens or landed immigrants. Most were born, raised, and educated in Canada, while those who had been born abroad had moved to Canada as youngsters.⁵ None had been specifically recruited or supported by al-Qaeda or one of its affiliate groups. None had had any contact with or acquired any training in a terrorist camp in Afghanistan, Pakistan, or elsewhere. Neither had any of them been specifically dispatched to attack Canada by Osama bin Laden, or al-Qaeda's deputy, Ayman al-Zawahiri, or any other al-Qaeda leader. For all intents and purposes, the Toronto Group was autonomous, self-generated, and independently trained. "What we're onto scares us," explained McDonnell following an address to an Ottawa conference on critical infrastructure protection in May 2008. He noted, rather candidly, that the RCMP was actively investigating seven suspected terrorist plots in Canada and more than 800 other national security cases. Even then, he added, "what we're not onto really scares us" (MacLeod 2008b).

Canadians are today on trial for allegedly planning to kill and maim their fellow citizens. In light of this development, what is Canada to do?

5 "Indepth: Toronto bomb plot: Profiles of the suspects," *CBC News*, November 5, 2007.

THE MAKING OF HOMEGROWN TERROR

“For various reasons, [the Toronto Group] appear to have become adherents of a violent ideology inspired by al-Qaeda. Any movement that has the ability to turn people against their fellow citizens is obviously something CSIS is very concerned about.”

— Luc Portelance, Assistant Director of Operations, Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS), June 2006⁶

Since 9/11, major terrorist attacks and foiled plots in London, Moscow, Berlin, Madrid, Paris, Miami, Istanbul, and other cities have led to a refocusing of national and international counterterrorism initiatives toward combatting the emerging threat of homegrown terrorism. The general trend since the 2001 attacks has been the diminution of centrally orchestrated international terrorism matched by a concurrent rise in localized and unaffiliated terrorism. The Toronto plot is symptomatic of this shift: it developed with no direction from al-Qaeda Central or other terrorist organizations, its perpetrators were Westernized individuals, the targets were fellow citizens. Today, terrorism in Canada is as likely to stem from the very society in which the attacks might take place as it is to originate in a state or region halfway around the globe.

While the threat of locally based terrorism in Western states is not new — white supremacists, political separatists, irredentists, Marxists, enviro-extremists, anti-government militias, and others have threatened violence for decades — the new element is the rise of al-Qaeda and jihadi-inspired Muslim homegrown terrorism. Understanding how to combat it begins by first appreciating how homegrown jihadism has developed.

Homegrown terrorist groups that support al-Qaeda’s theological, political, and practical guidance usually have only very superficial interaction, if any, with the global terrorist network. Part of the reason rests on the fact that al-Qaeda’s capacity to recruit and train operatives for international attacks (as it did in the case of the 9/11 attacks) has been severely degraded since 2001. More often than not, homegrown terrorism is a self-generated threat. Al-Qaeda at one time did have a centralized and hierarchical decisionmaking apparatus, a territorial base and safe haven in Afghanistan, and operational links with Islamist groups in Chechnya, the Balkans, Somalia, Tajikistan, Kashmir, and elsewhere. At its peak, the organization had an annual operating budget of roughly US\$30 million, with which it funded salaries for jihadists, training camps, airfields, vehicles, and arms, developed and disseminated training manuals, and planned international acts of terrorism (United States 2004, 171–72).

6 “Accused ‘inspired by al-Qaeda’,” say police,” *CBC News*, June 4, 2006.



And al-Qaeda had the wherewithal to train international operatives and dispatch them on well-coordinated attacks across the globe — including, for instance, against the US embassies in Kenya and Tanzania (1998), the USS *Cole* in Yemen (2000), the World Trade Center and Pentagon (2001), a French tanker off Yemen’s coast (2002), a synagogue in Tunisia (2002), a hotel in Mombasa (2002), a hotel in Karachi (2002), and the UK embassy in Karachi (2003); see Pape (2006). It is today, however, better understood as an ideological phenomenon rather than a functioning organization.

Following the removal of the Taliban regime in Afghanistan in 2001 along with the capture and elimination of many of al-Qaeda’s leaders since then, al-Qaeda is a shadow of its old self. Today, no al-Qaeda training camps are running in Afghanistan, no government openly supports the group financially or territorially, and its members are continuously hunted down by a robust counterterrorism coalition with an expansive global reach. As Brian Jenkins of the RAND Corporation put it, “the al-Qaeda of Sept. 11, 2001, no longer exists” (2004). Marc Sageman, perhaps the most widely read terrorism expert in North America, added that “Al Qaeda is operationally dead. There is no Al Qaeda anymore. The social movement is alive and well, but the guys who [attacked] Madrid, Casablanca, and Istanbul were *not* Al Qaeda. They were people who were doing operations on behalf of Al Qaeda, but they were not Al Qaeda. The old Al Qaeda is hiding away in caves someplace” (Telvick 2005; see also Sageman 2004a, 2004b). And yet, in recent years, al-Qaeda has had a resurgence in and around Pakistan’s western tribal regions. Bruce Riedel, a terrorist expert at the Brookings Institution in Washington, DC, goes so far as to suggest that the organization is today “as dangerous a threat as ever...[with] a secure safe haven in Pakistan, and a revived ally in the Taliban” (quoted in Shah 2008). Nonetheless, al-Qaeda’s central leadership, for the most part, has evolved from directly overseeing and supporting terrorist operations around the globe into a global mouthpiece for jihad.

In kind, al-Qaeda is more of an idea and sentiment than a functioning organization. While al-Qaeda affiliates continue to hoist its banner worldwide — al-Qaeda in Iraq, al-Qaeda of the Islamic Maghreb, al-Qaeda in Europe, among others — and though these groups might have the blessing of bin Laden and al-Zawahiri to franchise the brand, they are nonetheless attaching themselves to the cachet of al-Qaedism as opposed to building operational and functional links with any broader network. Though these groups might develop very real ideological alliances with al-Qaeda’s surviving leaders, they attract and recruit members, fund activities, and plan acts of terrorism independently. As Eben Kaplan of the Council on Foreign Relations suggests, “today al-Qaeda...inspire[s] individuals or small groups to carry out attacks, often with no operational support from the larger organization” (2007). Al-Qaeda might continue to communicate and exhort its followers, as it often does in video, auditory, and Internet messages, but its followers are nonetheless on their own.

In the West, al-Qaeda’s evolution has had the related effect of directly inciting acts of terrorism. With a little encouragement, individuals predisposed to support al-Qaeda’s radical Islamic ideology self-generate into smaller cells and networks. From there, it is a short step to the sort of “al-Qaeda-inspired terrorism” the Toronto Group allegedly sought. “What we’re facing,” suggests RCMP Assistant Commissioner McDonnell, “is a violent Islamist born-again social movement” with no formal links to al-Qaeda or any other international terrorism network. “I look at them as terrorist wannabes,” he says.

Nonetheless, he cautions that “being a wannabe does not make them any less dangerous; in fact, I would argue it makes them more dangerous. Not ideologically motivated, they are emotionally motivated” (quoted in MacLeod 2008b).

While homegrown terrorists might find it difficult, if not impossible, to organize 9/11-scale destruction, they nonetheless could kill a great number of people and inflict lasting social, economic, and infrastructural damage. Moreover, because they are locally set, they can blend more easily into the target society; they can meet face-to-face with ease, and plan attacks in the comfort of their homes while going about their daily routines without raising the suspicion of the community. Consider, further, that the 2004 Madrid bombings carried out by an “al-Qaeda-inspired” group killed almost 200 civilians and injured another 1700 at a cost of as little as US\$15,000 (Kaplan 2007). The 2005 London transit bombings, which killed more than 50 and injured 700, cost only £8000 (United Kingdom 2006). In both cases, explosives were assembled in apartment “bomb factories” near walking distance from the selected targets. As former US attorney general Alberto Gonzales argued in 2006, “the terrorists and suspected terrorists in Madrid and London and Toronto were not sleeper operatives sent on suicide missions. They were students and business people and members of the community. And they were persons who...came to view their home country as the enemy.”⁷

This is the sort of terrorism Canada, the United States, and their allies in Europe and elsewhere face today. While centralized terrorist groups like al-Qaeda still represent a very real threat, the homegrown variant will prove just as dangerous and just as difficult — if not more difficult — to contend with.

To get a sense of how widespread and diffuse the threat is, here is just a sampling of events involving homegrown terrorists, besides those already mentioned in Toronto, London, and Madrid, that have taken place since 9/11.

- *Tampa, Florida, January 2002*: A teenaged-boy, Charles Bishop, flies a small private plane into a Tampa-area high rise. While police and the general media characterize the event as “a suicide” by a lonely and disturbed boy,” a note written by Bishop and retrieved in the wreckage of the plane praises the 9/11 attacks. “First of all, Osama bin Laden is absolutely justified in the terror he has caused on 9-11,” Bishop wrote. “God blesses [bin Laden] and the others who helped make September 11th happen.” He signed the statement with: “I had no other help, although I am acting on their behalf” (Canedy 2002; see also Krueger, Gazella, and Quioco 2002; Wezler 2002). Although Bishop was not a Muslim and had had no known contact with al-Qaeda, his admiration for bin Laden was palpable. Bishop’s friends and family are at pains to explain why.
- *Los Angeles, California, July 2005*: Four men, preparing to attack El Al Airline ticket counters at Los Angeles International Airport, a number of synagogues, and US military facilities, are arrested. Three of the four men — Levar Haley Washington, Kevin James, and Gregory Vernon Patterson — are US-born Muslim converts. Each pleads guilty on terrorism conspiracy charges.

7 “Attorney General Gonzalez holds a news conference on terrorist arrests, transcripts, *Washington Post Online*, June 23, 2006.



The fourth man, Pakistani national Hammad Riaz Samana, is found mentally unfit to stand trial. According to Patterson's lawyer, the men had been "misled...in what the Quran says" (Marquez 2007).

- *Melbourne and Sydney, Australia, November 2005*: Seventeen people are arrested in a multi-pronged counterterrorism raid. Police seize large quantities of chemicals, equipment, Internet-based instruction manuals on the production of the explosive triacetone triperoxide, and information on targets. Officials comment that a number of the suspects are second-generation Australians of Lebanese decent and that none of the group had had any known links with al-Qaeda or Jemaah Islamiyah, the terrorist groups responsible for the 2002 and 2005 Bali bombings that killed more than 220 people, including 92 Australians (Bonner 2005).
- *London, England, August 2006*: In what has become known as the "liquid bomb plot," UK security forces arrest twenty-four individuals preparing to destroy up to ten commercial airplanes flying to the United States and Canada in mid-flight over the Atlantic Ocean. The liquid explosives, reminiscent of a previously foiled 1995 al-Qaeda plot to destroy US-bound planes over the Pacific Ocean, were to be smuggled in bottles and assembled on board. The suspects are mainly UK-born individuals of Pakistani descent; three are British converts to Islam.⁸ In September 2008, three suspects are convicted of conspiring to commit mass murder (see Freeze 2008a; Stinger and Dodds 2008).
- *Frankfurt, Germany, September 2007*: German security officials arrest three individuals — two German converts to Islam and one Turkish resident of Germany — for planning a series of bombings. The men are moving 1500 lbs of hydrogen peroxide — the same compound detonated in the 2005 London bombings — when they are apprehended (see Boyes 2007; Landler 2007). While previous plots targeting Germans — a 2006 plot to bomb trains, for instance — had been foiled, the 2007 arrests mark the first time German citizens are directly involved.
- *Copenhagen, Denmark, September 2007*: Six Danish citizens and two foreigners with residence permits are arrested for storing "unstable explosives" with the intent of initiating a string of attacks (Kulish 2007). It is the third foiled attack in Denmark in less than three years. In October 2005, another four individuals are apprehended for allegedly attempting to smuggle explosives into the country. The raids are conducted after accomplices are arrested in Sarajevo, Bosnia, where officials tip off Danish authorities.⁹ In September 2006, officials arrest seven suspected terrorists in Odense for having acquired the materials needed to build explosives. In all cases, Danish citizens and long-term Danish residents make up the majority of those arrested.
- *Glasgow, Scotland, June 2007*: Four individuals, all doctors working for the National Health Service in England, are charged with conspiracy to conduct terrorism after a Jeep Cherokee laden with propane canisters is driven halfway through the main entrance of the Glasgow International Airport and two car bombs are discovered parked near Piccadilly Circus in London. At the centre of the plot is Dr. Bilal Abdulla, born in the United Kingdom, and Dr. Kafeel Ahmed (the Jeep's driver), a native of India. Neither had had any contact with international terrorist organizations (see Leppard 2007; Pierce 2007).

8 "Who are the terror plot suspects?" *BBC News*, August 11, 2006; see also Scheuer (2006).

9 "Four face terror trial in Denmark," *BBC News*, August 24, 2006.



As these and other cases highlight, homegrown terrorism is a global phenomenon. Combatting the threat will require certain innovations. The following section discusses a number of specific tactics and strategies that Canada and its allies have begun to develop in their war on homegrown terrorism.



TACKLING TERRORISM AT HOME

“I remember specifically being at that stage where I was ready to go to Chechnya, I was ready to go to Afghanistan. I wanted to do some jihad-oriented thing. But I was lucky that I was exposed to people who [sic] I could talk to, who could correct my understanding...and debunk what I was thinking.”

— Mubin Shaikh, CSIS counterterrorism informant instrumental in the Ontario raids, July 2006¹⁰

There exists a wide and diverse array of ways to combat homegrown terrorism in Canada, the United Kingdom, Australia, and elsewhere. Some are idealistic, even fanciful, in nature. Greater global political stability, more pacific interstate relations, economic development, and democratic progress in illiberal countries will each likely diminish perceived and actual grievances held by Diaspora communities living in the West. The more peace there is over there, the argument goes, the more peace there is over here. However, besides working to address international conflict, promoting human rights and democratization, and providing various forms of development and technological aid, the Canadian government is not in a position readily to influence these loftier goals. Global peace and stability is a nice idea but hardly the cornerstone of a realistic foreign and defence policy.

Other factors that might combat homegrown terrorism — such as the emergence of moderate political, social, and religious leadership, the establishment of secular-oriented education systems overseas, greater interfaith and intercommunity dialogue, and a united political voice against terrorism everywhere and always — are perhaps achievable but nonetheless rest beyond Canada’s practical political reach. There are, for instance, few things the Canadian government might realistically do in order to catalyze greater religiously driven rejection of religiously sponsored violence in the Middle East, Asia, or North Africa. Canadians can denounce extremism all we want — as we do, often — but the task of challenging extremism’s roots eventually must fall upon coreligionists and moderate community members. As Wesley Wark, a Canadian expert on intelligence, notes, “support for Islamist terrorism will eventually be defeated through its own rhetorical, ideological, and violent excesses” (quoted in Bell 2008b). Ottawa might assist in the process, but the bulk of the effort will have to come from within the extremists’ broader community. All is not lost, however: Ottawa could protect Canadians against the threat of homegrown terrorism using a variety of strategies, four of which are discussed in more detail below.

First, agencies of the Canadian government should begin, as their counterparts in the United States, Europe, and Australia have done, to obtain a better understanding of the particular pathways that lead

10 “Indepth: Toronto bomb plot — Mubin Shaikh, bomb plot mole,” *CBC News*, July 15, 2006; see also Bennion (2007).

ordinary Canadians to embrace and employ violence against their fellow nationals. By appreciating what drives the radicalization process, the Canadian government would be in a better position to influence and impede its development.

Second, Canada should monitor local elements that preach, incubate, and foster ideologies of hatred and violence. While an individual can self-radicalize, more often than not his embracing terrorism and violence is fortified by ideological or practical direction from above. Community leaders who advocate and promote violence against Canadians should be deterred from doing so through legal and punitive measures.

Third, Ottawa should use the Internet to uncover, track, and impede terrorist infrastructure and planning in Canada, and to further disseminate the particular rationales that underpin Canadian defence and foreign policy. Better informing Canadians of their government's role overseas would help contradict extremist viewpoints while simultaneously arming moderate factions.

Finally, if and when a homegrown terrorist group, network, or plot is uncovered, the Canadian government should use all of its facilities to disrupt and foil the threat. To do so effectively and expeditiously would require that Canada build the appropriate intelligence-gathering and policing capabilities and inter-agency and international cooperative relationships.

Understand Radicalization in Canada

Individuals who contemplate killing their fellow citizens in campaigns of terrorism do so, in great part, because their beliefs dictate that murder is feasible and just — actions are rarely constructed in a vacuum. In the case of homegrown terrorism, ideological sentiment informs extremist behaviour. Tackling the homegrown terrorism phenomenon requires that governments and societies understand where these ideologies stem from, how they are disseminated, and how they inform the radicalization process that can lead to violence. As Lidewijde Ongerling, Dutch deputy national coordinator for counterterrorism, offered in his testimony to the US Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee, “people who set out to kill other people for political or religious reasons first go through a process of radicalization” (2007).

Radicalization is best understood as a personal process in which the individual adopts extreme political, social, or religious ideals and aspirations, and where the attainment of particular goals justifies the use of violence. Understanding what drives extremism and radicalization is perhaps the most challenging aspect of countering homegrown terrorism. After all, peering into the individual's mind-set in order to grasp the rationale for violent behaviour is virtually impossible. Doing so before the individual expresses radical sentiments through violence is even trickier. As CSIS acknowledges, “there does not appear to be a single process that leads to extremism: the transformation is highly individual” (quoted in Bell 2006a). And yet, in the case of homegrown, al-Qaeda-inspired terrorism, some commonalities seem to inform the process.



Some suggest that radicalization is born of the confluence between globalization and religion. According to a report from the Dutch General Intelligence and Security Service, radicalization is a result of a struggle pitting religious beliefs against modern — and generally secular — society. “A good part of the explanation,” the report reads, “lies in the specific circumstances of a modern and globalising society in which young Muslims find themselves.” To a certain extent, while parents continue to practise their religion in a traditional context, their sons and daughters are confronted with a “rapidly modernizing, more secularized” cultural environment that conflicts with religious traditions and duties. “These young people,” the Dutch report continues, “struggle with existential and religious questions, seeking answers in an Islam which is increasingly divergent from a local cultural context” (Netherlands 2006, 30). A recent report by the New York City Police Department adds further that personal crisis can catalyze the process of radicalization and indoctrination. Sudden economic hardship or personal loss and chronic social alienation and racial discrimination can leave individuals “receptive to new worldviews” that can become increasingly polarizing over time. The report concludes that the phenomenon of violent extremism begins when the “individual is looking for an identity and a cause” (New York Police Department 2007, 7–8). For others, like French scholar Olivier Roy, the loss of personal identity expressed by many second- and third-generation immigrants (in both Europe and North America) can be mended by rebuilding identity around a globalized community of extremist ideologues that offers not only a unifying cause but interpersonal ties, kinship, and feelings of belonging (Roy 2004).

Devoid of strong religious roots and lacking informed teaching, some individuals fall prey to the belief that more puritanical versions of their religion are also the most enviable and accurate. Part of that vision is entrenched in al-Qaeda’s ideological narrative of a “vanguard” of pious Muslims battling an immoral, secularized, and global world order (see Long 2006, 8–10). The Dutch report finds that some individuals, too poorly equipped to appreciate the intricate nuances of religious belief, “compile a radical ‘cut-and-paste’ version of Islam...which they reshape into a revolutionary pamphlet of global violent jihad” (Netherlands 2006, 32). RCMP Assistant Commissioner McDonell adds that homegrown terrorists are attracted to “sound-bite Islam” and are less religious scholars than violent misfits (quoted in Freeze 2008d).

With only a partial and often misguided introduction to the complexities of religious observance, radicalization can more easily rear its ugly head. As Aidan Kirby and Shawn Brimley (2006) write, “in the minds of would-be jihadists,” al-Qaeda’s narrative of a global war between believers and unbelievers “elevates their normal, mundane, everyday grievances to a profound level. It provides a rationale that seamlessly links identity confusion and personal conflict about the role of religion in one’s life in a Western society with alleged outrages against Muslims in distant conflicts.” This can be a very powerful incentive.

Besides religion, other social factors influence the radicalization process. Polarization of society between different religions or cultural groups weakens the bonds of state identity and nationalism. “The reality in Western Europe,” suggests Jack Granatstein, a pre-eminent Canadian historian, “is that the second and third generation of Muslim citizens are more fiercely Islamist than their parents.

At the same time, their sense of themselves as Dutch or British or French citizens...is much less strong than their identity as Muslims” (2007, 179). Those arrested in Ontario on terrorism charges share a similar lack of national integration, although, as CSIS Director Jim Judd noted in his testimony to the Senate National Security Committee in 2006, “these people were essentially raised in Canada” (quoted in Bell 2006b).

For Granatstein, this is exactly the greatest problem: “Whatever efforts Canada made to integrate these men into the polity failed,” he writes. “The efforts to teach democracy, to instruct all who live [in Canada] about the ways in which we settle policy disputes and mobilize support for legitimate ideas, need to be doubled and doubled again” (2007, 200). Paradoxically, however, just as the Toronto suspects were decidedly anti-Canadian, they nonetheless retained a certain *Canadianness*. Like the London transit bombers who dined on fish and chips and enjoyed watching football on the telly, those rounded up in Ontario look and behave much like other young Torontonians. Whereas in the recent past those involved in terrorism within Canada’s borders usually brought their extremist views with them upon immigration (the Sikh and Tamil cases being the more prevalent ones), today’s extremist is more than likely to be a local, born and raised. CSIS notes that “the high percentage of Canadian-born subjects” on its terrorism radar “illustrates the changing nature of Islamic extremism in Canada” (quoted in Bell 2005).

It is this fact alone that troubles CSIS and other security agencies so much. Homegrown terrorists combine their deadly ideology with an innate understanding of the society in which they live. As a result, the emerging generation of terrorists will be much more difficult to detect. Not only do they live in the areas they plan to attack, but they share the local dialects, dress like their neighbours, watch the same television programs, and eat the same food — they blend in. Robert Mueller, director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), has noted that the terrorists responsible for much of the post-9/11 terrorism in the West “were not sleeper operatives sent on suicide missions [but]... members of the community” (Mueller 2006).

To a certain extent, at issue is the fact that democracy is itself anathema to al-Qaeda and its followers. Javier Jordan and Luisa Boix write that “multicultural coexistence is inadmissible in the ideological universe of members of al-Qaeda.” “Democracy,” they continue, “is not easily assimilated into such an ideological concept” (2004, 5, 11–12). Islamists who share al-Qaeda’s vision, in general, do not conceive of or accept any separation between political and religious spheres, but rather assume that the state should govern both. Al-Qaeda’s supporters are committed to a virulent strain of religious totalitarianism that champions absolute power over the personal freedoms of others. As David Mandel, a defence scientist with Defence Research and Development Canada, suggests, al-Qaeda’s 9/11 objective was “to weaken strong democratic (as well as some autocratic) states and to strengthen their totalitarian movement based on militant fundamentalism...intolerant not only of democratic ideals but also of all moderate forms of Islam” (2005, 3). In Europe, the process is a bottom-up phenomenon, evidenced by the growing number of individuals from the Muslim community who have turned away, both physically and mentally, from the secular societies in which they live. A report by the Dutch government suggests that the process of societal rejection — dubbed “extreme



isolationism” — threatens Europe’s democratic political order because it is a “slow process which ...gradually harm[s] social cohesion and solidarity and undermine[s] certain fundamental human rights” (Netherlands 2007a, 10–12). As a result, some radicalized individuals distance themselves politically, socially, and even ideologically from the broader community, eventually rejecting the national identity shared by their fellow citizens, along with the collective’s underlining political ideology, historical narrative, and related value-systems. Anti-democratic action and violence is one possible outcome.

But rejecting democracy and liberal politics is not necessarily an individually driven process. Spurned by Western society at large, many cultural groups look to identify with their own communities. “I understood that I was different,” explained “Ousman,” an imprisoned French Islamist, “that I was not French, that I would never become French and that I had no business trying to become French either. I took it well. I was proud of my new Muslim identity. That was my reconquest of myself, my burst of lucidity, my awakening...no more desire to become part of this France that did not want me” (quoted in Rosenthal 2006). Encouraging those susceptible to radicalization to include themselves more fully in the community and society in which they live should be a priority. One way to do that is to counteract the socio-political polarization of subgroups, combat discrimination, and reverse perceptions (real or otherwise) of xenophobia, racism, or prejudice.

With a better understanding of the radicalization process, steps could be taken to deter the use of violence. Community leaders are central to the process; they are well placed to identify and detect subtle cues that betray an individual’s radicalization. Sayyid Ahmed Amiruddin, a religious leader in Toronto, witnessed just such a personalized transformation in a number of the suspected conspirators arrested in Ontario. “They would enter into the mosque to pray...and they would come in military fatigues and military toques,” he noted. “It looked to me that they were watching a lot of those Chechnyan jihad videos online.”¹¹ At the community level, potentially radicalized individuals could be approached, constructively, and offered nonviolent social prospects (such as greater political involvement, more exact religious education, avenues for social activism, or other forms of volunteerism). Local leaders, community members, family members, and others in direct contact and most familiar with suspected radicals could take the lead in this case. In that way, radical elements would be dealt with on a case-by-case basis, in the hope of steering individuals clear of violent extremism. Security officials would be contacted only if and when their services were required.

Where does this leave the Canadian government? In terms of concrete policy prescriptions, Ottawa might begin by more fully addressing the radicalization process as it pertains *to Canada in particular*. It is one thing to illustrate how radicalization develops in general and quite another to understand how and why it does so in one’s own backyard. As the French, US, Dutch, UK, and Australian governments have done in their own subnational communities, Ottawa too requires an in-depth and comprehensive analysis of radicalization in Canada. The government and Canadians in general need to know how the process has evolved in the Canadian context, what Canadian groups and individuals

¹¹ “Teacher witnessed transformation of some bomb-plot suspects,” *CBC News*, June 8, 2006.

are susceptible to violent radicalization, and where the phenomenon is heading. Building “radicalization metrics” specific to Canada would give the government an early warning system that would highlight what segments of Canadian society are susceptible to radicalization and what policies might reverse negative trends. With early warning, more carefully tailored de-radicalization programs could be arranged (see United States 2007, 8–10). Only then will Canadians have counter-radicalization and counterterrorist policies that accurately address the homegrown terrorist threat.

Ottawa has begun to illustrate how radicalization in Canada has developed, but the process to date has been conducted in a patchwork and uneven manner. An April 2007 CSIS report entitled *Islamist Extremism in Canada* deals, in part, with Canadian radicalization. Perhaps understandably, although it comes at the expense of informed scholarly research on the subject, the report remains largely unavailable to the general public. Some of it, however, has been declassified under the *Access to Information Act*.¹² The document reads that “the newest [terrorist] threat is from locally born youth or those who moved to the West at a young age who are inspired by the idea of a global jihad to fight against what they perceive as Western aggression against Muslims. Often called homegrown, these individuals are being radicalized, recruited, and organized locally, often without ever leaving their country.” What the report does not appear to do, however, is illustrate how, why, and when Canadians “are being radicalized” in the first place. That much of the report remains classified does not allow average Canadians to understand current developments taking place in their country. It might be time for the Canadian government, as the Netherlands has done with its pioneering work on European radicalization, to publish and disseminate its research on Canadian radicalization.

Other government agencies have also begun to address the radicalization process in Canada. In 2004, Ottawa established the Integrated Threat Assessment Centre (ITAC). Though a “functional component” of CSIS, ITAC is primarily a multi-agency institution with staffers from Public Safety Canada, the Canada Border Service Agency, the Department of National Defence (DND), Foreign Affairs and International Trade Canada, the RCMP, and various other offices. ITAC’s primary function is to produce “comprehensive threat assessments” that can be shared and distributed among Canadian intelligence and security partners. Part of that mandate involves the periodic publication of a series called *Trends in Terrorism*. Since 2005, the series has provided a number of excellent reports, including *Militant Jihadism: Radicalization, Conversion, Recruitment, Islam and Democracy* and *A Framework for Understanding Terrorist Use of the Internet*.¹³ While both reports, like the 2007 CSIS report, present robust contributions to the counterterrorism literature writ large, neither is particularly concerned with mapping out the radicalization process in Canada. Likewise, both DND and the RCMP have noted in their own publications the threat of radicalization and homegrown terrorism in Canada, though, once again, nothing has been published to date that delves further into explaining the process as it pertains to Canada and Canadians (see Canada 2006a, 2007; RCMP 2007).

If the threat of homegrown terrorism is to be confronted properly, the government needs to acquire a more comprehensive and robust understanding of radicalization. While appreciation of the process

12 A few pages are available online thanks to *The National Post* and columnist Stewart Bell — see Bell (2008a).

13 For these and other ITAC reports, see the Web site: <http://www.itac-ciem.gc.ca/pblctns/tc_prsnts/index-eng.asp>.



has begun, a critical mass of knowledge has yet to be attained. The first priority for Ottawa thus should be to invest further in mapping out the ideological process that feeds and sustains the terrorism threat. This will take time and considerable effort, and should include input from religious leaders, academics, scholars, and informed citizens.

Besides developing a better understanding of radicalization, Ottawa might also develop strategies to (re)integrate subnational community groups that are disenfranchised or alienated from the political process or suspicious of Canada's security services. Efforts should be made to inform communities more fully about Canada's political process and security environment — call it agenda-based community outreach. Attracting and educating youths should be a priority. The RCMP's National Security Youth Outreach Program does just that. As part of the RCMP's broader Community Outreach Initiative, the program attempts to "engage youths" — those under age 30 — with "national security issues." To date, the RCMP has given presentations and workshops to university and high school students, and has made an effort to present speakers and panellists at conferences.¹⁴ In March 2008, for instance, young Muslims and non-Muslims gathered in Surrey, BC, for a conference entitled "Muslims of Tomorrow." Organized by local community leaders, the RCMP, and UK Islamic leader Abdul Haqq Baker, the event was an effort to combat extremism and terrorism with education and dialogue. As Sana Siddiqui, an RCMP Youth Advisory Council member argued, the conference was "about education...what we're talking about is what [the Muslim] community's view on [radicalization and terrorism] is and what our religion says on it." "Prevention," she added, "is the best medicine and the safety of all Canadians is in the interest of all Canadians as well."¹⁵ Other government agencies are also reaching out. DND, as part of its Security and Defence Forum, engages the Canadian public through conferences, panel discussions, seminar lectures, and keynote addresses. It is not uncommon to have a vice-admiral or brigadier-general give an open and frank assessment of Canada's evolving security environment to a lecture hall full of eager university students. In both cases, Canadians, especially the young, are introduced to the country's security environment. These efforts should continue.

The point is not a trivial one. In 2007, MI5, the United Kingdom's security intelligence agency, identified 2000 citizens belonging to roughly 200 terrorist networks active in that country — a number four times higher than MI5's 2004 assessment (see United Kingdom 2007). As the RCMP points out, while a "vast majority of Muslims do not support terrorists attacks...a minority have some sympathy" for terrorist groups. "About 1 in 7 Muslims in France, Spain, Britain, and Germany," the RCMP highlights with reference to recent international polling data, "agreed with the statement that 'violence against civilian targets in order to defend Islam' can 'often' or 'sometimes' be justified" (RCMP 2007, 127). The story is not quite as dark in Canada. A recent survey conducted by Environics in association with the CBC found that 81 percent of Canadian Muslims surveyed were "satisfied with the way things are going" in Canada, in sharp contrast to satisfaction levels in the United Kingdom (51 percent), Germany (44 percent), and France (33 percent). However, the same survey

14 See RCMP, Youth Outreach Program, at Web site: <http://www.rcmp-rc.gc.ca/nationalsecurity/youth_outreach_e.htm>.

15 "Goal of Muslim conference to fight extremism," *CTV News*, March 15, 2008.

found that 40 percent of Canadian Muslims questioned “feel there is a struggle [in Canada] between moderate Muslims and Islamic Fundamentalists.” Of this 40 percent, 14 percent responded further that they “identify with...extremists in this struggle.”¹⁶ Not to overstate the case, but how many Canadian extremists is too many?

To combat homegrown extremism in Canada, Ottawa needs to address these findings with more robust education and outreach programs that decouple perceived and real socio-political grievances from justification for violence. The fundamental lesson should emphasize that, in Canada, we have well-established and clearly defined avenues through which to address political grievances. Our courts are fair. Our political system is accessible to all. Freedom of speech is enshrined. Grievances can be vetted through social and political activism. In each case, the message to underscore is that the issuance of threats and violence are not justified and never tolerated.

Monitor and Dissuade Preachers of Violence

While homegrown radicalism can be a self-generated and autonomous process, it can also be taught, directed, and engendered. As CSIS describes in its 2007 report, “people are key in the radicalization process...It is the individual who delivers the radical message [and] it is this message that further guides the listener along the path of radicalization.” Indeed, CSIS concludes that the “vast majority” of homegrown terrorism cases point to the “importance of the influence of the individual” who guides and leads the process (Bell 2008a).

Firebrand preachers can lecture on radical thought and spread the indoctrination of particularly violent ideas; they can shape political grievances into the foundation blocks that inform and justify violence. Combatting homegrown terrorism will require keeping track of individuals and institutions that represent gateways to radical milieus. Stewart Bell, an expert on terrorism in Canada, suggests that “many homegrown terrorists...radicalize as a result of a spiritual leader who guides them to extremism.” He cites the case of Mohammed Jabarah, a St. Catharines, Ontario, man who joined al-Qaeda with assistance from Kuwaiti cleric Sulayman Abu Gaith (Bell 2006a). In this way, leaders can act as mentors and ideological facilitators of terrorism. According to the final report on the July 2005 London transit bombings, “mentors may first identify individuals from within the larger groups who may be susceptible to radicalization; then ‘groom’ them privately in small groups until the individuals...begin feeding off each other’s radicalization” (United Kingdom 2006). Groomers of terrorism must be deterred from doing so.

Top-down radicalization is more pronounced in Europe than in Canada. The brutal murder of Dutch filmmaker Theo van Gogh in 2004, ostensibly for his short film *Submission*, which describes violence against women in Muslim societies, is a case in point. Though van Gogh’s murder was a singular event against one man, his killer, Mohammed Bouyeri, a 26-year-old Dutch citizen, was

16 “Canada’s Muslims, an international comparison,” *CBC News*, February 13, 2007.



part of a network of young local jihadists. According to Dutch reports, Bouyeri was part of a terrorist network, later dubbed the Hofstad Group, that had “fallen under the sway of a Salafist [cleric] from Syria. This preacher...urged young people to abandon the mosque in favour of home-based religious instruction, where they could be mentally prepared for the violent jihad” (Ongering 2007, 2). After the 2004 Madrid train bombings, Dutch authorities noted that the Hofstad Group began preparing for similar attacks in the Netherlands. Security personnel took measures accordingly and rounded up the cell. Unfortunately, they did not recognize that individual members of the network were planning their own, personalized acts of terror, like van Gogh’s murder.

Leaders who preach hatred and violence should be monitored and, in cases where their words risk inciting acts of terrorism, punitive legal action should be taken against them. Granatstein argues that Canada must respond “harshly against those who try to secure change by violent means.” He suggests that Ottawa should make it clear that, “if your cause is terror, you cannot support it from Canada. And if a religious, political, or organizational leader does not disavow the use of terror and violence completely, legislation needs to be in place to deal with him” (2007, 196, 202).

Over the past five years, the United Kingdom has taken several important steps toward codifying the incitement of terrorism as a punishable crime, something that has been slow to come in Canada. In 2006, Abu Hamza al-Masri, a former leader of London’s Finsbury Park Mosque — which was attended by Zacarias Moussaoui (a 9/11 conspirator) and Richard Reid (the “shoe bomber”) — was sentenced to seven years’ imprisonment on six charges of soliciting to murder and three charges related to “stirring up racial hatred.” He is also due in a US court for attempting to establish a terrorist training camp in Oregon.¹⁷ A similar fate met Trevor Forrest, a Jamaican-born British cleric who changed his name to Abdullah al-Faisal upon converting to Islam and who was found guilty in 2003 on three charges of soliciting murder and three charges of inciting racial hatred. It was noted that al-Faisal weaned Germaine Lindsay, one of the 2005 London suicide bombers, by way of taped sermons and lectures. On the day al-Faisal became eligible for parole, the United Kingdom deported him to Jamaica. More recently, Mohammed Hamid, self-dubbed “Osama bin London,” was found guilty on three charges of soliciting to murder and three charges of providing terrorist training. Prosecutors successfully connected Hamid’s training camp and lectures to a number of individuals convicted on terrorism charges following the abortive transit attacks on London in 2005 (see Bowcott 2008a, 2008b). And in 2007, UK courts affirmed an order to deport Abu Qatada, described by authorities as a “spiritual guide to al-Qaeda,” to Jordan. Audio recordings of Qatada’s speeches encouraging and legitimizing violence against the West were found among the belongings of Mohammed Atta, the 9/11 ringleader, and would-be “shoe bomber” Reid (see Perlez 2007). The Canadian government might follow London’s lead on the matter of inciting terrorism, which is not covered in Canada’s *Anti-Terrorism Act*.

John Reid, former secretary of state for the Home Department under Prime Minister Tony Blair, stated bluntly that the United Kingdom is “committed to protecting the public and has made it clear

¹⁷ “Abu Hamza jailed for seven years,” *BBC News*, February 7, 2006.

that foreign nationals who abuse our hospitality and break our laws can expect to be deported after they have served a prison sentence. We will not tolerate those who seek to spread fear in our communities” (quoted in Ford 2007). Canada should be prepared to do the same. As Wesley Wark points out, however, Canada’s current “anti-terrorism legislation does not specifically sanction incitement to acts of terrorism.” He concludes that “any sufficiently tight legal definition of incitement, likely to pass [Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms] muster, would have to link incitement very closely to real evidence of [terrorism] plots” (quoted in Bell 2008b). It is time Canadians held their own national debate on the relationships among free speech, incitement, and terrorism. Doing so now would lay the groundwork for legislative evolution, if and when it is needed.

Thwarting facilitators of terrorism requires local knowledge and assistance from the Muslim community. Consider that it was “common knowledge” that Fahim Ahmad, one of the men rounded up on terrorism charges in Ontario, was passing out DVDs praising Osama bin Laden and 9/11 along with a variety of other “incendiary propaganda” at his local mosque. Muhammad Robert Heft, who knew Ahmad and his cohorts, warned them that “the 9/11 attacks were wrong, but they did not listen” (quoted in Bell 2006b). In this particular case, it is more than likely that local, community-based sources were instrumental in tipping off Canadian security officials at CSIS, the RCMP, or the municipal police force as to these troubling developments. But localized, interpersonal contact is critical to uncovering terrorist plots. The challenge for governments is to promote the exchange of that information between locals and security officials. Outreach programs, like those evaluated in the previous section, not only help build bridges between diverse Canadian communities, but also allow for improved government-community networks.

Taking stock of radical preachers and dealing with them appropriately also requires that Ottawa work with community members and leaders to build a common and shared consensus on security. Working towards common goals of community welfare, nonviolent dialogue, and individual well-being would build consensus between government and community leaders on a common security agenda; it could also catalyze a process of information sharing. “Passive observers” like Heft need to be comfortable enough to come forward with information regarding violent individuals and fire-brand preachers living and working within their communities (see Eddy and Rojas 2007). It is important to note that Mubin Shaikh, the CSIS informant instrumental in rounding up the Toronto Group, sought involvement with CSIS, not vice versa. After reading about the arrest of a friend (Mohammad Momin Khawaja) on suspicion of terrorist activity, he figured he would get involved. “I phoned the CSIS and said, ‘Listen, I know the family. I know this guy, Momin. Is there some way that I can help? I’ve grown up with him. I don’t know him to be like this’.”¹⁸ Perhaps even more important, though, is the fact that Shaikh, having consulted various religious leaders regarding his anticipated participation with CSIS, was given their unequivocal support. Shaikh’s case is a beacon for countering homegrown terrorism, a local individual who takes matters in his own hands to counter extremism in his community while receiving the blessing to do so from his religious leaders. Finding

18 “Indepth: Toronto bomb plot — Mubin Shaikh, bomb plot mole,” *CBC News*. See also Blatchford (2008a, 2008b, 2008c); Freeze (2008b, 2008c).



ways to ensure that others follow Shaikh's lead if and when the time arises is a priority for the Canadian government. Building stronger links between government officials and community leaders would be a good start.

Use the Internet to Collect Intelligence and Spread Moderate Positions

The Internet can play just as important a role in radicalizing individuals as do charismatic preachers. When terrorist groups such as Hamas and Hezbollah have savvy and interactive Web sites as sophisticated as those constructed by government agencies, it is clear that a propaganda battle for the hearts and minds of various populations in Canada and abroad is at stake. Spreading hatred and sowing violence has never been so easy. Free, rapid, and uncensored information is available to anyone at the simple click of a button. Search engines expedite the process. That such information can be shared anonymously by individuals living around the globe adds to the Internet's appeal as a tool for radicalism's diffusion.

Today, a Canadian with a penchant for extremist violence not only can find the moral and ideological fortitude required to carry out acts of mass terrorism, but can also print off instructions on how to build bombs, download real-time satellite imagery of targeted locations, map-search driving directions, solicit financial assistance, and attract accomplices. Al-Qaeda and its affiliates are also building a dynamic and interactive library of training materials supported by experts who answer questions posted on message boards and chat rooms. Recent topics under discussion include instructions on mixing the poison ricin, constructing bombs from readily available commercial chemicals, sneaking into Iraq to join the insurgency, navigating through the desert at night by starlight, and selecting targets. There are even Internet discussions as to where a suicide bomber should stand on a crowded bus in order to inflict the most devastation.¹⁹ As Steve Coll, a renowned historian of bin Laden, and Susan Glasser write, "al Qaeda has become the first guerrilla movement in history to migrate from physical space to cyberspace. With laptops and DVDs, in secret hideouts and at neighborhood Internet cafes, young code-writing jihadists have sought to replicate the training, communication, planning and preaching facilities they lost in Afghanistan with countless new locations on the Internet" (2005). The borders are seemingly limitless.

For Roy, the Internet is a tool that allows for the creation of an "abstract and virtual community of believers delinked from any specific country and culture." Instead of following a local group or religious leader — as had been the norm in previous generations — today's youths can surf the Web and are "free to choose, quote, or follow whomsoever he/she wants" (Religoscope 2004). The numbers are not encouraging: according to some Canadian estimates, there are as many as 4500 jihadi Web

19 For further information on the use of the Internet in terrorism, see Weimann (2004); Coll and Glasser (2005); "Militant website shows attack tactics," *The Australian*, November 19, 2005; Canada (2006b); Hoffman (2006); Netherlands (2007b); United States 2007; and "Internet may have played role in bomb plot," *CBC News*, June 6, 2008.

sites available online.²⁰ Finding virulent information is easy; a self-generated and autonomous terrorist cell operating in any Western city has all the means available to plan acts of terrorism. The result, as CSIS describes, is frightening: “Once hooked into these webs of information, susceptibility to recruitment increases” (Bell 2006a).

Of course, the street runs both ways: just as jihadists use the Internet as a virtual call to arms, so, too, can governments, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), and religious institutions use it to combat terrorism. Canadian officials can use the Internet to counter homegrown terrorism in two ways. First, government agencies can track and monitor Web sites — especially those that incite violence or offer details on the how-to of terrorism — in order to collect intelligence on suspected terrorists and plots. Second, the government can use the Internet to disseminate information that counters and even contradicts the radicals’ message, thereby strengthening local moderates. Countering al-Qaeda’s message and “winning the war of ideas” will require a redoubling of efforts in the realm of public diplomacy that not only rebuffs al-Qaeda’s political and religious legitimizers but offers counter-arguments and alternative viewpoints (see Blinken 2002).

In the first process, Internet forums can be monitored by security authorities and gleaned for intelligence. The Web is a treasure trove of valuable information. Consider this case. In thousands of posts on personal blogs and Internet forums uncovered by the *Globe and Mail* in 2006, a number of individuals shared their views on everything from the legitimacy of killing civilians in the course of jihad to their virulent hatred of all things pertaining to Canada — which they rarely referred to by name but rather as “this filthy country.” In one particularly malicious post, an individual wrote: “May Allah crush these jews [sic], bring them down to their knees, humiliate them. Ya Allah make their women widows and their children orphans.” As to the Canadian political system, another advised Muslims to avoid the process altogether: “Are you accepting a system that separates religion and state? Are you gonna [sic] give your pledge of allegiance to a party that puts secular laws above the laws of Allah?” (El Akkad and McArthur 2006; see also Steyn 2006, 70–80). These ravings might be disregarded as trivial — if offensive — Internet chatter except that they were made by family members and friends of the men arrested in the counterterrorism raids in Ontario. That these individuals shared their hatreds with one another and the public via the Internet likely tipped security officials to the group’s potentially violent tendencies, their co-conspirators, and the larger terrorist plot. After all, if the *Globe and Mail* was able to “uncover” such postings, the odds are very good that CSIS did so, too, perhaps years ago. As the Toronto arrests highlight, the best counterterrorism strategy is to follow one lead (in this case, virulent anti-government and racist sentiments) to more fully developed terrorist plans. By searching the Web for intelligence, CSIS (likely) was able to piece together the group’s infrastructural development and aspirations. As Michael Kern, a one-time analyst with the SITE Institute, a terrorist-tracking organization, suggests, the Internet allows officials to see “who’s posting what and who’s paying for it” (quoted in Kaplan 2006). When the

²⁰ “Internet may have played role in bomb plot,” *CBC News*; see also Thomas (2003).



time comes, as it likely did in June 2006 in the Ontario case, Internet-based intelligence can be used to round up those associated with a given plot.

Internet interceptions should, of course, be conducted in a manner that protects Canadians' rights under the Charter. Intelligence personnel legally can gather information from personal e-mail and other Internet activity, as they do with non-Internet-based communications, although online intelligence gathering is tightly controlled. The principal safeguard against abuse is a requirement that intelligence authorities ask, in writing, and receive judicial authorization before conducting Internet surveillance. A number of oversight bodies also exist. The Commission for Public Complaints against the RCMP and the Security Intelligence Review Committee protect Canadians against unlawful Internet surveillance conducted by the RCMP and CSIS, respectively.²¹ Both bodies may conduct external audits of RCMP and CSIS activity and report to Parliament on a yearly basis. Furthermore, both the commissioner of the RCMP and the director of CSIS may conduct their own internal audits. Finally, the Supreme Court of Canada may review decisions taken by either agency, since unlawful interception is an offence under Canadian law. New legislation dealing specifically with Internet-based intelligence gathering, the *Modernization of Investigative Techniques Act* (MITA, or Bill C-74), was tabled in 2005, but Parliament was dissolved before the act's final reading (see Canada 2005). Although MITA has yet to be resurrected by the Harper government, that legislation, or something like it, eventually will be passed. As developments in wireless and digital technology evolve, so too must the laws governing a state's capacity to identify and intercept communications in order to safeguard national security.

Internet dragnets prove useful in combatting homegrown terrorism because they alert security apparatuses to the kernels of intelligence they require to unearth and foil terrorist plots. "Collecting intelligence these days," Stephen Mercado, an analyst with the US Central Intelligence Agency argues, "is at times less a matter of stealing through dark alleys in a foreign land to meet some secret agent than one of surfing the Internet under the fluorescent lights of an office cubicle" (quoted in Shane 2005). To that end, security officials can use the Web in order to penetrate terrorist cells and sow dissent and distrust, insert informants within start-up organizations, and trace the scope of already-established terrorist networks. Likewise, intelligence officers can spread disinformation that confuses potential adversaries and collect open-source intelligence from media, blogs, chat rooms, and social forums from around the globe. Thus, while would-be homegrown terrorists have found that high-tech communication technologies greatly assist in the planning of terrorism, electronic communication is nonetheless proving a double-edged sword. Aspiring terrorists must either accept the risks that come with sharing their thoughts and plans online or limit their reliance on telecommunication services and diminish their operational efficiency as a consequence.

And yet, Canadians must ensure that the cure is not worse than the disease. Civil liberties, individual rights, freedom of speech, and freedom of association must not be undermined. While the Canadian

21 For further information, see the Web site of the Canadian Internet Policy and Public Interest Clinic, University of Ottawa: <<http://www.cippic.ca/en/projects-cases/lawful-access/>>.

government might be required to employ more robust online tactics to protect Canadians against Internet-savvy terrorists, it must not unintentionally erode the very values and characteristics that make up our society. The Internet might need to be monitored, but safeguards should be concomitantly constructed. A recent report by the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) offers a number of measures that could help protect freedoms while allowing for broader online counterterrorism measures. The report suggests, as a starting point, that combatting terrorism online should not be used as a pretext to curb freedom of expression or freedom of information. Accordingly, if a government believes a restriction of information is needed on the grounds of national security, it should demonstrate, first and foremost, that the restriction is prescribed by law. Similarly, “a clear distinction must be made between unwanted and illegal content as defined by law,” so that information that is perhaps irksome to the government — though not a security threat — is protected. If and when Internet data are removed, they must first be declared illegal “on the basis of law and by a ruling of a court of justice.” Finally, the procedure should be transparent and a “right of appeal” granted (OSCE 2005). In sum, a balance must be determined between security and liberty. As David Harris, director of the International and Terrorist Intelligence Program at INSIGNIS Strategic Research Inc. and former chief of strategic planning at CSIS, posits, “if the [Canadian] government fails to restrict the enjoyment of some liberties in the face of...growing threats, one might expect to see other liberties ultimately going unenjoyed — perhaps even the right to life and security of the person” (2008, 144). Put together, these safeguards would ensure that Canadian freedoms are enshrined while Canadians themselves are protected from the threat of terrorism.

The Internet can serve a second significant counterterrorism function: the Canadian government should use it to spread its own political and policy message. Part of that process requires that the government more clearly outline and explain its position on a number of hotly debated foreign policy initiatives. Using the Internet to do so effectively should be a priority. By better explaining how policy positions have been constructed and highlighting why Canada’s foreign policy functions the way it does, the government can diminish misinformed grievances against it from within Canada. Doing so might help eliminate the radicals’ most powerful asset: a diaspora beset with perceptions of global and national injustices. CSIS notes that “the most important factor for [jihadi] radicalization is the perception that Islam is under attack from the West. Jihadists also feel they must pre-emptively and violently defend Islam from these perceived enemies” (MacLeod 2008a). In the Toronto case, Canada and Canadians were considered “enemies.”

While the perception of a war against Islam is a global phenomenon, the Canadian government should redouble its efforts to quell these sentiments among Canadians. As Harris suggests, Ottawa should “without fear or favour...or political correctness...tell it like it is to Canadians, about terrorism and its sources” (2006). It is time the government tells us all, candidly and openly, about the threats we face and the strategies it has developed to protect our welfare and national interests.

If misperceptions are to be corrected, Ottawa should start by explaining more fully Canada’s role in Afghanistan. That many non-Muslim Canadians still do not understand why Canada continues to fight the Taliban betrays much more than simple ignorance on the part of Canadians; it shows a lack



of effort on the part of the government to tell Canadians where their national interests lie in that beleaguered country and what the government is prepared to do to protect Canada's national security. That Ottawa managed to catalyze some debate on the Afghan mission (much of it positive) following the tabling of the report of the Independent Panel on Canada's Future Role in Afghanistan (the Manley Report) in January 2008 shows that it could make much better use of the Internet (from where most Canadians are likely to obtain such reports) to disseminate information about Canadian interests overseas. Ottawa could also use the Internet to reiterate the many constructive successes we have had in Afghanistan, including the roads, hospitals, and schools Canadian efforts have built, and our coercive successes, such as eliminating and capturing Taliban and al-Qaeda leaders, thwarting suicide bombings, and defusing roadside bombs. Ottawa might also illustrate, as the United Nations, Human Rights Watch, NATO, our allies, and countless NGOs have done repeatedly, that civilian casualties in Afghanistan are by and large the product of vicious and indiscriminate Taliban attacks (see, for example, Human Rights Watch 2007; United Nations Assistance Mission to Afghanistan 2007; and NATO 2008). Indeed, Ottawa might want to share with Canadians that the Taliban's very *raison d'être* is to destabilize the UN's humanitarian effort in Afghanistan by killing and maiming Afghans and baiting NATO soldiers into retaliatory positions. By better illustrating what Canadian objectives are in Afghanistan and more accurately portraying the facts of the Afghan battlefield to Canadians, homegrown radicals might lose a principal recruiting device.

Other foreign policy positions need to be explained more fully as well. Consider that, during the Israel-Hezbollah conflict of 2006, Canada (along with *every single one* of our allies) supported Israel's right to defend itself. That many Canadians lambasted the government for giving up Canada's perceived "neutrality" on all things concerning the Middle East highlights the fact that Ottawa did not go as far as it should have in expressing the rationale underpinning its position. Simply put, Hezbollah is a banned international terrorist organization under Canadian law. Had the government published and disseminated easily accessible online documents to that effect via government Web pages, many more Canadians might have understood Canada's position not as "pro-Israel" but as "anti-terrorism." The same could be said concerning Ottawa's long-standing policy against propping up Hamas financially in the Gaza Strip and shutting down Canadian-based fronts that support the Tamil Tigers (a designated terrorist group responsible for a devastating terrorist campaign in Sri Lanka). With this sort of information, lingering grievances shared by various Canadians might be undercut. Using the Internet to explain Ottawa's position more widely on a number of foreign policy issues might help solidify and strengthen more tolerant viewpoints as a result.

Track, Disrupt, and Destroy Terrorist Organizations

When homegrown terrorist organizations, networks, and plots are uncovered, the Canadian government should ensure that its security apparatus has the means, through offensive, coercive counterterrorism tactics, to eliminate the threat (see Wilner 2007). "One of the basic problems in counterterrorism," Richard Betts, an expert on terrorism with the Council on Foreign Relations, notes, "is that, in

contrast to conventional warfare, where in most cases...the defense has an advantage over the attacker, [with] terrorism it's usually the reverse because as long as the attacker can hide and choose the location and moment in which to invest and focus his resources, it's a much more difficult game for the defender to cover every potential vulnerability" (2006).

Dismantling localized terrorist organizations requires tracking down known and suspected associates, mapping out their affiliates in Canada and abroad, and arresting members when attack plans are in their final stages. As Mueller (2006) sees it, coming to grips with "underground networks...can be tedious, intricate work," yet it is essential to root out homegrown terrorist groups in their entirety. In the weeks following the Madrid train bombings, Spain's security services tracked part of the terrorist cell (including the leader) to a local apartment building. After a short gun battle, the terrorists blew themselves up, destroying their apartment and killing one police officer. In the investigation that followed, Spanish authorities found more than 200 detonators of the kind used in the March 11 train attacks and in the foiled April 2 train attack, several kilograms of explosives, suicide vests, and a car, packed with explosives, parked outside. As Spain's interior minister Angel Acebes expressed at the time, the Madrid bombers "were going to keep on attacking because some of the explosives were prepared, packed, and connected to detonators."²² Obviously, that Spain had both the investigative and policing ability to destroy a well-organized and highly capable terrorist group in a matter of days saved countless lives. If Canada is to do the same, it will require a very robust intelligence-gathering capability and the policing abilities to put intelligence into action.

Coercive counterterrorism requires excellent intelligence. As discussed above, Internet chatter can be monitored and sting operations mounted. Monitoring suspicious behaviour, such as the purchase of large quantities of potentially explosive materials (certain fertilizers, for instance) or the transfer of large sums of money, can also tip a state's security apparatus to potential threats. Likewise, human intelligence should also be sought. Because homegrown terrorist cells are usually small, the best kind of information will come from personal interaction with members. Infiltrating terrorist groups, as Shaikh did, offers security personnel the most valuable of all intelligence. It allows for the gathering and implementation of "actionable intelligence" — information that officials can use to plan and carry out interceptions. Shaikh, after having been placed in a position to befriend members of the Toronto cell, was asked to join them and help organize the training facility north of Toronto. "My comment to my CSIS handler at that time," Shaikh recalls, "was, 'This guy is an *effing* time bomb waiting to go off'."²³ It was priceless intelligence for Canadian officials, who followed the group to its camp, monitored its activities, and set in motion the operation that foiled its plans several months later.

Besides the need to acquire human intelligence, security officials also need to battle homegrown terrorism from the target end of the equation. That is, by appreciating the functioning of various societal systems — mass-transit systems, airports, seaports, and so on — officials would be better able

22 "Madrid 'ringmaster' dies in blast," *BBC News*, April 2, 2004.

23 "Indepth: Toronto bomb plot — Mubin Shaikh," *CBC News*.



to predict what pieces of the whole are most vulnerable and might be selected by terrorist groups as a result. Mueller calls it “knowing your domain”: “We need to know the risk factors,” he explains, “and the potential targets for criminal and terrorist activity. With this information, we can find and stop homegrown terrorists before they strike” (2006). Defences, for instance, could be bolstered at sensitive locations and potential targets. Appreciating a society’s weak points also would prepare first responders, along with government officials and the medical community, to react effectively to terrorist attacks. Mitigating the consequences of an attack is important to foiling the next one because it would diminish the socio-political impact terrorists seek.

R.P. Eddy, director of the Manhattan Institute’s Center for Policing Terrorism, suggests that defensive counterterrorism should seek to match terrorism’s unpredictability by “inject[ing] randomness” into defensive tactics (2008). This sentiment is reflected in a recent report by the US Department of Homeland Security, which argues that “both variability and unpredictability must be consciously injected into flexible prevention measures” (United States 2007). As an illustration, Eddy suggests that the type of “random bag search” used in New York’s subway system could deter would-be terrorists in a cost-effective and efficient manner. “If you’re a terrorist,” Eddy argues, “you have a limited amount of resources [and] you don’t want to deploy them if you have an increased chance of...not being successful” (2008). Likewise, terrorists are generally risk-averse while preparing for an attack; they obey the law diligently, are less likely to steal, speed, or do drugs, and generally avoid attracting undue attention lest they get caught before carrying out their long-term goals. If so, even a very minor probability of getting caught (by a random bag search, for instance) would have a disproportionately large deterrent impact (see Anthony 2003). The principal intent of the search itself is to give would-be bombers the impression that their plans will not easily succeed (see Kifner 2005). The idea is to throw a little uncertainty into the terrorist planning stage. Randomness could be used in other ways, too. For instance, several dozen police officers in squad cars converge twice daily at randomly selected times and locations throughout New York City. The assumption is that the unanticipated police presence keeps extremists guessing as to when and where a security force might materialize at any point during the day, which impedes terrorist planning by introducing a greater level of uncertainty (see Schmitt and Shanker 2008).

Critics of New York’s random bag search argue that the policy is an affront to individual privacy because police officers search individuals without suspicion of wrongdoing. Two weeks after the subway search program began, the New York Civil Liberties Union, on behalf of five individuals, filed a lawsuit against the New York Police Department and the City of New York, arguing that the program violated the Fourth Amendment to the US Constitution, which prohibits unreasonable searches (see NYCLU 2005). Nonetheless, a district court rejected the lawsuit, finding that the searches are not only voluntary — upon being informed of the search, individuals are allowed to refuse to having their possessions examined and are free to exit the subway station — but a number of safeguards sufficiently protect riders’ privacy. For instance, searches are conducted at randomly erected checkpoints; a predetermined selection process is used that ensures police officers do not decide selectively which individuals to stop; officers give vocal notice of the searches and reiterate that they are voluntary; posters alongside checkpoints notify passengers that bags will be examined; the

subway's operating authority makes audio announcements to that effect; during the search itself, officers examine only containers large enough to carry a bomb and do not inspect wallets, small purses, or jackets; and, finally, the searches take only several seconds. Perhaps most important, however, the court concluded, following expert testimony, that the program has "created an environment in New York City that has made it more difficult for terrorists to operate" (see Goodman 2006). Arguably, with proper oversight and safeguard mechanisms, programs like New York City's random bag search can defend effectively against terrorism while upholding civil liberties.

Relying on police forces is another measure that should be honed to counter homegrown terrorism. Agencies such as the FBI and CSIS are relatively small organizations with finite personnel and resources. The personnel of law enforcement agencies, on the other hand, can number in the tens of thousands. In Canada, for instance, more than 60,000 police officers and 25,000 RCMP personnel protect our communities.²⁴ These officers are intimately attuned to the social intricacies that mark the communities they work in, and can have a wealth of knowledge. In combatting homegrown terrorism, police forces, Eddy suggests, might be used as "first preventers and not just as first responders": a thin blue line to countering terrorism (2008). Good police work can be great counterterrorism. Solid detective work in Torrance, California, for example, resulted in one of the United States' greatest post-9/11 counterterrorism successes. Beginning in 2005, a group of armed men began a significant crime spree that involved the robbery and attempted robbery of nearly a dozen gas stations. As Los Angeles police chief William Bratton explained in his testimony before the US House of Representatives, "in investigating the crimes, the experienced detectives of the Torrance Police Department focused on the basics of any investigation: evidence, witnesses, and modus operandi." When detectives searched one of the suspect's apartments, they found evidence, such as body armour and knives, that was in keeping with the robbery. "However," Bratton continues, "when the detective noticed jihad-related literature and the addresses of potential 'targets,' the detective fell back on his previous training as a terrorism liaison officer...and recognized this as a preincident indicator to a terrorist attack" (Bratton 2007; see also Bratton, Kelling, and Eddy 2007). Counterterrorism experts were contacted and, eventually, a well-defined plot to attack a number of Los Angeles synagogues, El Al ticket booths, and US military facilities was derailed.

In Canada, police units specially trained in counterterrorism are being set up at the local level. Vancouver police chief Jamie Graham revealed in 2006, for instance, that his department was taking steps to better combat the threat of terrorism in the city. "If there ever is a [terrorist] incident in Canada," Graham argued, "there's a likelihood that incident will take place in a major urban centre. I need to ensure that I have officers spending 24 hours a day concerned with what happens in Vancouver."²⁵ In 2007, the Vancouver Police Department disclosed that it had established a five-member counterterrorism squad, with three members from the municipal force and two from the RCMP (Bolan 2007). Training police officers in other Canadian cities in the basics of counterterrorism would

24 See the RCMP Web site at: <http://www.rcmp-grc.gc.ca/about/organi_e.htm>; and Statistics Canada (2007).

25 "Vancouver police setting up counterterrorism unit," *CBC News*, June, 5, 2006.



provide Canada's counterterrorism community with an on-the-ground network of active intelligence gatherers in major population centres.

In the Torrance case, intelligence sharing among security agencies exposed the cell. The obvious lesson here is that internal security partnerships, among police, military, and intelligence officers, are a necessary requirement to countering homegrown terrorism. While getting solid intelligence is important, transforming bits and pieces of information into organized police action takes a collaborative effort. In the United States, counterterrorism agents have been dispatched to local FBI offices, where, together with linguists, analysts, and surveillance specialists, they gather and assess information before sharing it with the local law enforcement community. Canada has taken similar steps toward security integration, and has done well in the years since 9/11 to strengthen its internal intelligence-sharing capability. Since 2004, ITAC has successfully brought together agents from a number of Canadian departments in order to distribute intelligence more easily. Those efforts should continue, with emphasis placed on including more local-level security officers.

Besides local integration, international partnerships should also be established. As is often the case, localized terrorist cells have contacts, members, and affiliates in other countries. The Ontario terrorism bust resulted from a high level of cooperation among international enforcement and intelligence agencies in Canada, the United States, Denmark, the United Kingdom, Bosnia, and Bangladesh (Mueller 2008). Likewise, the foiled 2004 bomb plot in the United Kingdom led to the arrest, by RCMP officers, of Canadian-born Mohammed Momin Khawaja in Ottawa (which, as noted, led Sheikh to assist CSIS uncover further plots in 2006), along with individuals in the United States, Pakistan, and the United Kingdom. The Canadian government should continue, as it has over the past half-decade, to build intelligence links with allied governments in order to combat homegrown terrorism in Canada and abroad.

COUNTERTERRORISM IN THE COMING DECADE

“We have a bifurcated threat at this point. We must be vigilant on two fronts, that which is coming to us from the outside environment and, increasingly, that which is growing up in our communities...that look to Canada to execute their targeting.”

— Jack Hooper, Deputy Director of Operations, CSIS, June 2006 (quoted in Bell 2006a)

Canada’s counterterrorism strategy is evolving. The al-Qaeda network responsible for 9/11 is, by and large, on the run. Yet, remnants of it continue to foster chaos in Pakistan, Afghanistan, North Africa, and the broader Middle East, and it continues to represent a formidable opponent of Canada, the United States, and their allies. It is the challenge posed by homegrown terrorism, however, that threatens Canada’s security in new and uncertain ways. If bin Laden is hiding in a Pakistani cave, tomorrow’s homegrown terrorist may be hiding in an Eglinton Avenue apartment in Toronto.

Combatting this novel threat requires a multi-pronged strategy. First, the Canadian government should redouble its efforts to understand how and why Canadian citizens radicalize and join terrorist organizations. The drivers of radicalization should be mapped out if Ottawa is to focus its counterterrorism initiatives accurately. Likewise, Canada’s security agencies should foster outreach programs with Canadians in order to inform and educate them about our shared security environment.

Second, while self-radicalization can happen, the making of a homegrown terrorist is more apt to be a top-down process. Homegrown attacks in Europe have revealed that firebrand preachers can identify individuals susceptible to radicalization and groom them on the use of indiscriminate violence. In Canada, community leaders who incubate violence should be monitored and legally prevented from doing so.

Third, Ottawa should use the Internet to combat terrorism by monitoring extremist Web sites and collecting intelligence on terrorist activity in Canada. Internet-based intelligence can tip off officials about broader terrorist plots. Likewise, the Canadian government, in explaining more aptly the rationale behind Canada’s foreign policy, should use the Internet to spread a political and social message that challenges the extremists’ standpoint. Ottawa should reiterate not only that Canada is on the right side of the current struggle, but that our actions have resulted in a better and safer world.

Finally, Ottawa should ensure that it has the intelligence and policing capabilities to destroy terrorist networks and foil terrorist plots whenever and wherever they might arise on Canadian soil. Training police to recognize terrorist threats, ensuring a high level of inter-agency cooperation, and strengthening intelligence ties with allied governments would go a long way toward protecting Canadians against the threat of homegrown terrorism.



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