

Jihad and the United Kingdom¹

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2017 in the United Kingdom perfectly encapsulated the centre-periphery debate at the heart of this book. Four jihadi-inspired terrorist attacks in the United Kingdom (U.K.) resulted in 35 fatalities and the number of injured came close to 400. The perpetrators included individuals born and bred in the U.K., with no first-hand experience of foreign conflicts but inspired by actions abroad, a Libyan-born refugee who had travelled back and forth between the U.K. and his country of origin, religious converts, first-generation immigrants from Pakistan, members of the Saudi-born extremist group al-Muhajiroun, a failed asylum seeker from Morocco and a recent refugee from Syria. 2017 also witnessed several serious plots disrupted by U.K. intelligence involving U.K.-born citizens, who had trained, and/or were directed from, foreign theatres of conflict. Meanwhile, approximately 1400 U.K. citizens reside in Syria as members of ISIS. This list demonstrates the complex import from, and export to, the Jihadi centre within the U.K. There is no simple answer and the ratio of whether a behaviour or event was primarily influenced by foreign or domestic sources is likely to vary from case to case.

So where do we go from here? Generally, research on terrorism and political violence focuses on one of three units of analysis; the individual terrorist, the terrorist organization or the community that the terrorist group claims to represent. Let's take these units of analysis as a starting point to weigh evidence of import and export dynamics.

Generally speaking, studies on individual terrorists seek to ascertain the factors that drive individuals to engage in terrorism. Various analyses have focused on pathological dispositions to violence², authoritarian personalities³, general socialization factors⁴, suicidal personalities⁵, altruism⁶, vengeance⁷, quests for personal significance⁸, religious fanaticism⁹, revenge for personal suffering¹⁰, and despair¹¹. Studies on the organizational dimension generally offer rational-choice style explanations. Various analyses emphasize strategic utility¹² power balances in asymmetric war¹³, terrorism's ability to produce system collapse¹⁴, and its role as

¹ This project has received funding from the European Research Council (ERC) under the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme (grant agreement No 758834)

² Harvey Gordon, 'The suicide bomber: is it a psychiatric problem?' *Psychiatric bulletin* 26/8 (2002), pp. 285-287.

³ David Lester, Bijou Yang and Mark Lindsay, 'Suicide bombers: are psychological profiles possible?' *Studies in conflict and terrorism* 27/4 (2004), pp. 283-295

⁴ Scott Atran, 'Genesis of suicide terrorism', *Social science review* 299 (2003), pp.1534-1539

⁵ Ariel Merari, *Driven to death: Psychological and social aspects of suicide terrorism* (Oxford, 2010)

⁶ Jean-Paul Azam, 'Suicide bombing as inter-generational investment', *Public choice* 122/1 (2005), pp. 177-198

⁷ John Rosenberger, 'Discerning the behavior of the suicide bomber: The role of vengeance', *Journal of religion and health* 42/1 (2003), pp.13-20

⁸ Arie W. Kruglanski, Xiaoyan Chen, Mark Dechesne, Shira Fishman and Edward Orehek 'Fully committed: Suicide bombers' motivation and quest for personal significance', *Political psychology* 30/3 (2009), pp. 331-357

⁹ Daniel Pipes, 'Despair and hopelessness do not motivate suicide bombers', pp19-23 in Lauri S. Friedman, ed., *What motivates suicide bombers?* (Michigan, 2005)

¹⁰ Avishai Margalit, 'The suicide bombers', *The New York review of books* 50/1 (2003)

¹¹ Ilene R. Prusher, 'Despair and hopelessness motivate suicide bombers', pp24-33 in Lauri S. Friedman, ed., *What motivates suicide bombers?* (Michigan, 2005)

¹² Robert A. Pape, *Dying to win: The strategic logic of suicide terrorism* (New York, 2005)

¹³ Gal Luft, 'The Palestinian H-Bomb', *Foreign affairs* 81/4 (2002), pp. 2

¹⁴ Mohammed M. Hafez, *Suicide bombers in Iraq: The strategy and ideology of martyrdom* (Washington, 2007)

a signalling act¹⁵. Bloom¹⁶ emphasizes tactical choice and its relationship with domestic political competition and the search for public support. Studies on the societal dimension of terrorism focus on factors such as degrees of political freedom and poverty¹⁷, regime type¹⁸, social injustice¹⁹, and attachment to political Islam²⁰. Hafez²¹ outlines that a sense of victimization and threat, combined with symbolic narratives venerating martyrdom and legitimate leaders consenting to violence, lead to societal support for certain types of terrorist tactics.

Many research projects within the study of al-Qaeda or ISIS violence point toward jihadi narratives as sources of support (at the community level), enablers for violence (at the individual level) and a set of practical codes and constraints (at the group level). Their acceptance and presence are often treated as a given prerequisite. This chapter seeks to disaggregate the import and export of jihadi narratives (and their effects) from a U.K. perspective. The above studies collectively contribute to our knowledge of jihadi-inspired violence, but the literature lacks a framework that ties the individual, organizational and societal dimensions together to explain the causal interactions amongst them. More specifically, we have little understanding of how the import and export of jihadi narratives impact upon these three levels of analysis. Where exactly are such import/export dynamics crucial? First, we look at the critical, yet differing, roles that various foreign-born epistemic authority figures (and the nominally non-violent groups they led) have had within the U.K. Second, we explore evidence for community support for Jihadi narratives and goals within the U.K., and place these levels within their comparative context. Third, we examine the impact of the importation of Jihad from the centre, and the effect it has had within the U.K. This section will consider the importation of core narratives, and the importation of direction for violent plots. Before concluding this chapter, the final section focuses on U.K. citizens who travelled outside of the U.K. for training, or to participate in related conflicts.

Marketing Martyrdom: The Role of Epistemic Authority Figures

The direction for violent plots within the United Kingdom has come from multiple levels of influence. Many foreign-born religious leaders from various groups have used the U.K. as their base to provide the broad call to arms and legitimating ideology and martyrdom narratives, without which there would be no violence. Such religious/political entrepreneurs frame the necessity of violence and seek to increase the social allure of violence to both the constituency they claim to represent and, at a more micro level, potential attackers.

The U.K. has a long and changing history with these types of individuals. For example, in the initial aftermath of their victory in Afghanistan against the Soviets in the late 1980s, “many of those who had been to London before, or knew others who had, returned once again...seeking

¹⁵ Bruce Hoffman and Gordon H. McCormick, ‘Terrorism, signalling and suicide attack’, *Studies in conflict and terrorism* 27/2 (2004), pp. 243-281

¹⁶ Mia Bloom, *Dying to kill: The allure of suicide terror* (New York, 2005)

¹⁷ Alberto Abadie, ‘Poverty, political freedom and the roots of terrorism’, *American economic review* 96/2 (2004), pp. 50-56.

¹⁸ Sara Jackson Wade, and Dan Reiter, ‘Does democracy matter? Regime type and suicide terrorism’, *Journal of conflict resolution* 51/2 (2007), pp. 329-348

¹⁹ Bloom, *Dying to kill: The allure of suicide terror*.

²⁰ Simon Haddad, ‘A comparative study of Lebanese and Palestinian perceptions of suicide bombings: the role of militant Islam and socio-economic status’, *International journal of comparative sociology* 45/5 (2004), pp. 337-363

²¹ Mohammed M. Hafez, ‘Rationality, culture, and structure in the making of suicide bombers: a preliminary theoretical synthesis and illustrative case study’, *Studies in conflict and terrorism* 29/2 (2006), pp.165-185

refuge” as Afghanistan returned to internal turmoil²². At this time, the list included leadership from the Libyan Islamic Fighting Group and the Algerian Front Islamique du Salut as well as individuals linked to Osama bin Laden. According to Pantucci²³, “for most of these activists the priority was to instigate action in the Muslim world”. The London-based Arabic newspaper *Al-Quds al-Arabi* published an interview with Osama bin Laden in 1996, where he announced that after the United States (U.S.) had stationed troops in the Gulf, it had “entered into a confrontation with a nation whose population is 1 billion Muslims”²⁴. This was not limited to the print world. The URL www.azzam.com was registered in Britain in the 1990s. Its main purpose was to disseminate English-language extremist material related to the key Afghan mujahedeen ideologue, Abdullah Azzam. Much later, al-Shabaab’s website was also apparently run from the U.K. The website formed part of a network that was “providing at least the ideological backdrop, if not the practical support, to young Britons, who were trying to join al-Shabaab”²⁵.

Abu Qatada

Amongst this predominantly London-based milieu, several individuals and groups are worthy of greater mention. The first is Abu Qatada. He was “renowned throughout the Muslim world as a prominent academic and cleric...he served as a one-stop shop for the itinerant body of post-Afghanistan jihadis who had scattered around Europe while helping support active wars”²⁶. In particular, he used his base in the U.K. to help influence the Algerian jihad. From London, he wrote for the Ansar al-Jihad newsletter and acted as a fundraiser. He also issued fatwas in support of the Group Islamique Armee (GIA)²⁷. One such fatwa condoned the killing of the wives and children of ‘apostates’ in Algeria. This occurred two months after GIA’s first suicide bombing. At that stage, the group was in its third year of a bloody insurgency that had killed over 30,000 people. Up to that point, that initial suicide bombing was the single most deadly attack of the insurgency, killing 42 and injuring over 300. The vast majority of victims were civilians, although a police headquarters was the intended target. The claim of responsibility depicted the headquarters as a “base for torture and killing”²⁸. However, in the concluding paragraph of this claim, the group maintains that the death and injuries to civilians was a major error for which “the group is obliged to ask for pardon”²⁹. Abu Qatada’s fatwa intended to provide complete religious pardon for the atrocity.

This depicts a process whereby U.K.-based individuals sought to influence the jihad within the core. Abu Qatada’s inability to speak English fluently meant a limited impact occurred upon British Muslims. His influence lay elsewhere. “For men like this, London was simply a backdrop against which they would carry out their activities overseas. Their targets and interests remained abroad, and their fatwas and commandments mostly concerned activities that occurred beyond Britain’s borders”³⁰.

²² Raffaello Pantucci, “*We Love Death As You Love Life*”: *Britain's Suburban Terrorists*. (Oxford, 2015), pp. 46

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Shiraz Maher, *Salafi-Jihadism: The history of an idea*. (Oxford, 2017)

²⁵ Pantucci, “*We Love Death As You Love Life*”: *Britain's Suburban Terrorist*, pp. 250

²⁶ Raffaello Pantucci, ‘The Tottenham Ayatollah and the hook-handed cleric: An examination of all their jihadi children’ *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, 33/3 (2010), pp. 226-245.

²⁷ Pantucci, ‘The Tottenham Ayatollah and the hook-handed cleric: An examination of all their jihadi children’, pp.227

²⁸ Associated Press, “Radical group threatens more suicide commandos during Ramadan”, 5th February 1995

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Pantucci, *We Love Death As You Love Life*”: *Britain's Suburban Terrorists*, pp. 133

The first organised group worthy of mention is Hizb-ut-Tahrir (HT), who has used the U.K. as a base since the 1980s. Syrian-born Sheikh Omar Bakri Mohammed initially led the group in the U.K., after being arrested and deported from Saudi Arabia. Bakri arrived in London in 1986, where he started organizing HT activities almost immediately, and personally takes credit for HT's success in the U.K.³¹. The group's stated goal is to use Islam to defeat Western powers upon the Caliphate's establishment elsewhere. Unlike Abu Qatada, it has had a major and long-lasting impact upon the jihadi sphere within the U.K. Indeed, many violent British jihadis were at one time linked with HT. Baran³² describes HT's British chapter as the "nerve centre for the international movement", although the group itself has not disclosed the location of their global leadership. The British branch however "has been speaking in defence of the group as a whole over the last couple of years, and speaks confidently on the group's beliefs, goals, and methods as one might expect the global leadership to do"³³. Certainly, the group's media operations are largely based out of the U.K., including websites, regular magazines and books. All of the group's communiqués emanate from the U.K.³⁴, including the al-Khilafah magazines and leaflets, which are distributed across the world (Baran, 2004). There is evidence to suggest that the English language version differs from those translated and published elsewhere with local-based reporting from various Muslim countries omitted from English language versions. HT's YouTube videos are also produced in the United Kingdom with translations later spliced in for non-English speaking audiences³⁵. HT acknowledges that it removed some of its overseas literature from its British website for fears that if it were "read out of its context [some] might see it as offensive"³⁶.

In 1996, Bakri left HT. Pantucci³⁷ alleges that Bakri's departure was on ideological grounds. Bakri "began saying that the group should start trying to convert the United Kingdom to Islam, rather than simply focusing on recruiting people to support HT efforts to take over Muslim majority nations". Bakri intended to shift the focus therefore from the international core of jihad to the domestic struggle. This obviously led to a great deal of tension and resulted in his departure. After Bakri left the group, HT "embarked on a period of semi-clandestine recruitment and re-growth, not emerging back into the limelight until the campaign against the government of Uzbekistan"³⁸ in the early 2000s. HT's goal of focusing on the jihad abroad has therefore remained steady in the wake of Bakri's departure.

Very soon after his departure from HT, Bakri set up al-Muhajiroun (translated as "The Emigrants") with the help of Anjem Choudary³⁹. The group's name alludes to those who accompanied the Prophet Muhammad after his expulsion from Mecca. "Just as The Emigrants

³¹ Pantucci, *We Love Death As You Love Life*: Britain's Suburban Terrorists, pp. 91

³² Zeyno Baran, *Hizb ut-Tahrir: Islam's political insurgency*. (Nixon Center, 2004)

³³ Horton, 2006:74 John Horton, 'Hizb-ut Tahrir: nihilism or realism?', *Journal of Middle Eastern Geopolitics*, 23 (2006)

³⁴ ICT, *The Mode of Operation of Hizb ut Tahrir in an Open Society*. (The International Institute for Counter-Terrorism, 2004) <http://www.mailarchive.com/osint@yahoogroups.com/msg03472.html> (Accessed 21 January 2010).

³⁵ Osman, Mohamed Nawab Mohamed. "The Transnational Network of Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia." *South East Asia Research* 18, no. 4 (2010): 735-755.

³⁶ Maher, *Salafi-Jihadism: The history of an idea*, pp. 24

³⁷ Pantucci, *We Love Death As You Love Life*: Britain's Suburban Terrorists, pp. 116

³⁸ ICT, *The Mode of Operation of Hizb ut Tahrir in an Open Society*, pp. 3-4

³⁹ Catherine Zara Raymond, 'Al Muhajiroun and Islam4UK: The group behind the ban' *International Centre for the Study of Radicalisation and Political Violence*, London, (2010), pp. 18-19

helped Muhammad establish a base for his new religion in Medina, a base from which he and his followers later conquered Mecca and much of the Arabian Peninsula, so Bakri and his students hoped their organization might play a similar role in bringing Islamic rule to Britain⁴⁰. The group's stated goal is to "overthrow the British government without using violence, and to establish an Islamic state in the UK based on Shariah law". Upon the Islamic State's establishment, the plan is to "continue to conquer other countries, removing the obstacles in the way of establishing the Shariah until we have the domination of Islam globally"⁴¹.

During his leadership, Omar Bakri was an expressive supporter of al-Qaeda related activities. However, this largely depended upon the location in which the violence occurred. On occasions, Bakri has explained that he does not support jihadist violence in the U.K. and the U.S. because of a covenant of security that exists between Muslims and non-Muslims in these countries⁴². Elsewhere, however, he has played active roles in facilitating and promoting violence. He sees the violent jihadists "around the world in Lebanon, Somalia, Sudan, Afghanistan, Palestine, Bangladesh, Pakistan" as being in "one hundred percent agreement in matters with us"⁴³. On one occasion, he applauded the U.S. Embassy suicide bombings in Africa in 1998 because U.S. troops were present in the Gulf fighting Muslims⁴⁴. At other times, he legitimized foreign fighters engaging in battle in Chechnya, Kashmir and Afghanistan. Bakri also claimed that he recruited Bilal Ahmed – England's first suicide bomber, who took part in the Kashmir insurgency and detonated his bomb in December 2000. Omar Bakri also released statements on behalf of Osama Bin Laden and once in 1999 published a letter to Bin Laden imploring him to act against the West⁴⁵. He praised the 9/11 hijackers as the "magnificent 19" and referred to the attacks as a "Towering Day in World History"⁴⁶. On the one year anniversary, al-Muhajiroun convened meeting of "radical mullahs" at Finsbury Park Mosque to argue for jihad. Bakri stated: "The people at this conference look at September 11 like a battle, as a great achievement by the mujahideen against the evil superpower"⁴⁷.

A mixed method analysis of al-Muhajiroun conducted by Kenney et al.⁴⁸ demonstrates the significant impact Omar Bakri's leadership had upon the network. A social network analysis demonstrated the centrality of Bakri to key al-Muhajiroun operations and conduct. His impact however, declined after two major incidents. First, when he left Britain for Lebanon shortly after the 7/7 attacks (he was later prohibited from returning by British authorities). Second, when two successor groups to al-Muhajiroun (al-Ghurabaa and the Saved Sect) were proscribed as illegal. The latter incident led to a 45% decline in total connections within the al-Muhajiroun network. First-hand interviews and participant observation of al-Muhajiroun protests, locations where they proselytised Islam, educational lessons and Internet chat rooms

⁴⁰ Michael Kenney, John Horgan, Cale Horne, Peter Vining, Kathleen M. Carley, Michael W. Bigrigg, Mia Bloom, and Kurt Braddock, 'Organisational adaptation in an activist network: Social networks, leadership, and change in al-Muhajiroun' *Applied ergonomics*, 44/5 (2013), pp. 739-747.

⁴¹ Raymond, 'Al Muhajiroun and Islam4UK: The group behind the ban', pp. 7

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Raymond, 'Al Muhajiroun and Islam4UK: The group behind the ban', pp.11

⁴⁴ L. Harding, "New terror laws: Muslims who find a haven in London", *The Guardian*: 26th August 1998

⁴⁵ John Horgan, *Walking away from terrorism: Accounts of disengagement from radical and extremist movements*. (London, 2009)

⁴⁶ Raymond, 'Al Muhajiroun and Islam4UK: The group behind the ban', pp. 7

⁴⁷ Stuart Croft, 'British Jihadis and the British War on terror', *Defence Studies*, 7/3 (2007), pp. 317-337.

⁴⁸ Kenney et al. 'Organisational adaptation in an activist network: Social networks, leadership, and change in al-Muhajiroun'

demonstrated that “Bakri’s leadership has changed from direct oversight of al-Muhajiroun to symbolic, geographically removed leadership”⁴⁹.

Since Bakri’s departure, Kenney et al.⁵⁰ argue that al-Muhajiroun has gone through two quick generational shifts. First, several al-Muhajiroun veterans based in Britain replaced Bakri as day-to-day emirs. These individuals created the ‘Ahlus Sunnah wal Jamaah’ Internet discussion forum Islam4UK. Islam4UK conducts political protests and roadshows “largely without Bakri’s direct involvement”⁵¹. This group similarly invoked the previously mentioned covenant of security: “As Muslims in Britain, we live among you under a covenant of security; in return for our lives and wealth being protected we are not permitted to attack the lives and wealth of the non-Muslims with whom we live”⁵². These new leaders have directly replaced Bakri’s provision of Islamic theology lectures and jurisprudence. The last generation have had little to no direct contact with Omar Bakri and joined al-Muhajiroun through one of its successor organizations and later set up their own such as Muslims Against Crusades and Supporters of Sunnah⁵³.

Abu Hamza al-Masri

The next individual of note is the radical cleric from Egypt, Abu Hamza al-Masri. Croft⁵⁴ depicts him as a “key radicalising influence” in the domestic jihadi scene in the U.K. In the late 1980s, he went on Hajj to Mecca and studied under the mujahideen leader and ideologue Abdullah Azam⁵⁵. After moving back to the U.K, he acted as a translator for wounded mujahideen fighters from the Afghanistan battle in the late 1980s. Abu Hamza visited Bosnia three times in the early 1990s, visited Afghanistan in 1991 and returned to the U.K. in 1993. He was the official spokesman for al-Ansar’s organizational newsletter that supported the Algerian jihad and acted as press secretary for the Islamic Army of Aden-Abyan⁵⁶. In 1994, he leveraged his growing infamy from participating in two foreign conflicts to develop the Supporters of Shariah group in London. It became a “crucial intersection between jihad in the Muslim world and its Western support network”⁵⁷. Abu Hamza claims the formation of this group was to “give the message to the average Muslims [from those who participated in Bosnia, Afghanistan and elsewhere]...we are established to defend the Shari’ah, the Islamic law, and also to defend the people who are defending Islamic law...we also give people advice to go for training to help fellow Muslims, and not to be deceived by the Western European society”⁵⁸. Later, he became leader of the notorious Finsbury Park Mosque in 1997. His activities “transformed the mosque into one of the major stops on the European jihadist trail”⁵⁹. The mosque acted as a “secure retreat for rest and recreation after a tour of duty in the holy war”⁶⁰.

⁴⁹ Kenney et al., ‘Organisational adaptation in an activist network: Social networks, leadership, and change in al-Muhajiroun’, pp. 743

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Raymond, ‘Al Muhajiroun and Islam4UK: The group behind the ban’, pp. 7

⁵³ Kenney et al., ‘Organisational adaptation in an activist network: Social networks, leadership, and change in al-Muhajiroun’, pp. 743

⁵⁴ Croft, ‘British Jihadis and the British War on terror’, pp. 321

⁵⁵ Pantucci, *We Love Death As You Love Life”: Britain's Suburban Terrorists*, pp. 112

⁵⁶ Pantucci, *We Love Death As You Love Life”: Britain's Suburban Terrorists*, pp. 113, 122

⁵⁷ Pantucci, ‘The Tottenham Ayatollah and the hook-handed cleric: An examination of all their jihadi children’, pp. 229

⁵⁸ Pantucci, *We Love Death As You Love Life”: Britain's Suburban Terrorists*, pp. 113-114

⁵⁹ Pantucci, *We Love Death As You Love Life”: Britain's Suburban Terrorists*, pp.117

⁶⁰ Sean O’Neill and Daniel McGrory, *The suicide factory: Abu Hamza and the Finsbury Park mosque*. (HarperCollins UK, 2006).

There, Pantucci⁶¹ outlines, “videos and newsletters could be purchased, read or watched which provided grim updates from jihadist battlefields around the world. Returning warriors would regale newer recruits with tales of adventure and experiences fighting or training on the frontline, while posters would offer sign-up sheets for those who were eager to go abroad”. On different occasions, Abu Hamza stated his readiness to train suicide bombers for the Chechen insurgency, his belief that 9/11 was an act of self-defence⁶², facilitated travel to various conflict zones and sought to set up a jihadist training camp in Oregon, USA⁶³. Whilst he undoubtedly had a large impact in English-speaking jihadi circles, his impact with non-English speaking populations has been negligible⁶⁴.

Therefore, the various cases outlined above demonstrate the variance in which U.K.-based epistemic authority figures and how their groups have influenced both the domestic and international jihadi scenes. Usually this influence is a direct outcome of their personal affordances (language, social networks, battlefield experience) and personal strategic goals. The next section looks at the levels of support for various themes associated with the jihadi movement within the U.K.

Support for Jihadi Narratives

Opinion polls in many states illustrate that small minorities justify suicide bombings and other acts of jihadi violence. This is the constituency that jihadist-inspired groups aim to gain support from. It is also the constituency from which much smaller numbers will become radicalized to the point of engaging in militancy. Opinion polls conducted by ICM Research for *The Guardian* newspaper in England reveal that in March 2004, 13% of polled British Muslims could justify any future al-Qaeda suicide bombing on the United States. Directly after the 2005 7/7 Tube bombings in London, 5% of British Muslims polled could justify future attacks by British suicide bombers in the U.K. In a ICM poll of Muslims in Britain in June 2009, 11% of those surveyed felt that it was right for the Taliban to attack or target British/NATO soldiers in Afghanistan. 2% agreed with the Taliban using suicide bombers in Pakistan. Populous opinion polls undertaken for *The Times* in England reveal that, of the British Muslims polled in December 2005, 7% could justify suicide bombings in the U.K., 16% in Israel, 15% in Iraq and 13% in Chechnya. An opinion poll close to one year after the 7/7 bombings showed 13% of polled British Muslims considered the 7/7 perpetrators as martyrs. 16% would justify suicide bombings in the United Kingdom against military targets, 11% against government buildings/workers, 10% against the police, and 7% against civilians. This poll illustrates that those who provide support do not just lend support without thinking about the methods used and intended target. Here, the supporters more readily justify attacks on traditionally legitimate targets, such as the military or political targets. In more recent academic polling of a representative survey of individuals of Muslim heritage in the U.K. between the ages of 18 and 45, it was found 2.4% showed some sympathy for violent protest and terrorist acts. Amongst other factors, sympathy was higher for those born in the U.K, and those who spoke English at home⁶⁵.

⁶¹ Pantucci, *We Love Death As You Love Life*: *Britain's Suburban Terrorists*, pp. 125

⁶² D. Dronfield, ‘Suicide attacks were self-defence – Outspoken cleric’, *Press Association*, 14th September 2001

⁶³ Pantucci, *We Love Death As You Love Life*: *Britain's Suburban Terrorists*, pp. 127

⁶⁴ *Ibid*, pp.129

⁶⁵ Kamaldeep Bhui, Nasir Warfa and Edgar [Jones, ‘Is violent radicalisation associated with poverty, migration, poor self-reported health and common mental disorders?’ *PloS one*, 9/3 (2014), e90718.

For a comparison, let's look at the evidence in other countries. Kazim et al's⁶⁶ survey shows 15.3% of Pakistani respondents supported suicide bombing. 37.2% saw it as an act of martyrdom. Much higher numbers expressed approval for suicide bombings in other conflicts such as Palestine (48.4%), Kashmir (47.3%), and Lebanon (50.7%). The Pakistani respondents, therefore, saw differing levels of legitimacy and this was dependent upon the cause the suicide bombing was associated with. Respondents seemingly more readily accept suicide bombings in far-off conflicts than suicide bombings within Pakistan that could potentially harm the respondents themselves. This dynamic is repeated in the single country case studies analysed below. Haddad's⁶⁷ survey of perceptions of suicide bombing in Lebanon showed 70% of Lebanese Sunni Muslims and 81% of Shi'a Muslims supported suicide bombings targeting Israel. A major Pew Research Centre poll of 60,000 Muslims living in the United States showed that 5% justified suicide bombings. Of those under 30 years of age, 15% saw justification.

The Program on International Policy Attitudes survey in September 2008 for BBC's World Service allows for a direct comparison. Respondents relayed their feelings about al-Qaeda. Of those polled, 20% in Egypt, 19% in Pakistan 16% in Indonesia, 7% in Lebanon, 4% in the UK, 2% in the US and 2% in Turkey expressed positive feelings⁶⁸. Pew's 'Global Attitudes Project' in May 2006, asked the question "Can suicide bombing of civilian targets to defend Islam be justified?" Muslim respondents from states, in which suicide bombers have emerged, showed a significant minority who justify suicide bombing. Examples include Jordan (29%), Egypt (28%), Turkey (17%), Great Britain (15%), Pakistan (14%), and Indonesia (10%). From the previous surveys outlined, we may be able to infer that if the question asked specifically about military or political targets, then the positive expressions of support would be higher. It should also be noted that the justification for suicide bombing is already implanted within that particular question. If either no justification or a different justification is given, or even if a specific target is mentioned, the results are likely to be much different.

One of the most interesting observations we can extract from this opinion poll research is the disparity between those who can justify or support violence and the actual numbers who become violent. This vast difference needs explaining. The huge disparity indicates that attitudinal affinity with a cause is not a sufficient explanatory variable for participation. Moskaleiko and McCauley⁶⁹ accurately distinguish between these two states of mind by developing both an Activism Intention Scale, which assesses an individual's readiness to participate in legal and non-violent political action and a Radicalism Intention Scale which assesses willingness to participate in political action that is illegal or violent. Clearly, there is a difference between passively accepting and justifying acts of suicide bombing and engaging in suicide bombings. For an adequate explanation, other factors than attitudinal affinity are at work concurrently.

Importing the Jihad and its Effect on the Individual Terrorist

⁶⁶ Syed Fareez Kazim, Zarmeneh Aly, Haider Khan Bangash, Bhisham Pardeep Harchandani, Affan Bin Irfan, Syed Muhammad Javed, Rana Khalil-ur-Rehman, Haider Naqvi and Murad Moosa Khan, 'Attitudes toward suicide bombing in Pakistan', *Crisis* 29/2 (2008), pp. 81-85

⁶⁷ Simon Haddad, 'A comparative study of Lebanese and Palestinian perceptions of suicide bombings: the role of militant Islam and socio-economic status', *International journal of comparative sociology* 45/5 (2004), pp. 337-363

⁶⁸ Program on International Policy Attitudes, <http://www.pipa.org/> (2008)

⁶⁹ Sophia Moskaleiko and Clark McCauley, 'Measuring political mobilization: The distinction between activism and radicalism', *Terrorism and political violence*, 21/2 (2009), pp. 239-260.

This section looks at the main impacts that the importation of jihad from the centre has had upon jihad within the U.K., which has been inextricably linked to the importation of jihadist ideals from the centre since the beginning. This has come in many forms. This section narrows its analysis to the importation of both, core narratives and the direction for violent plots.

The failed attacks on the London transport system on 21st July 2005 illustrate the broader network within which violent operators tend to inhabit. The levels of foreign and domestic influence differ across different aspects of the plot. The subsequent investigation to the failed attacks lead to several convictions and highlighted a number of associations within a wider network than the attempted suicide bombers themselves. In this example, the detonators of all four bombers (Yasin Omar, Osman Hussain, Muktar Said Ibrahim and Ramzi Mohammed) failed to ignite the explosives. Prosecutors of the failed bombers allege that both, Muktar Said Ibrahim and Ramzi Mohammed, devotedly followed Abu Hamza al-Masri (whose accepting attitude toward suicide bombings will be covered later in this chapter). Seized documents belonging to the failed bombers included speeches by al-Masri, Osama bin Laden, and Sheikh Abdullah al-Faisal (formerly an extreme cleric based in the U.K. but deported in 2007 due to his actions), as well as footage of various suicide bombings, jihadist executions and videos that provided explosives training. Muktar Said Ibrahim also allegedly received hands-on bomb making training in Pakistan between December 2004 and March 2005.

The second level of influence captures all individuals that provide the space for face-to-face interaction that further normalizes martyrdom narratives, increases a sense of in-group identity, and provides a location to physically and mentally prepare to become a violent jihadist. On one occasion, Omar Bakri Mohammed, for example, clearly explained how the radicalisation process works: “We find young men in university campuses or mosques, invite them for a meal and discuss the situation for on-going attacks being suffered by Muslims in Chechnya, Palestine or Kashmir. We...make them understand their duty to support the Jihad struggle verbally, financially and, if they can, physically in order to liberate their homeland”⁷⁰. This depiction places the import of jihadi narratives as crucial. However, other extremist preachers give a different side to the story. Al-Muhajiroun’s leader in the U.K., Anjem Choudary, outlined that the group tailors its message to local concerns to increase its appeal: “We go to the areas looking at the problems they have, a lot of places have a lot of problems with the youth, with prostitutions, drugs, alcohol, and [what we do is] really tap into that and present Islam as an alternative...we don’t really talk about the judicial system and jihad...we talk more about the social system, economics, etc.”⁷¹.

Similarly, recruiters Atilla Ahmet and Mohammed Hamid, who were convicted in September, 2007 and February, 2008, respectively, did not engage in any violent acts. However, their provision of a safe space for would-be 21/7 attackers to condition themselves, originally normatively and mentally - and later physically - for martyrdom, acted as a crucial cog in the psychological process of becoming a violent jihadist. Those who run jihadist websites and those who upload the jihadist literature and propaganda would also fall into this category. For example, in 2008 Blackfriars Crown Court in England convicted Aabid Hussain Khan. Two years earlier, police at Manchester International Airport had arrested him upon his arrival from Pakistan. The conviction itself related to the items he returned to Britain with and items stored on his laptop. The presiding Judge referred to the seized artefacts as “amongst the largest and

⁷⁰ Croft, ‘British Jihadis and the British War on terror’, pp. 321

⁷¹ Raymond, ‘Al Muhajiroun and Islam4UK: The group behind the ban’, pp. 15

most extensive ever discovered". They included thousands of files of propaganda glorifying acts of political violence and suicide bombing, training manuals, maps and logistical videos of potential targets, and maps of transport infrastructure, in the U.K. and U.S. In total the soft-copy materials came to 1.3 terabytes of data across 33 hard drives, 90 floppy disks, multiple USB drives and MP3 players, 450 audiotapes, 188 videos and over 600 CDs and DVDs (Simcox et al, 2010). Newspaper reports depicted Khan as a "cyber groomer", while the Crown Prosecution Service referred to him as a "Terrorist Mr. Fix-It". Further evidence revealed that Khan arranged travel to Pakistan for budding jihadists looking to train. Khan also administered the at-Tibyan website, which provided translations of al-Qaeda recruitment documents. Khan therefore played multiple roles that could potentially facilitate violent acts, including suicide bombings.

The third level is that of ideological support networks. Here, the influence from abroad becomes more actively engaged in ideological debate, religious observation and physical preparation. According to the Metropolitan Police, Ahmet and Hamid hosted meetings in the latter's home in East London. During these meetings, Hamid encouraged the small-assembled audience "to murder people who do not believe in the Islamic faith". The group also frequently engaged in discussion about preparing for a life as fighters in terms of discipline and training. These meetings were typically strewn with references of, and from, foreign jihadi conflicts. Two of the failed 21/7 suicide bombers attended these meetings while Hamid was also in telephone contact with the other two failed bombers. Again, behaviours within this group depiction are not causal and no behaviour within this setting is in itself violent. Instead, the physical and spiritual preparation facilitate an individual, who may later engage in terrorist violence by providing a more internalized militant group identity that is deemed to be religiously and ideologically justified. The numbers within this network are still larger than those who join operational support networks and/or operational cells. The behaviours and conditioning apparent within the ideological support network may facilitate transition to the smaller, more intense and more intentionally violent groups, but do not either cause terrorist violence by themselves or even promise that an individual will become more deeply embedded within a plot.

The next level captures those who were intrinsic to the actual attempted violent act. Whereas earlier levels provide face-to-face or online justification and glorification of terrorism, those in this level provide the expertise needed to actually carry out a suicide bombing. Those who trained Muktar Said Ibrahim in bomb-making in Pakistan and the convicted Adel Yahya's expertise provided (in theory at least) the practical skills necessary for a bomb to successfully detonate.

Lone actor terrorists typically do not have such complicated levels of interaction. However, that leaves them open for greater influence from foreign bodies, who disseminate their message via the internet. For example, On May 14th, 2010, Roshonara Choudhry stabbed Stephen Timms, a Labour Party member of Parliament, causing him serious bodily injury. In the subsequent trial, the court heard a draft letter of Choudhry addressed to her mother that was found on her computer. The letter stated that she hated living in Britain and did not want to spend the rest of her life in a non-Muslim country. She said that she could not live under the British Government, which she described as an "enemy of Islam", and that she could not pay taxes to it or work as a teacher in its education system. Investigators established that Choudhry began downloading Anwar al-Awlaki's videos and sermons in the autumn and winter of 2009, when she began spending an abundance of time in her bedroom. Her parents believed that she was studying, but in reality, she was downloading extremist material, including more than 100

hours of al-Awlaki's sermons. It was supposedly during this time that Choudhry made the decision to engage in a violent attack. During her police interview, Choudhry responded to a question concerning the transition from immersing herself in religion to committing violence. Her response stated; "Because as Muslims we're all brothers and sisters and we should all look out for each other and we shouldn't sit back and do nothing while others suffer. We shouldn't allow the people who oppress us to get away with it and to think that they can do whatever they want to us and we're just gonna [sic] lie down and take it". Choudhry referred to a specific YouTube video of Sheikh Abdullah Azzam that made her understand that "even women are supposed to fight" and that she had an obligation to turn toward violence.

When we examine how violent jihadis within the United Kingdom justify their violence, we often see the direct importation of narratives from the core of jihad. For example, the drafting of a last will and testament acts as a point of little return for the terrorist. In terms of the narratives contained within these testaments, often the individuals draw a line of descent from the martyrs of the past to themselves. This places the individual within a path-dependent historical narrative, on a pedestal with the martyrs and heroes of the past. Leader of the July 7th attacks, Mohammad Siddique Khan's testament stated, "I am directly responsible for protecting and avenging my Muslim brothers and sisters...I myself make due to Allah to raise me amongst those whom I love like the prophets, the messengers, the martyrs and today's heroes". We know from elsewhere that the success of other terrorists spurs individuals on the fringe forwards. One of the 7/7 bombers, Hasib Hussain was open in school about his support and reverence for the 9/11 bombers⁷². Newspaper reports suggest two of the 7/7 bombers were present at a party celebrating 9/11 in Beeston, Leeds⁷³. Police found pictures of the four 7/7 bombers and Mohammed Siddique Khan's last will and testament in a house belonging to one individual charged over the transatlantic airplane plot. Following the failed attacks, a fortnight after the July 7th 2005 suicide bombings on London's transport infrastructure, police raided the dwellings of the perpetrators. According to newspaper reports of the court proceedings, the police found video images of beheadings, cassettes of Bin Laden's speeches, images of a suicide bomber attacking a U.S. barracks in Saudi Arabia, CD-ROMs including one of a course on Jihad, and a videotape of a speech by the radical cleric Abu Hamza suggesting that suicide bombers are martyrs.

The narratives for violence also typically place a call to arms for other potential recruits to follow the same path. No one attacker can realistically think that their one bombing will achieve the stated aims of the group; therefore, this type of narrative attempts to placate the individual by assuming that others will follow in trying to achieve the goal. The British suicide bomber Asif Hanif stated: "You Muslims are sitting in your houses, watching whatever is happening here to your Muslim brothers in Palestine. We want to be martyrs for Allah and we want you to be martyrs for Allah as well". Often, last will and testaments also seek to coalition build by linking their attack with the conflicts and insurgencies of others. Bilal Abdulla, the Glasgow airport suicide bomber, addressed his will to the "soldiers of Islam in the country of the Two Rivers", a moniker al-Qaeda regularly applies to Iraq.

Finally, these testaments also tend to displace responsibility onto the targets of violence themselves. By blaming others, the individual absolves him/herself of blame for the deaths of innocents and cites the death of innocent Muslims in core conflict areas. The will of 7/7 attacker

⁷² House of Commons, *Report of the official account of the bombings in London on 7th July 2005*, (London, 2006)

⁷³ Vuilliamy, E. 'When I heard where the bombers were from I felt sick', *The Guardian*: 24th June 2006

Shehzad Tanweer announced: “For the non-Muslims in Britain, you may wonder what you have done to deserve this. You are those who have voted in your government who in turn have oppress[ed] our mothers and children, brothers and sisters...Your government has openly supported the genocide of more than 150,000 innocent Muslims in Fallujah.” He continued that suicide bombings will continue until “you [Britain] pull all your troops out of Afghanistan and Iraq. Until you stop all financial and military support to the US and Israel and until you release all Muslim prisoners from Belmarsh”. The shoe bomber Richard Reid stated: “Your government has killed 2 million children in Iraq...Your government has sponsored the rape and torture of Muslims in the prisons of Egypt and Turkey and Syria and Jordan with their money and their weapons...I don’t know...what I done as being equal to rape and to torture, or to the deaths of the 2 million children in Iraq”. Nicky Reilly’s handwritten note following his attempted suicide bombing of a restaurant in Exeter was more clearly aimed at the British government and their policies and the British public: “Everywhere Muslims are suffering at the hands of Britain, Israel and America. We are sick of taking all the brutality from you. You have imprisoned over 1,000 Muslims in Britain alone in your war on Islam...In Britain it’s OK for a girl to have sex without marriage and if she gets pregnant she can get an abortion so easily. When you are getting drunk on Friday and Saturday night your behaviour is worse than animals. You have sex in nightclub toilets. You urinate in shop doorways. You shout your foul and disgusting mouth off in the street...Britain and USA and Israel have no real rules”.

These testaments directly show the impact that foreign conflicts and their motivations have had for individual plotters in the United Kingdom. As Tony Blair described the leader of the 7/7 plot: He “may have been born here. But his ideology wasn’t.”⁷⁴.

Exporting Violent Activists

There is a long list of U.K. citizens, who planned or travelled outside of the U.K. to gain the requisite training and/or participate in foreign conflicts. Perhaps the earliest expression of this was by the little-known U.K.-based group Jam’iat Ihyaa Minhaaj Al-Sunnah (JIMAS). Established in 1984, JIMAS was crucial for many Britons, who travelled to foreign theatres of conflict. The group explained to its followers that “you don’t feel at home in Britain, but you can’t go ‘home’ to a country you have never visited. So, we have a third identity for you – a pan national Islamism that knows no boundaries and can envelop you entirely”⁷⁵. From 1989 onwards, JIMAS sent up to 100 British nationals to fight in Afghanistan, Kashmir, Bosnia, Burma and the Philippines. Amongst those influenced by JIMAS was Britain’s Omar Saeed Sheikh, who was a very experienced jihadist by the time he was convicted for kidnapping the journalist Daniel Pearl⁷⁶.

Pantucci⁷⁷ estimates the number of Britons, who fought for jihad in the Balkans in the 1990’s, to be in the hundreds. At least five British died in Bosnia during this time. Six British were arrested in Yemen in 1998 for organizing a terrorist attack on U.S. forces. The Yemeni prosecutor in the case stated, “this offense started in London in the offices of SoS [Supporters of Shariah] which is owned by Abu Hamza and who exports terrorism to other countries”⁷⁸. Other activities that led to convictions include Waheed Ali and Mohammed Shakil’s attempts to join training camps in Pakistan. The leader of the 7/7 plot, Siddique Khan, attended a terrorist training camp in Pakistan; as did two of the 21/7 plotters. Omar Sharif attempted a suicide

⁷⁴ Croft, ‘British Jihadis and the British War on terror’, pp. 328

⁷⁵ Pantucci, *We Love Death As You Love Life*: Britain’s Suburban Terrorists, pp.94

⁷⁶ Pantucci, *We Love Death As You Love Life*: Britain’s Suburban Terrorists, pp. 95-97

⁷⁷ Pantucci, *We Love Death As You Love Life*: Britain’s Suburban Terrorists, pp. 107

⁷⁸ Pantucci, *We Love Death As You Love Life*: Britain’s Suburban Terrorists, pp. 125

bombing in a Tel Aviv bar in 2003. 70 or 80 British individuals including some suicide bombers appeared in the Iraqi insurgency⁷⁹. Just like most countries on the periphery, the U.K. has also witnessed a mass export of jihadists into Syria in the past decade. Some, like Mohammed Emwazi, played key operational and propaganda roles in the early days of the newly established Caliphate. Others, like Junaid Hussain, played an active role in encouraging ISIS-related attacks in the West.

Of course, violent operators are only one necessary component of a terrorist campaign. Funding also plays a large role for complex terrorist organizations. Again here, we can find multiple examples of British-based organisations exporting their finances to aid foreign conflict theatres. Kalim Siddiqui set up the Muslim Parliament in 1992. In the Parliament's initial manifesto, they describe jihad "as a basic requirement of Islam and living in Britain or having British nationality by birth or naturalisation does not absolve the Muslim from his or her duty to participate in jihad: this participation can be active service in armed struggle abroad and/or *the provision of material or moral support to those engaged in such struggle anywhere in the world*"⁸⁰. True to its commitment, the Muslim Parliament later set up an "Arms for Bosnia", which was later rebranded as the "Jihad Fund" and collected money for those fighting in Algeria, Kashmir and elsewhere⁸¹.

Conclusion

The illustrations demonstrate the complexity in assessing the relative importance of import and export dynamics at the heart of this book. The notion is too reductive to be useful. What we can absolutely say for certain is that specificity matters. The importance of these dynamics will differ from case to case and behaviour to behaviour. To sum this up, we look at the case of Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab. On 25th December 2009, Abdulmutallab boarded Northwest Airlines Flight 253 from Amsterdam to Detroit. He ignited an incendiary device shortly before arrival in Detroit in an attempt to destroy the plane and 289 individuals on board. Fortunately, there were no fatalities or serious injuries. Abdulmutallab reportedly became very pious in his religion during his teenage years in Nigeria. He spent his free time reading the Quran and earned the nickname 'Alfa'. Over 300 internet postings under the handle 'farouk1986' were identified. Abdulmutallab spoke of love, his future ambitions, and his inner struggle between liberalism and extremist as a devout Muslim. In January 2005, Abdulmutallab confessed:

"I am in a situation where I do not have a friend. I have no one to speak too, no one to consult, no one to support me and I feel depressed and lonely. I do not know what to do and then I think this loneliness leads me to other problems...I get lonely sometimes because I have never found a true Muslim friend" (Cited in Gill, 2015: 70).

Abdulmutallab's postings display his gradual ideological changes towards more devout Islamic opinions and practices and display his views of violence and extremism, without specific mention of his own choice to follow such behaviours. However, when Abdulmutallab enrolled in mechanical engineering at University College London in September 2005, his religious beliefs began attracting attention. Abdulmutallab became head of the campus branch of the Islamic Society in 2006, inviting controversial speakers and former Guantanamo Bay inmates to attend functions. He regularly attended prayers at London Mosques monitored by the British security services. He was seen 'reaching out' to known extremists and was noted as being 'on

⁷⁹ Pantucci, *We Love Death As You Love Life*: Britain's Suburban Terrorists, pp. 157

⁸⁰ Pantucci, *We Love Death As You Love Life*: Britain's Suburban Terrorists, pp. 86

⁸¹ Pantucci, *We Love Death As You Love Life*: Britain's Suburban Terrorists, pp. 100

the periphery' of various investigations. He was not, however, considered a threat by British counterintelligence.

In June 2008, Abdulmutallab graduated and was granted a multiple entry tourist visa to the United States. The following January, Abdulmutallab enrolled at the University of Wollongong, Dubai, to study a business course. In August 2009, Abdulmutallab dropped out and travelled to Yemen, studying at the Sana's Institute for Arabic Language. At this time Abdulmutallab attempted to return to England, but his student visa request was refused. Abdulmutallab later explained that he travelled to Yemen to meet radical Imam Anwar al-Awlaki, after studying his preachings. Whilst attending a Mosque in Yemen, Abdulmutallab was introduced to 'Abu-Tarak', who was allegedly a member of Al-Qaeda, and during daily discussions, they discussed various ways to attack the U.S. In October 2009, Abdulmutallab travelled to the Shabwa Province and attended an Al-Qaeda training camp, purportedly under the direction of al-Awlaki. In November 2009, Abdulmutallab agreed to become involved in an aerial martyrdom attack against the U.S. It was also during this time that Abdulmutallab contacted his parents and hinted at his involvement in a movement. His father contacted CIA officials at the United States embassy in Nigeria, expressing concerns for his son. Abdulmutallab claimed to have met the bomb maker, a Saudi Arabian individual, whilst in Yemen. The device, consisting of Pentaerythritol Tetranitrate (PEIN) and Triacetone Triperoxide (TATP), weighed approximately 200g. The device had no metal parts, and therefore, would not alert airport security. Detonation was to be achieved by injecting liquid acid into the PEIN and TATP at a time of choosing. The device was designed to be part of Abdulmutallab's underwear. Prior to leaving Yemen, Abdulmutallab recorded a video. The video showed Abdulmutallab at a desert training camp shooting at targets including a Jewish star, the British Union Jack flag, and the initials 'UN'.

In Abdulmutallab, we have an example of an individual who, prior to being in the U.K., displayed a lot of attitudinal affinity with the jihadi cause, but little of the propensity or capability that was needed. In the U.K., his initial social isolation in a new country led to him developing social networks in these local milieus. The social networks led to new ties in other countries and strong links with those engaged in violence. These links offered him the direction and capability for violence. All of this occurred as a chain of behaviours. The importance of foreign or domestic influences ebbed and weaned depending upon what phase of the sequence he was in. Ultimately, each acted as a force multiplier making the next stage more likely. As we noted at the outset of this chapter, *there is no simple answer and the ratio of whether a behaviour or event was primarily influenced by foreign or domestic sources is likely to vary from case to case*. The Abdulmutallab case demonstrates it is also likely to vary within a single case.

Whilst the above may hold true for most, if not all, of the countries examined in this book, there are some features of the United Kingdom's experience which may hold it as an outlier in some respects. Its experience as a colonial power and home to multiple iterations of immigration flow into the country immediately sets it apart. More specifically related to terrorism however, is the fact it is widely acknowledged that the United Kingdom's engagement in Iraq elevated the terror threat domestically. A former head of MI5 is on record as stating that these actions "undoubtedly increased" the terror threat and that within a year of the invasion, MI5 was "swamped" with investigative leads. She continued: "What Iraq did was produce fresh impetus on people prepared to engage in terrorism...The Iraq war heightened the extremist view that the West was trying to bring down Islam. We gave Bin Laden his jihad" (<https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-politics-10693001>).

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