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Terrorism Where Terror Is Not: Australian and New Zealand Terrorism Compared

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ABSTRACT

Despite many commonalities in national security priorities, Australia and New Zealand approach the threat of terrorism quite differently. Both had twentieth-century manifestations of domestic terrorism which were generally downplayed. The emergence of jihadist-inspired threats globally have affected Australia much more than New Zealand, and Australian counterterrorism strategy has developed significantly since 9/11. New Zealand has watched global events so far untouched by any jihadist threat, and has implemented few effective counterterrorism measures. The reasons for the differing experience, it is contended here, are the varying historical perceptions of threat, and consequent differing approaches each country has taken to mitigate perceived threat.

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At a glance, New Zealand has been largely free of terrorism historically. It would appear that even the rapid developments in global terrorism since 9/11 have had no impact. This is in contrast to Australia, where terrorism was evident in the later twentieth century and much more obvious after 9/11. This article explores the similarities and differences between the two countries in relation to their experience of terrorism. It looks first at the phenomenon of domestic terrorism in Australia and New Zealand in the twentieth century—a period where similar domestic stimuli actually resulted in similar patterns of terrorism in both countries. International terrorism is then discussed, and here some differences will be seen to emerge in scale and frequency. Then the discussion will move onto the twenty-first century, where a significant divergence between the two countries has become noticeable—a *jihadist* terrorist threat has emerged in Australia, but not in New Zealand where the official terrorism alert level remains “low.” Key reasons for this divergence are posited here as differing geographical locations and perceptions of threat, which in turn led to certain policy directions about how best to mitigate risks. The outcome has been the emergence of a terrorism risk for Australia that, to date at least, has not been replicated in New Zealand.

Ideally this article would approach terrorism in each country the same way. However, while there is a considerable span of sound scholarship on terrorism in Australia, including its historical experience, New Zealand is lacking in academic attention on this topic. The framework used here will compare each type of terrorism in both countries before and after

9/11, but considerably more detail will be given to New Zealand events because there is no published body of knowledge with which to refer, to draw out the comparison between the two countries.

Australian Domestic Terrorism

Recent Australian scholarship has cast considerable light onto historical manifestations of political violence and terrorism reaching back to the nineteenth century. Stuart Koschade pioneered the notion of three specific Australian waves of historical terrorism. He noted that while Australia had very few instances of domestic political violence, these events occurred in a context of international terrorism in the 1960s and 1970s.¹ Sean Brawley and Ian Shaw have since identified more specific iterations of terrorism in Australia's history.² Terrorist events in Australia since about 1970 have involved groups using terror tactics, stimulated in part by prevailing international influences, but focused on issues in or affecting Australia. All of these authors note the development of strong internal dissent over the Vietnam War, national service and nuclear issues as prompts to "low scale, zero casualty terrorism" in the 1970s.³ A total of 176 individual incidents were documented by the Australian Security Intelligence Organisation (ASIO) occurring between 1969 and 1972, a quarter of which were claimed by various groups—the remainder going unclaimed by their perpetrators.⁴ These perpetrators used the tactics of terrorism, dwelt in the aura of terror created by international terrorism, but at the same time, they often lacked the confidence or expected support to reveal who they were.

Australian attacks were predominantly bombings, or threats of violence targeting government buildings or vehicles, police stations, military sites, as well individuals or assets associated with foreign embassies, political parties, or businesses related to any of the former. The attacks were prompted by mainly left-wing political causes. If arrests were made, criminal charges followed (as no terrorism legislated existed) but many incidents were not solved. Few if any casualties were ever inflicted and no one was killed; many incidents were not reported in the media and downplayed for political or operational reasons. This lack of exposure contributed to a belief, prevailing into the twenty-first century, that domestic terrorism did not exist in Australia.⁵

New Zealand Domestic Terrorism

By comparison New Zealand's nineteenth-century experience of political violence encompassed land and race issues resulting in open warfare, but little of it has ever been depicted as involving terrorism. This is not to say terrorism was absent in that century, and it remains a worthy area for analysis for a larger project than this. For the twentieth century there is no scholarship on the subject, and no attempt yet by anyone to try and determine the existence of waves or iterations of historical terrorism that might have existed in New Zealand. In fact, it is safe to assert that most New Zealanders would regard terrorism as absent almost entirely from the twentieth century—except for the *Rainbow Warrior* affair in 1985. Prior to the work of the historians noted above, this would have once aptly described Australia too.

Prior to 1969 there appears to have been little twentieth-century terrorism. The exceptions occurred during industrial unrest often involving miners. There was a bombing in 1913 at Denniston in the South Island during the strikes that occurred that year.⁶ Amid industrial

unrest in March 1951 six dynamite charges were laid on a railway bridge near Huntly and detonated—prior to a train carrying 40 miners crossing over it.⁷ The bridge was damaged but not destroyed and no one was hurt, although investigations subsequently revealed enough explosive had been used to destroy the bridge—had it been more expertly placed.⁸ The event was widely reported and Prime Minister Sydney Holland publicly described the event as “a diabolical act of sabotage” and “an infamous act of terrorism.”⁹ It is not clear if the perpetrators were ever found, despite Holland announcing that the full resources of the state would be employed to find the culprits, and “extensive enquiries” being made at the time.¹⁰

Coinciding with a similar events in Australia during the Vietnam War, there was a distinct rise in bombings in New Zealand from 1969. The Auckland High Court was bombed in 1970 and 1972, the second occasion coming seven days after another bomb exploded outside a central city hotel in Auckland just before closing time.¹¹ No claim of responsibility was made for these incidents but the coincidence with anti-Vietnam War protest is suggestive. A clearer motive is apparent for the gelignite bomb discovered near the U.S. military support headquarters in Christchurch in March 1973, following a protest by the Committee Against Foreign Military Activities in New Zealand.¹²

In June 1972 the French Airline UTA office in Auckland was firebombed and entirely gutted, coinciding with a planned French nuclear test in the South Pacific.¹³ Local antinuclear groups distanced themselves from this action.¹⁴ The same month security guards were placed on Air New Zealand flights to Tahiti after threats were received to hijack planes destined for French territories in the Pacific.¹⁵ No casualties resulted from any of these incidents and threats were not acted on. New Zealand’s antinuclear activism was prompted by French testing in its Pacific territories which were considered by some as “right next door” to New Zealand.¹⁶ By the time the *Rainbow Warrior* was bombed in 1985, there had been a long established protest movement against French nuclear testing at Mururoa Atoll.

On 14 May 1973 a bomb exploded outside the South African Consulate in Wellington, an event that went unreported in the main Wellington newspaper, *The Dominion*—although a report comprising just over 70 words appeared in the Auckland-based *New Zealand Herald*.¹⁷ Media attention was given to bombing incidents but it could be sparse, and as with the 1973 case, often confined to one report with no detail given to the progress of investigations subsequently.

The targeting of the South African Consulate came amid rising public concern and growing protest over sporting contacts with South Africa. Local rugby union buildings were targeted intermittently with bombs or fire bombs throughout the 1970s as the national rugby teams of each nation continued to play each other. The 1981 Springbok rugby tour of New Zealand prompted unprecedented protests. The use of realistic bomb threats was contemplated as a deliberate tactic by protest movements to stretch police resources at that time.¹⁸ International controversy regarding contacts with South Africa coincided with growing dissent over New Zealand’s own race relations which grew after 1970. Public concern was expressed by Prime Minister Robert Muldoon in 1977 over suspicions that a number of Maori activists had gone to Cuba to train in “subversive activities.”¹⁹

In 1982 a bomb exploded in the foyer of the Police Computer Centre located in Wanganui—a small provincial city about 200 kilometers from the capital, Wellington. The bomb was exploded by an anarchist, Neil Roberts, who killed himself at the same time. Roberts was involved in the punk scene, had been involved in the 1981 Springbok Tour protests, and had some minor criminal convictions. He spoke openly of killing himself and of taking

the Computer Centre or Parliament Buildings “with him.”²⁰ His action against the Wanganui Computer Centre was a protest against the computerization of police records occurring at the time. Expert analysis of the scene afterward concluded Roberts’s understanding of explosives was “extremely limited,” but his attack was carefully planned and he was clearly determined to carry it out.²¹

On 27 March 1984 a bomb in a suitcase exploded inside the Trade’s Hall building in Wellington, the capital city. The suitcase was left in a corridor early in the morning and remained undisturbed until later in the afternoon the caretaker—Ernie Abbott (who lived in the building)—went to move it. As he did so, the bomb detonated and killed him.²² The Hall was a Union/Labour hub and had a longstanding association with workers’ rights movements and the leadership of various strikes and protests. This strongly suggests an anti-Labour “political” motive on the part of the bomber.²³ The bomber clearly knew what he was doing, depositing a motion-sensitive bomb in a public place without being detected. The bomber has not been identified and the file remains open.

New Zealand’s Full Gospel Mission

It is not clear if a discussion of New Zealand’s Full Gospel Mission sect belongs in this article, or if there are any parallels to it in Australia. But in the current international environment of religiously prompted terrorism, with apocalyptic expectations, it is appropriate to at least consider its place here. In 1977 police raids on North Canterbury, Lower Hutt, and Palmerston North properties of a New Zealand millennial Christian sect—the Full Gospel Mission—netted almost 200 firearms, 50,000 rounds of ammunition, and quantities of gun powder. This prompted a very rare public statement by the head of the New Zealand Security Intelligence Service (NZSIS) regarding his concern about the amount of firearms the sect had acquired.²⁴ The sect was training its members in military-style tactics.²⁵ It had a number of serving military personnel as members.²⁶

The sect appears to have reverted back to acquiring and hiding firearms after the 1977 intervention. The Full Gospel Mission’s North Canterbury property was the subject of more police search warrants a decade later, but a fault with the warrants led to a delay at the point of execution; it is suspected caches of arms were removed and buried before new warrants were executed.²⁷ If they indeed existed, they have never been found. No charges followed the 1987 warrants and the sect disintegrated subsequently after the death of its leader, Douglas Metcalf, who believed he was the reincarnation of Jesus Christ and that the Second Coming was imminent. A former member of the sect observed subsequently that the police action toward the Full Gospel Mission probably averted a Waco-style incident.²⁸

International Terrorism In Australia

In order to better illustrate the comparison between Australia and New Zealand’s domestic terrorism in the later part of the twentieth century, it is worth first considering how international terrorism manifest itself in both countries in the same period. The Australian government’s 2010 Counter-Terrorism White Paper listed five key terrorist events occurring in Australia prior to 2001:

- Yugoslav Trade Agency bombing,
- Hilton bombing,

- assassination of the Turkish consul-general,
- Israeli Consulate bombing, and the
- Turkish Consulate bombing.²⁹

This list is not asserted as exhaustive, but for the purposes of drawing comparisons with New Zealand's experience it will suffice. In 1972 the Yugoslav General Trade Agency in Sydney was bombed, causing injuries to 16 people. The perpetrators were Croatian (Ustashi) separatists opposed to the Tito-led socialist regime in Yugoslavia. This bombing was the most significant attack carried out by an Ustashi group but they had been responsible for a number of others previously.³⁰ The 1978 bombing of the Sydney Hilton Hotel, occurred at a time it was hosting the Commonwealth Heads of Government Regional Meeting. A bomb was placed in a rubbish tin outside the hotel and exploded when rubbish collectors emptied the bin. Two men associated with Ananda Marga were eventually convicted for planting the bomb, although one was subsequently acquitted on appeal.³¹ Ananda Marga was a religious sect of Indian origin, whose leader had been arrested in India in 1971 and the sect itself banned in 1975. Chapters of the sect had emerged around the world by this time. Ananda Marga's first act of political violence outside of India occurred in 1975—in New Zealand (to be discussed below).

In 1982 two car bombs, detonated four hours apart, targeted the Israeli Consulate and a Jewish football and social club in Sydney. No one was killed in either blast, but three people were injured. One person was apprehended at the time in connection with the incident, but he was not prosecuted. The attack was carried out by the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, using members coming to Australia connecting with established networks to carry it out.³² However, limited progress was made in identifying any of the perpetrators. In 2012 the investigation into the incident was re-opened with a number of persons of interest identified, still with no conclusive result.³³

The 1980 assassination of the Turkish consul-general in Sydney and the 1986 bombing of the Turkish consulate in Melbourne were the actions of Justice Commandos for the Armenian Genocide (JCAG), an Armenian terrorist group holding historic grievances against Turkey. Again JCAG members from outside Australia are thought to have used local support to carry out the assassination. No one was identified for the assassination, but two perpetrators were identified for the bombing, one due to his being killed when he accidentally detonated the bomb, the other a Lebanese-born Armenian with Australian citizenship was prosecuted.³⁴

New Zealand's International Terrorism

While clearly domestic terrorism occurred in New Zealand in the early 1970s, it was the middle of the decade before international terrorism had an impact. In October 1975, following the banning of the Ananda Marga sect in India, four members of this sect were arrested in New Zealand and charged with kidnapping a police officer, attempting to steal explosives from a quarry, and conspiring to blow up the Indian High Commission in Wellington.³⁵ Three of the four were convicted on these charges, including its New Zealand leader, Cocilio Fabrizio.³⁶ The three received prison sentences and Fabrizio and another non-New Zealand citizen were subsequently deported. Fabrizio maintained an openly militant attitude in prison and was visited by a number of Ananda Marga members during his two-year prison term.³⁷

This sect was also suspected to be involved in a second plot that year to kidnap the New Zealand prime minister, although nothing came of it.³⁸ These two plots were the first attempted acts of violence by Ananda Marga outside of India. The sect subsequently “undertook terrorist attacks against diplomatic targets and airlines and airports around the world.”³⁹ It was thought in Wellington to have some 600 members in Australia and New Zealand in the late 1970s, 40–50 of whom were considered active in New Zealand.⁴⁰ Ananda Marga members moved freely between the two countries, with New Zealanders attending retreats in Australia, and “it has been alleged but not substantiated that discussions on the use of explosives took place at one of those retreats.”⁴¹ Indeed, it was observed later in 1975 that the October events in Wellington occurred shortly after a number of New Zealanders had attended an Ananda Marga meeting in North Sydney in September.⁴² More significantly, these events in 1975 would appear to be the first acts of international terrorism attempted in New Zealand.⁴³ The Indian High Commission incident received some publicity at the time but even so, it is all but forgotten in New Zealand now.⁴⁴

In 1985 French Secret Service agents bombed the *Rainbow Warrior* in Auckland Harbour. This attack was aimed at Greenpeace’s antinuclear testing campaign. Two bombs were placed by combat divers on the vessel; both exploded and killed a crew member. On the face of it, New Zealand appears to have been chosen because that was where the vessel was docked prior to leaving for a protest at the French nuclear test site Moruroa Atoll.⁴⁵ The intention was to prevent the planned protest going ahead by sinking the *Rainbow Warrior*—the protest fleet’s flagship.⁴⁶ It has been contended by G.P. Taylor that New Zealand was also opposed to the French presence in the Pacific, and this may have been a factor in the French decision to bomb the vessel in Auckland.⁴⁷ In any event, two of the agents involved were apprehended, and subsequently convicted of manslaughter. At their sentencing the Judge expressed his view that their actions “may well fall within the definition of terrorist activity.”⁴⁸ New Zealand had no terrorism legislation at the time.

Comparisons Considered

This brief survey of incidents from the late 1960s is sufficient to notice themes emerging in Australia and New Zealand. Both countries experienced domestic terrorism, exhibited mostly in actual, threatened, or attempted bombings, most often resulting in no fatalities. Many went unclaimed—suggesting fringes of certain groups were committing them, not confident of support from their own groups or from the wider community. Certainly there is evidence in New Zealand of the antinuclear movement distancing itself from violent events. Many of these events were unsolved, or if solved, very little publicity was given in either country to the fact that they were. Neither country maintained terrorism legislation in the 1960s or 1970s, prosecutions that were undertaken involved normal criminal charges and public consciousness of terrorism remained low—with collective memories of various events quickly fading.

Brawley notes the effect of left-wing American stimuli influencing Australian domestic terrorism, and this is certainly noticeable in acts motivated by opposition to New Zealand’s involvement in the Vietnam War. Both countries experienced terrorism as a result of antinuclear sentiment, with atomic research being a key prompt in Australian attacks and some concern over French nuclear testing obvious in the firebombing of the French consulate in Perth in the 1990s. New Zealand’s particular brand of antinuclear activism grew much more

from acute perceptions of its nearness to French territories, not having any research or testing program of its own. Controversy over the Apartheid regime in South Africa touched nerves that were increasingly raw in New Zealand from contention emerging in the 1970s over the Treaty of Waitangi and Pakeha-Maori race relations.

When international terrorism emerged in Australia in the 1970s it caused injuries and deaths, unlike domestic attacks. It was sectarian in nature, with extremist local migrant groups, or outsiders entering Australia—connecting with migrant extremist support—attacking targets associated with foreign governments they were opposed to. These attacks were more numerous, more damaging and more deadly than international terrorist events in New Zealand. Apart from the Ananda Marga attempts in 1975—in which trans-Tasman connections were apparent—international terrorist events in Australia had no parallel in, or direct connection with, New Zealand. The range of terrorist groups operating in Australia was not reflected in New Zealand. The bombing of the *Rainbow Warrior* in 1985—while commonly referred to as an international terrorist act—was a highly unusual one, a foreign government, on friendly soil, attacking a nongovernmental organization (NGO). While strong similarities exist between Australia and New Zealand domestic terrorism, there are noticeable differences in international terrorist events in each country during the 1970s and 1980s.

Australia first, and then New Zealand—started to increase attention to counterterrorism efforts during the 1970s, but they were tentative steps. Neither country had specific terrorism legislation; both relied on their criminal codes to investigate and prosecute acts of terrorism. Both had existing national intelligence organizations and terrorism became a concern for them, but Cold War national security priorities predominated. Seminal events prompted specific changes—the emergence of the Australian Federal Police following the 1978 Hilton bombing, and New Zealand's International Terrorism (Emergency Powers) Act in 1987 in the wake of the *Rainbow Warrior* bombing, but terrorism remained in the background rather than the forefront of national security priorities. The end of the Cold War started to alter these priorities, the nature of terrorism in Australia began to evolve and new legislative changes in 1995 set the scene for the new millennium. Always with less frequent events and those more likely to be domestically oriented, New Zealand did not follow Australia's experience of terrorism in the 1990s or beyond, and two diverged noticeably in the twenty-first century.

Terrorism Post-9/11: Australia

Since 2000 Australia's internal security landscape has developed significantly, involving Al Qaeda inspired and directed plots, focusing on Israeli targets in Australia during 2000, and Sydney's electricity grid in 2003.⁴⁹ The success of efforts to disrupt the communication and connection between Australian groups and external *Jihadist* organizations led to a period after 2003 notable for the emergence of solely home-grown *jihadist* threats in Australia.⁵⁰ Australia successfully disrupted terror plots as a result of Operations Pendennis in Sydney (2005–06) and Neath (2009). Both were locally inspired plots, but in each case a number of those involved had prior connections and experience with Al Qaeda and Al-Shabab.⁵¹ Numbers of those involved had traveled to Afghanistan, Pakistan, and other places prior to 9/11, and then after the U.S. invasion of Iraq to less noticeable countries such as Somalia and

Lebanon.⁵² Importantly trials have been held, convictions for defined terrorist offenses obtained and evidence subject to public and academic scrutiny.

Between 120–250 Australians appear to have traveled to fight in Syria and Iraq,⁵³ and others are thought to be with *jihadi* groups in Somalia and Yemen.⁵⁴ Perhaps as many as 800 Australians have been prevented from leaving the country to join foreign fighters in the Middle East.⁵⁵ A significant proportion of the actors concerned in the Operation Pendennis plot had traveled to Lebanon, many being of Lebanese descent or having other close connections there.⁵⁶ Like the United States and Europe, Australia has experienced sole-actor events from 2014—involving individuals with no operational links to external *jihadi* groups.

The clear sectarian theme previously evident as a stimulus for a number of terrorist events in Australia evident prior to 2000 has been overshadowed by *ihadism* as the main prompt for terrorist activity since. This is in line with international experience in which many older style terrorist organizations have faded in the face of the indiscriminate and ruthless violence exhibited by *jihadi* groups.⁵⁷

Australia's global footprint is much larger than New Zealand's; 110 Australians were killed in the 9/11 attacks in 2001,⁵⁸ and 88 Australians were killed in the Bali bombings in 2002.⁵⁹ Australia led the intervention in Indonesia-controlled East Timor in 1999, contributed to Operation Enduring Freedom in 2001 and provided combat forces for the invasion of Iraq in 2003 (when many Western countries including New Zealand did not). Australia was declared a target by Osama bin Laden in 2001, citing its role in East Timor (separating it from Muslim Indonesia). Both bin Laden and al-Zawahiri subsequently reiterated Australia's status as a target.⁶⁰ While there may be varying assessments on what Australia's strategic significance is as a target for Al Qaeda, ISIS or other *jihadi* groups, Australia has nevertheless presented a large enough profile to attract externally and locally driven attacks from them since 2000.

Australia's awareness of terrorism as a threat has increased significantly since legislative changes were made in 1995. Between 2001 and 2014 there were over 60 separate terrorism law changes in Australia, which have defined a range of new offenses.⁶¹ Recent changes include offenses of “advocating” terrorism and traveling to areas where terrorist groups are fighting.⁶²

Australia's terrorism alert level was raised to “high” in September 2014.⁶³ There have been periodic reviews of counterterrorism policy and practice.⁶⁴ Public advertisements are run on Australian television alerting the general public to report possible terrorist concerns or behavior. There have been significant increases in government spending in the security sector as it relates to terrorism—one estimate asserts over \$15b between 2001 and 2010 has been spent on the “War of Terror” and security and intelligence budgets and staff continue to expand.⁶⁵ The nature of many of Australia's legislative changes and levels of expenditure has led to criticism. It has been alleged that the erosion of civil liberties under antiterrorist legislation has been greater in Australia than in countries that face more significant terrorist threats.⁶⁶ Even so, a July 2016 ANU survey on Australian attitudes to national security found 46% of those polled did not think government counterterrorist measures had gone far enough to adequately protect the country.⁶⁷

Post-9/11: New Zealand's Domestic “Terrorism”?

New Zealand's post-2000 experience has not seen the same evolution in terrorism as Australia, and not surprisingly New Zealand's response to terrorism has been muted by

comparison. Indeed discussing terrorism is not a straight forward matter in relation to New Zealand, partly as a result of its peculiar legislation.

Following the 9/11 attacks New Zealand enacted the Terrorism Suppression Act 2002. This Act remained untested until the New Zealand Police evoked it following a lengthy surveillance operation of a small group of activists running a series of camps in the Urewera Forest, in the central North Island. Over 30 firearms had been illegally acquired by the group, Molotov cocktails were used, and a surveillance operation ongoing since 2005 had recorded intentions expressed to assassinate various political figures as well as carry out attacks against people and infrastructure.⁶⁸ Multiple arrests were made by police under “Operation Eight” in October 2007, but subsequently no charges were laid under the Suppression of Terrorism Act. On reviewing the evidence, the solicitor-general ruled that the Act was “incoherent and unworkable,” and could not be applied to the circumstances the police had observed.⁶⁹ Crimes Act and Arms Act charges were laid against four of those arrested, but the rest were released without charge—and, unlike a number of Australian cases, a considerable body of evidence collected by police was unable to be publicly aired. The question remains—was this terrorism or not? Public commentary after the solicitor-general’s decision contained a large measure of criticism of police—police racism and incompetence—but critically, much of the evidence they based their actions on has not been made available for public, legal, or academic scrutiny.

The Suppression of Terrorism Act has not been overhauled or amended in any significant way since and New Zealand remained in 2016 without any effective terrorism legislation. This lack of an effective state definition complicates any discussion of terrorism in New Zealand. Whatever is made of the evidence collected in Operation Eight, however, there was nothing publicly available that showed any connection with *jihadist* influences and the group’s activities were home-grown and locally focused.

In 2014 a police investigation was launched following letters received by major primary producer groups containing milk powder laced with 1080 poison. The letters contained a threat to contaminate baby formula—widely used throughout New Zealand and exported to a number of overseas destinations—unless the New Zealand government ceased the use of 1080 as a pest control agent in forest and conservation lands. The action was publicly described as terrorism by Prime Minister John Key and others,⁷⁰ and the threat was estimated to have cost the country \$37 million.⁷¹ However, the subsequent arrest of an individual by police was not followed by any terrorist related charges, instead he was prosecuted for criminal blackmail—New Zealand Police remain unlikely to consider using the Suppression of Terrorism Act again after the Operation Eight experience. A 60-year-old male was charged and convicted of criminal blackmail in 2016—the Chief High Court Judge observing that it “near was the most serious case of its kind.”⁷² One journalist covering the case, observed that his eight-year prison sentence was “well justified punishment for what was virtually an act of terrorism.”⁷³ The use of 1080 poison has been and remains controversial, is a particularly New Zealand issue and once again, no external stimulus prompted this event.

International Terrorism and New Zealand

Neither of the events discussed above had an external stimulus, but global events have had an impact on New Zealand. The Director of the NZSIS, Rebecca Kitteridge, indicated in 2015 that between 30–40 people were of concern to the NZSIS in New Zealand for a range

of activities. These included an expressed interest in inciting or encouraging radicalization, funding or facilitating others to travel to warzones overseas, as well as “people who are interested in planning attacks in New Zealand and who are actively endeavouring to do that.”⁷⁴ Kitteridge noted that, overall, these comprised a small number of people at different locations around New Zealand.⁷⁵ Kitteridge publicly stated in June 2016 that there were now a higher proportion of individuals of concern to the NZSIS than there were 18 months ago.⁷⁶ The actual figure was not given, although it has been surmised at around 70;⁷⁷ none of these individuals of concern appear yet to have moved to carry out any sort of terrorist attack in New Zealand.

Some New Zealanders have traveled to Middle East warzones—estimates vary that between 6 and 12 have done so⁷⁸—and at least two have been killed.⁷⁹ While foreign fighters with ISIS and other groups are a staple subject covered by a range of academic and journalistic commentary—New Zealanders seldom if ever feature in it. Very recently New Zealand laid charges against two males with possessing and disseminating objectionable material—the graphically violent *jihadi* videos *Flames of War* and *Massacre of the Shias*.⁸⁰ Both men were convicted, one receiving a prison term—the Judge was at pains to stress that they were not terrorism charges. Crown prosecutors pointed out that charges eventually laid against the two men were normally laid against sex offenders, and that there was no precedent for them used being used in a case such as this.⁸¹ Police were apparently unwilling to test the vagaries of the Suppression of Terrorism Act again. New Zealand continues to rely on its criminal legislation alone for these types of offenses because its terrorism legislation cannot be effectively applied.

The country’s small size continues to be an advantage in relation to externally driven or inspired extremism. Only two New Zealanders died in the 9/11 attacks and one in Bali, indicating much less exposure to major events of this kind. New Zealand was involved in East Timor in 1999, committed combat troops as well as police to Afghanistan in 2003, and currently has troops in a training role at Taji, north of Baghdad, to support the Iraqi army against ISIS. New Zealand has also been a long-time member of the United Nations contingent in the Sinai. New Zealand, however, has carried these deployments often in the shadow of others—usually Australia, managing to do enough to be positively noticed by friends as a contributor, but apparently not enough to be noticed negatively by those who could be enemies.⁸² There has been no naming of New Zealand specifically as a target by any *jihadi* group; the appearance of the New Zealand flag among others in an ISIS video as part of the “global coalition” in 2015 appears to be the only time New Zealand has been specifically identified in this respect.⁸³ In 2015 New Zealand’s national threat level was raised from “Very Low” to “Low”—the distinction is vague—from a terrorist threat being considered “unlikely” to “possible but not expected.” Despite all recent developments, and with *jihadism* at least noticeable in recent prosecutions, no *jihadi*-inspired act has occurred in New Zealand.

Australia has state and federal police jurisdictions, separate internal and external intelligence agencies, as well as other law enforcement agencies involved in counterterrorism. Significant additional resources have been put into all of these agencies for counterterrorism purposes since 9/11. It would be difficult, however, to make any valid comparison with New Zealand, which has one national police force, one main intelligence agency (NZSIS), and various other law enforcement and defense groups involved in some measure of counterterrorism. While the NZSIS staff and budget have expanded significantly since 9/11, NZ Police

numbers have not, and its budget did not increase for a five-year period from 2009. A formal NZ Police National Security Group has only just been formed in 2016.⁸⁴ New Zealand's awareness of terrorism and perceptions of terrorist threat remain significantly less than Australia.

Late in 2014 New Zealand was prompted by international events to pass legislation to deal with foreign fighters, those leaving the country to fight with ISIS and other groups in Iraq and Syria. The Countering Terrorist Fighters Bill amended three other Acts—but did not itself become a separate piece of legislation.⁸⁵ The amendments allowed for passports of those suspected of traveling to war zones to be temporarily suspended or canceled for up to three years. Added intelligence and information sharing between police and the NZSIS was allowed for, as was a provision for short-term (24 hours) surveillance by the NZSIS, without a warrant, of those suspected of wanting to travel to fight.⁸⁶ However, the Bill did not make it illegal to leave the country to do so, nor did it offer any definition of who might constitute a “foreign fighter”—the government opting to rely on the definition of terrorism under the Suppression of Terrorism Act 2002, which, as has already been discussed, is highly problematic.⁸⁷ What to do with any New Zealanders returning from war zones remains an unaddressed issue, and it will be compounded by the lack of any offense having been committed by the act of going in the first place.⁸⁸ The Suppression of Terrorist Act could not apply to domestic circumstances observed by police in 2007—it is unclear how it will apply to actions of individual New Zealanders currently going largely unobserved on the other side of the world. If critics assert Australia's response to terrorism has gone several steps too far—New Zealand's response to the rising challenge of global terrorism arguably has not gone far enough.

Why the Divergence?

The source of the divergence between Australia and New Zealand's experience of terrorism emanates from the fact that, despite having much in common, the two countries are geographically quite distinct and distant. This has led in turn to key differences in Australia and New Zealand's perceptions of external threat, and ultimately to different policy decisions that have influenced the vulnerabilities to international terrorism.

Australia's geographical location being much closer to Asia than New Zealand meant that 1939–1945 wartime insecurity, while real for both countries, was much more acute for Australians than New Zealanders.⁸⁹ This prompted postwar policies aimed at encouraging immigration in a deliberate effort to boost the population to ensure sufficient human resources were available to meet any future external security threat. Consequently Australia's population has been boosted by over 5 million immigrants since the Second World War (a figure greater than New Zealand's current population), and while it deliberately maintained a “White Australia” policy until the 1970s, considerable ethnic diversity resulted from migrants from Eastern European and Mediterranean countries, and many others after the policy was abandoned. Some of these groups had their own deeply divided ethnic and political issues—and sufficient grievances relating to them appear to have been imported into Australia to fuel the various incidents that occurred. When Australia considered possible influences for terrorist activity there in the early 1970s, it identified Sectarian Yugoslav and Arab–Israeli influences as the main sources, but there were a number of others.⁹⁰

New Zealand on the other hand had a different postwar experience. New Zealand's distance even from Australia did not remove the perception of threat during or after the Second World War, but the threat was not felt as acutely after war ended. New Zealand did not see any immediate need to boost its population. New Zealand took numbers of displaced persons after 1945 and sought immigrants during the economic boom of the 1950s and at other times when skill or labor requirements dictated. However, New Zealand did not seek migrants on anywhere near the scale Australia did, and while it did not openly promulgate a "White New Zealand" policy, in reality it practiced a very restrictive immigration policy with few exceptions. During the twentieth century New Zealand wanted people with core skills, but used language tests and permit systems to quietly screen out the bulk of non-European would-be migrants.⁹¹ New Zealand also frequently capped migration of even European ethnic groups when they reached more than a few thousand people.⁹² As a result migrant communities that existed in New Zealand were in themselves vastly smaller, less different one to another than in Australia and forced by their small size to assimilate. New Zealand therefore prevented diversification in its population, minimizing the importation of sectarian conflicts or political sympathies that might be inflamed by overseas events. This approach was explained by the minister of Immigration to Parliament in 1964 as being quite a deliberate limiting of ethnic groups to avoid "the risk of creating racial frictions and tensions in our country."⁹³ It was an approach that would continue until effectively the mid-1980s and by the end of the twentieth century New Zealand's population of 4 million (Australia's population in 1901) was far smaller, much less diverse and far less likely to be affected by imported sectarian issues that might result in violence.

Lacking Australia's diversity, it is hardly surprising that sectarian causes evident there in the twentieth century were not replicated in New Zealand. Anti-Yugoslav and anti-Turkish causes have been referred to already as noticeable in Australian terrorism in the 1970s and 1980s. By comparison there were fewer than a thousand Turkish people living in New Zealand recorded in the 1976 census, and their population still had not exceeded one thousand in the most recent census.⁹⁴ Turkey did not have an embassy in New Zealand before 1992. An estimated 68,000 Yugoslavs entered Australia between 1945 and 1967 in the wake of significant political and ethnic disruption in Yugoslavia.⁹⁵ New Zealand's Yugoslav population by comparison numbered less than 3,000 people in 1951, just over 3,600 in 1976, declining to 2,600 in 2001.⁹⁶ New Zealand's Police Special Branch (the forerunner to the NZSIS) monitored the existence of a Macedonian Revolutionary Organisation in New Zealand from 1951; by 1954 it noted the movement was "almost defunct owing to lack of interest by leaders and members in N.Z." It had previously been observed as having only seven active members!⁹⁷ Groups like this, which might have brought grievances with them (or been susceptible to sectarian tensions arising in their home countries), consequently remained very small. In terms of actual divisions prompting extreme behavior, or the targets available for them to do so, New Zealand ensured it had little of either. Muslim populations in many Western countries have been subject to greater levels of concern from security services since 9/11, often with reported counterproductive results. New Zealand's Muslim population—similar to its ethnic populations in the twentieth century—has never been large, and despite recent significant increases remains less than 50,000.⁹⁸

Not surprisingly, there is little open source evidence of New Zealanders using historic or recent familial or other connections with Afghanistan, Pakistan, Lebanon, Somalia, Yemen, or other locations to engage in jihadist training camps in the 1990s or early 2000s. These

ethnic groups remain small in New Zealand into the twenty-first century, and exploitable connections much less available in comparison to Australia. A good deal of work by Australian researchers has identified the critical importance of close social networks to the recruitment and radicalization of *ihadists* in Australia.⁹⁹ Concerns are growing that these networks may be developing in New Zealand.¹⁰⁰ But the recent case of Amin Mohammed, arrested in Melbourne attempting to travel to Syria, suggests a previous lack of such links to and from New Zealand.¹⁰¹ Mohammed was a refugee who came to New Zealand as a child in 1998 and then subsequently left for Australia. It appears to have been there, that he made the connection with a group which led to his arrest and conviction in 2014.¹⁰² Similarly, a number of New Zealand women reported as leaving for Syria as potential “*ihadi* brides” in 2015, were subsequently revealed as holding New Zealand passports, but actually living in Australia prior to their departure.¹⁰³ The New Zealander Muslim John reportedly killed by a drone strike in 2012 held joint Australian and New Zealand citizenship. A second New Zealander reported killed in 2015 appears to have been living in Europe and likely fostered connections to Syria from there.¹⁰⁴ Mark Taylor, a New Zealander still apparently alive—but whose previous high public profile with Al Nusra in Syria has since vanished, worked for two years in Indonesia before traveling to Syria, via Turkey in mid-2014.¹⁰⁵

Conclusion

Comparing Australian and New Zealand experiences and reactions to terrorism brings some challenges with it. There is significant scholarship on terrorism for the period after 9/11 and increasing academic attention is being given to the historical experience of terrorism in Australia. This is not matched by similar levels of scholarship on New Zealand. Historical assumptions that only very limited terrorist activity has occurred are being reconsidered in Australia, but not in New Zealand. However, the two countries share common historical, social and cultural connections, and the national security interests of both have coincided repeatedly throughout the twentieth century. It is a valid exercise then, to compare and contrast the experience and responses to the rising national security priority of terrorism. When this is done, similarities are evident in Australian and New Zealand twentieth-century domestic terrorism. This mode of terrorism had a lower impact, inflicted few casualties, was often unclaimed, and usually perpetrated by isolated fringes of broader nonviolent protest groups. The response to it by both countries was similar too—each reluctant to acknowledge the presence of a genuine, home-grown, domestically driven terrorist threat, and they dealt with as if it was normal criminal offending. It attracted unexceptional media coverage and in both countries collective memories of domestic terrorism quickly faded.

Differences are more obvious in relation to international terrorism. Australia experienced more of it, it was more deadly and more assertive. New Zealand experienced much less—its size, greater distance and postwar immigration policies led to smaller and deliberately less diverse population growth. New Zealand did not have active or aggrieved groups large enough or with enough support or connections to “old countries” to generate the type of international terrorism Australia experienced after 1970. The two countries did not have terrorist movements that linked up—with the sole exception of Ananda Marga, which appears to have had a small, but dangerous and active following in Australia and New Zealand. Ananda Marga hatched plots in both countries between 1975 and 1978, the most destructive being the Hilton bombing in Sydney.

The emergence of *jihadi* terrorism had a clear and obvious impact on Australia, overshadowing older terrorist groups and militant *jihadi* is evident in several externally driven, as well as home-grown, plots since 9/11. Australia's response to terrorism has been comprehensive—involved huge legislative change, with multiple terrorist offenses proscribed, and massive increases in staff and funding across a range of government organizations. Arguably Australia has gone too far—its response to terrorism having impinged on civil rights to a greater degree than other countries, but if the majority of Australians are unhappy about this, it appears only because they do not believe the state has gone far enough. New Zealand on the other hand, has observed the rise of the global *jihadi* from a distance, although it has been a part of some international moves against it. But with no actual *jihadi* terrorist event occurring on its soil, New Zealand has struggled to legislate effectively with ongoing serious flaws in its terrorist legislation. Such events that might fall into the ambit of terrorism in New Zealand continue to be home-grown and domestically oriented with no external drivers, and they continue to be treated as normal criminal offenses.

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