

The 2016 'Lone Wolf' Tsunami - Is Rapoport's 'Religious Wave' Ending?

Martin J. Gallagher

Police Scotland, gallagher1234@hotmail.co.uk

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.usf.edu/jss>
pp. 60-76

Recommended Citation

Gallagher, Martin J.. "The 2016 'Lone Wolf' Tsunami - Is Rapoport's 'Religious Wave' Ending?." *Journal of Strategic Security* 10, no. 2 (2017) : 60-76.

DOI: <http://doi.org/10.5038/1944-0472.10.2.1584>

Available at: <https://digitalcommons.usf.edu/jss/vol10/iss2/5>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Open Access Journals at Digital Commons @ University of South Florida. It has been accepted for inclusion in Journal of Strategic Security by an authorized editor of Digital Commons @ University of South Florida. For more information, please contact scholarcommons@usf.edu.

The 2016 ‘Lone Wolf’ Tsunami - Is Rapoport’s ‘Religious Wave’ Ending?

Abstract

This article considers recent developments across the western world in the lethality of lone wolf terrorists during 2016 against the contextual framework of Rapoport’s theory regarding the existence of waves of terrorism, mirroring current extreme political and social situations. It highlights the similarities in terms of world conditions coupled to modus operandi that existed during the first wave of terrorism, the Anarchist wave, and currently, while highlighting recent increased lethality. The paper illustrates that current lone wolf behaviours, and the decreasing ‘Religiosity’ of fourth wave participants indicate that the wave’s breakwater may have been reached. A discussion of the role of mental health in influencing the behaviour of ‘lone wolf’ terrorists follows. It concludes that Islamic State’s current territorial losses, coupled to increased populism across the west may be potential areas where extreme social reactionary trends occur, that will ultimately manifest themselves as ‘Fifth Wave’ Terrorism; however cautions that any predictions in this regard are extremely difficult. It recommends that policy makers and law enforcement bodies closely monitor developments amongst those reacting to these significant geo political changes; and that there is an acknowledgement that mental health considerations must be included when discussing terrorist acts, and looking at mitigation measures.

Introduction

This article considers Rapoport's seminal four wave theory of terrorism's development, and argues that the phenomena's fourth wave—that of 'Religious' terrorism—appears to be coming to an end. The changing antecedents of terrorist actors—and in particular lone wolf participants—precipitates this shift. The article contrasts the current lone wolf terrorist actions in 2016 with the anarchist terrorism that emerged in the 1880s. The article illustrates the increased lethality of recent attacks, the disparate causes of participants, and identifies factors contributing to the ongoing changes to terrorism's dynamics, including the role of the internet and the mental health of the lone wolf terrorist.

The article concludes by suggesting the increased incidence of lone wolf terrorism is likely to continue, and suggests that the focus of terrorism may shift towards a reaction against emerging populism and the territorial aspirations of the successor groups to Islamic State (IS). It suggests that close observation of emerging counter arguments to increased populism coupled to any emerging successor narrative concerning IS are necessary, and that policy makers should strive to quickly address grievance and outcry in this area, or face serious consequences.

Discussion

*"While no one can predict the future course of terrorism with confidence, the history of terrorism counsels us to think broadly but at the same time exercise caution."*¹

Jenkins words above provide a good touchstone when considering potential developments in terrorism, particularly given the era defining events of 9/11 that followed two short years after they were written, the consequences of which continue to overshadow world events today. However, it is from this basis that I intend to approach this article. I ask that the reader considers recent publications both in academia and from law enforcement that indicate that terrorism may again be entering a new phase; a wave with striking historic echoes in terms of the modus operandi of participants, but on a wholly different scale, and with driving factors far removed from those of the past. The scope of this article limits discussion specifically to the lone wolf manifestation of terrorist action; however, extrapolation to wider consideration of terrorism's manifestations could be undertaken in future. In addition, it is through consideration of

¹ Brian M. Jenkins, "Foreword" in ed. Ian Lesser et al., *Countering the New Terrorism* (Santa Monica: RAND, 1999), x.

participants in terrorist groups that, to a degree, shines a light on what is happening amongst their lone wolf fellow travelers.

Individualized Terrorism

To begin this consideration, we must first determine whether terrorism can be an individual act. The study of terrorism is bedeviled by the inability of all interested parties, for a host of reasons, to arrive at an agreed definition.² However, this article considers the definition of the 2004 United Nations Security Council Resolution 1566, which condemns terrorist acts as:

“criminal acts, including against civilians, committed with the intent to cause death or serious bodily injury, or taking of hostages, with the purpose to provoke a state of terror in the general public or in a group of persons or particular persons, intimidate a population or compel a government or an international organization to do or to abstain from doing any act, which constitute offences within the scope of and as defined in the international conventions and protocols relating to terrorism, are under no circumstances justifiable by considerations of a political, philosophical, ideological, racial, ethnic, religious or other similar nature.”³

The definition does not exclude the actions of an individual as being regarded as those of a terrorist. It is the *Mens Rea*, the perpetrators intent in carrying out their actions, which is of significant import. Lone wolf terrorism’s definition has been debated at length, but that provided by Becker appears the most persuasive, defining it as

“ideologically driven violence, or attempted violence, perpetrated by an individual who plans and executes an attack in the absence of *collaboration (italics mine)* with other individuals or groups.”⁴

The FBI was alert to its potential contemporary consequential impact as early as 2004, with its Strategic Plan containing the observation that, “The

² A good example of this is Alex P. Schmid (ed.), “Statistics on Terrorism: The Challenge of Measuring Trends in Global Terrorism,” *Forum on Crime and Society* 4:1-2 (2004), available at: https://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/Forum/V05-81059_EBOOK.pdf.

³ United Nations Security Council, Resolution 1566, 2004, available at: http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/RES/1566.

⁴ For an excellent discussion of the difficulties of defining lone wolf-terrorism see Ramon -Spaaij and Mark S. Hamm, “Key Issues and Research Agendas in Lone Wolf Terrorism,” *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 38:3 (2015): 167-178. doi:10.1080/1057610X.2014.986979.

most significant domestic terrorism threat over the next five years will be the lone actor or lone wolf terrorist.”⁵ As the FBI predicted, there were many instances of lone wolf terrorism in the years that followed, both in the United States, and in other Western Nations. The most infamous until 2016 remained the actions of Andreas Behring Breivik, who on July 22 2011 detonated a car bomb in Oslo, Norway then undertook a shooting spree at a Labor Youth summer camp, killing 77 in total; Breivik was inspired by anti-Islamic far right rhetoric, sighting much of this in a self-published manifesto immediately prior to his actions.⁶

Wave Theory and the Lone Wolf

David Rapoport’s seminal work on the evolution of terrorism establishes the theory that terrorism has rolled across the world in four waves since the 1880’s.⁷ Rapoport outlines these waves as beginning with the *Anarchist wave*, which lasted for approximately forty years. It was followed in the 1920’s by an *Anti-colonial wave*, which lasted to the 1960’s, then a *New left wave* which in turn faded as the *Religious wave* crested, and it is this wave which, in theory, is said to still exists today.

For Rapoport, these waves were captured within the geo political tide of the times. The terrorist participants embraced the zeitgeist at the razor’s edge of contemporary radical thought. The initial Anarchist wave, which I consider in more detail below, petered out during the carnage of the First World War. As the world adjusted following its conclusion, colonial struggles succeeded it. It took place against a background of significant international reorganization and technological innovation, which some have described as being the initial phase of globalization. It is not surprising that the change in world politics that resulted led to the focus of radical political thought moving, and saw the focus of terrorism mirror the change. As colonial struggles concluded, largely successfully, and radical politics moved on to the New left, so too did terrorist motivations. The collapse of the Soviet Union, bastion of Communism and backer of many leftist terrorist sponsor nations, contributed significantly to the demise of the New left wave and the rise of the Religious wave. So too did the unforeseen consequences of western support provided to the

⁵ Federal Bureau of Investigation, “*FBI Strategic Plan 2004-2009*,” (Washington D.C.: Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2004), available at: <http://www.cfr.org/intelligence/fbi-strategic-plan-2004-2009/p14808>.

⁶ Lars. E. Berntzen, and Sveinung Sandberg, “The Collective Nature of Lone Wolf Terrorism: Anders Behring Breivik and the Anti-Islamic Social Movement,” *Terrorism and Political Violence* 26:5 (2014): 759-779.

doi:10.1080/09546553.2013.767245.

⁷ David C. Rapoport, “The Four Waves of Rebel Terror and September 11,” in ed. Charles W. Kegley, *The New Global Terrorism: Characteristics, Causes, Control* (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 2003).

Mujahedeen's struggle with the Soviet's in Afghanistan.

Accepting then that the actions of an individual can be regarded as acts of terrorism it is worthwhile to turn to Rapoport's first wave that of the anarchists, to consider acts of terror that came to be regarded as propaganda by deed. Several incidents of individual action are regarded as having wholly political motivations. Examples include:

- The 1881 shooting of a stranger by Emile Florion after he could not find republican politician Leon Gambetta
- The inability of Cobbler Leon Leuathier to make a functioning bomb and instead sitting down in restaurant and stabbing a fellow diner (who turned out to be Serbian ambassador)
- The assassinations of Elizabeth, Empress of Austria, King Umberto of Italy and President McKinley are examples of anarchist terrorism yet there are weak links between the perpetrators.⁸

In the case of McKinley's assassin, Leon Czolgosz, the crumpled newspaper found in the assassin's pocket covering the story of King Umberto's murder suggested his wider motivation.

Each of these anarchist-actions did though have one element in common. They were extreme acts to drive forward a political goal. How widely understood, or agreed, that goal was amongst the perpetrators is highly debatable. The perpetrators had virtually no interaction. Additionally, although in wider society they were perceived to be acting to achieve a common goal, it is highly debatable as to whether the perpetrators had a shared understanding of a common purpose.

It may have been the case that for the general public that:

“...improved telegraphy and successive newspaper editions updating the cycle of atrocity, arrest, trial, speeches from the dock, imprisonment or execution meant (they) could quite justifiably conclude that the activities of the bomb-throwing maniacs were being coordinated on behalf of sinister objectives across Europe or North America”

But Burleigh cautions that evidence suggests any real degree of co-ordination was limited.⁹

⁸ Donald H. Bell, “The Origins of Modern Terrorism,” *Terrorism: An International Journal* 9:3 (1987): 307-311. doi: 10.1080/10576108708435634.

⁹ Michael Burleigh, *Blood and Rage: A Cultural History of Terrorism* (London: Harper Collins, 2008), 79.

Jensen shares Burleigh's caution around any significant degree of anarchist cooperation. He also notes that despite the anarchist's actions notoriety, casualties from their actions were relatively light.¹⁰ During the period between 1880 and 1914, they killed 160 and injured 500. These largely uncoordinated actions had succeeded though in the objective of sowing terror. The new means of publicity meant that others, such as Czolgosz, at least knew of the likely level of international coverage their actions would bring. The Anti-colonial wave, and that of the New left, saw acts of such individual terror decrease dramatically. Terrorist actions were coordinated and group led. Indeed, between January 1, 1968 and May 1, 2007 there were only 72 acts of lone wolf terrorism, a mean of 1.84 per year.¹¹

However, it was during this period, Louis Beam, the right-wing writer, published 'Leaderless Resistance', to which Kaplan drew initial academic attention.¹² Beam called in 1983 (published in 1992) for individual autonomous action against the United States Federal Government. This 'call to arms' fell largely on deaf ears amongst those in the far right he sought to agitate at the time. However, it was from this call ultimately that the lone wolf term has been coined. It is not a difficult mental adjustment to retrospectively term the actions of the anarchists described above in such a manner.

The Dissipation of the Religious Wave

Each of Rapoport's waves had its formation, its crest, and its breakwater. The Religious Wave may be entering its 'breakwater' phase. We may be seeing an evolution to perhaps a new and even more dangerous wave. This wave appears to contain a particularly modern, twisted manifestation that I call the *Terror of the Individual*. This article demonstrates the need to employ a degree of delineation between the lone wolf terrorism that occurred during the religious wave and the new era of the terror of the individual.

¹⁰ Richard, B. Jensen, "The International Campaign Against Anarchist Terrorism, 1880-1930s," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 21 (2009):89-109. doi: 10.1080/09546550802544862.

¹¹ Ramon Spaaij, "The Enigma of Lone Wolf Terrorism: An Assessment," *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 33 (2010): 854-870. doi: 10.1080/1057610X.2010.501426. Within this article, see discussion of the RAND-MIPT Terrorist Knowledge Base. The database contains information on attacks that have occurred in the United Kingdom, Germany, France, Spain, Italy, Poland, Netherlands, Denmark, Sweden, Czech Republic, Portugal, Russia, Canada, United States and Australia.

¹² Jeffery Kaplan, "Leaderless Resistance," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 9:3 (1997): 80-95. doi: 10.1080/09546559708427417.

Initially, it is necessary to consider Rapoport's fourth religious wave in detail. In terms of terrorist organizations, it is essential we identify the factors that evidence its graduated dissipation, and that we are moving into a period of change. This is manifesting itself most noticeably amongst those on the edges of, or wholly unaffiliated to, groups: namely, the lone wolves.

It is work by Marc Sageman that initially subdivided the fourth wave that has existed since the 1980s, identifying sub-waves of Jihadi terrorist devolvement within the religious wave.¹³ So far, Sageman and his successors, have identified an inspirational first sub-wave. Members of this initial sub-wave brought the cause of a worldview that there is an international oppressed Muslim community. This message succeeded in drawing religiously inspired foreigners to join the Mujahedeen and participate, or assist, in the conflict in Afghanistan following the invasion by the Soviet Union. This first 'sub-wave' includes the original members of al-Qaida, such as Osama bin Laden.

The second sub-wave was constituted by elite Middle Eastern origin expatriates who attended Western Universities and then, following contact with first wave members and supporters, became involved in the conflicts such as Bosnia, Chechnya, and Kashmir; or self-starting operations such as 9/11. Sageman previously identified that these members of the global Salafi jihad were generally middle class, educated young men from caring and religious families, the large majority were married, many with children and no hardened criminals detected amongst their ranks.¹⁴ The third sub-wave of homegrown Jihadists emerged in the wake of the Iraq War and was largely sought out by a variety of inspirers to encourage participation. Richard Reed, the infamous failed shoe bomber serves as a good example and is of a different background to the self-starters of the second wave.

Those currently becoming involved in jihadist activities, for Rik Coolsaet¹⁵ the fourth sub-wave, have backgrounds far removed from the pioneers of Al Qaeda. The largely middle class/intellectual credentials of second wave jihadists have been replaced with recruits drawn from "immigrant gangs (that mix) jihadism with gangsta criminality."¹⁶ Van San's (2015) study of

¹³ Marc Sageman, *Leaderless Jihad: Terror Networks in the 21st Century* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008).

¹⁴ Marc Sageman, *Understanding Terror Networks* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004).

¹⁵ Rick Coolsaet, "Facing the Fourth Foreign Fighters Wave: What Drives Europeans to Syria, and to Islamic State? Insights from the Belgian Case," Egmont Paper 81, Egmont – *The Royal Institute for International Relations* (2016).

¹⁶ Jason Burke, *The New Threat from Islamic Militancy* (London: Harper Collins,

35 Belgian and Dutch foreign fighters for IS found that half were converts to Islam, all aged between 18 and 30, and none holding a university education.¹⁷

What is of particular note is that after each of the sub-waves there is a noticeable decline of 'religiosity' of the participants. As 'jihadist terrorism' has evolved the level of individual religious scholarship and background amongst participants has decreased. This is a development not missed by the analysts of Europol, who see the current situation as being perhaps best described as an 'extremist social trend' rather than radicalization in terms of the involvement of the religion of Islam as a motivating factor.¹⁸ Belgian Anti-terrorist Police Superintendent Alain Grignard sums up the current situation as that

“previously we were mostly dealing with radical Islamists, individuals radicalized toward violence by extremist interpretation of Islam but now we're increasingly dealing with what are best described as 'Islamized Radicals'.”¹⁹

Meanwhile, French anti-terrorism Judge Marc Trevidic illustrates the profile of fourth wave participants as consisting of 'ninety percent...who leave do it for personal reasons: they are looking for a fight, or for adventure, or revenge, because they do not fit in society...*Religion is not the engine of this movement and that's precisely its strength (italics mine)*’.²⁰ These observations are of potentially massive significance. Can it be argued that the fourth sub-wave is indeed a core part of Rapoport's religious wave? Instead should it perhaps now be acknowledged that we are, as with earlier wave dissipations moving to the 'breakwater' of the Religious wave? The decrease in 'Religiosity' appears indicative of a wider change. The 'extremist social trend' is far wider than jihadism alone. It appears that at least the Western world is now progressing into terrorism's fifth wave, and that this wave is starting to see a tsunami of attacks perpetrated by individuals, mirroring changes in terrorist groups'

2015), 207.

¹⁷ Marion Van San, "Lost Souls Searching for Answers?" *Perspectives on Terrorism* 9:5 (2015), available at:

<http://www.terrorismanalysts.com/pt/index.php/pot/article/view/460/912>.

¹⁸ Europol, *Changes in the Modus Operandi of Islamic State Terror Attacks* (The Hague: Europol, 2016).

¹⁹ Belgian Anti-terrorist Police Superintendent Alain Grignard quoted within Paul Cruickshank, "A View from the CT Foxhole: An interview with Alain Grignard, Brussels Federal Police," *Combatting Terrorism Centre Sentinel*, August 21 2015, available at: <https://www.ctc.usma.edu/posts/a-view-from-the-ct-foxhole-an-interview-with-alain-grignard-brussels-federal-police>.

²⁰ Coolsaet, "Facing the Fourth Foreign Fighters Wave. What Drives Europeans to Syria, and to Islamic State? Insights from the Belgian Case," (2016).

antecedents. Taking Becker's definition of a lone wolf as one that can be accepted and applied, the mean of 1.84 attacks per year noted by Spaaij above has been shattered in 2016.

Known lone wolf Terrorist Attacks in 2016

In Germany, there are numerous examples to consider:

- Ali Sonboloy, the Munich shooter lured youths to a Munich shopping Mall to obtain free burgers, having made increasingly vitriolic posts on social media against migrant communities, and ultimately altering his profile on one platform to a photograph of Anders Breivik.²¹
- There are the Reichsburgers, individuals who refuse to acknowledge the legitimacy of the state and drive vehicles into traffic police officers, set fire to the homes of asylum seekers, and shoot police officers carrying out evictions and confiscations.²²
- The 17-year-old Afghan asylum seeker who attacked fellow passengers on a train while armed with an axe and a knife.²³
- The 27-year-old Syrian refugee who detonated a bomb at a wine bar in Ansbach, killing only himself, but wounding 15 civilians, and was later found to have recorded a message on his mobile telephone pledging his allegiance the Islamic State.²⁴
- The Syrian asylum seeker armed with a knife who attacked a co-worker and bystanders in Reutlingen.²⁵
- A 27-year-old mentally disturbed German national who stabbed 4 at Grafing Train Station while shouting "Allah Akbar."²⁶

²¹ Harriet Alexander, Barry Henderson, Chiara Palazzo, Luke Heighton, James Rothwell, Zia Weise, Camilla Turner, and Justin Huggler, "Munich Shooting: Teenage killer Ali Sonboloy inspired by far right terrorist Anders Breivik and 'used Facebook offer of free McDonald's food to lure victims'," *The Telegraph* July 24, 2016, available at: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2016/07/23/munich-shooting-german-iranian-gunman-targeted-children-outside/>.

²² Bojan Pancevski, "Rise of 'new Reich army' sparks alarm in Germany," *The Sunday Times*, October 30, 2016, available at: <http://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/rise-of-new-reich-army-sparks-alarm-in-germany-xmd7jc9b7>.

²³ Rick Lyman, "After Attack on German Train, Fears Over Refugees, and From Them," *New York Times*, July 20, 2016, available at: http://www.nytimes.com/2016/07/21/world/europe/germany-train-attack-refugees.html?_r=0.

²⁴ Chiara Palazzo, Sophie Jamieson, James Rothwell, "Ansbach explosion: Syrian refugee bomber was due to be deported, as country faces calls to review refugee policy," *The Telegraph*, July 25, 2016, available at: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2016/07/24/one-dead-and-ten-injured-after-restaurant-blast-in-german-city-o/>.

²⁵ Caroline Mortimer, "German machete attack: Syrian refugee kills woman and injures two others in Reutlingen," *The Independent*, July 24, 2016, available at: <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/german-machete-attack-stuttgart-reutlingen-crime-knife-attack-a7153561.html>.

²⁶ Lizzie Dearden, "Munich knife attack: Man who killed one and injured three in

- The 53 year old female Muslim convert who attacked police with knives in Mulwhile crying “Allah Akbar,” and who had the flags of the Islamic State in her home though no other ties to the group.²⁷
- The Tunisian asylum seeker who ploughed a truck into a Berlin Christmas market, with responsibility later claimed by IS, but only a recorded pledge from the attacker indicating any significant degree of contact.²⁸

In Belgium, the following examples present:

- Two police officers were attacked by man wielding a machete and shouting “Allah Akbar” in the Belgian city of Charleroi.²⁹
- Belgian police shot and wounded a woman who wounded three people in a bus station in Uccle, a suburb of Brussels, Belgium.³⁰
- On October 5, 2016, three police officers were attacked by a man wielding a machete in the Schaerbeek neighborhood of Brussels, Belgium.³¹

In the United States, examples include:

- Dylann Roof attacked a church service after publishing a white supremacist manifesto.³²
- On January 7, 2016, in West Philadelphia, in the late evening, a

stabbing at Grafing station 'has no terrorist links',” *The Independent*, October 5, 2016, available at: <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/munich-grafing-station-s-bahn-stabbing-knife-attack-suspect-no-islamist-terrorist-links-isis-a7022546.html>.

²⁷ News Agency, “Convert attacks police with Knife,” *Herald Scotland*, February 11, 2016, available at: <https://www.the-herald/20161102/282011851916269>.

²⁸ Darran Simon, Ralph Ellis and Frederik Pleitgen, “Berlin Christmas market: 12 dead, 48 hospitalized in truck crash,” *CNN*, December 20, 2016, available at: <http://edition.cnn.com/2016/12/19/europe/berlin-christmas-market-truck/>.

²⁹ Lizzie Dearden, Katie Forster, “Belgium police attack: Man shouting 'Allahu Akbar' attacks two officers in Charleroi with machete,” *The Independent*, June 8, 2016, available at: <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/belgium-police-attack-news-latest-man-shouting-allahu-akbar-attacks-two-officers-in-charleroi-with-a7176361.html>.

³⁰ Julia Glum, “Brussels Knife Attack In Uccle Reported As Police Arrest Female Suspect In Belgium,” *International Business Times*, August 22, 2016, available at: <http://www.ibtimes.com/brussels-knife-attack-uccle-reported-police-arrest-female-suspect-belgium-2405281>.

³¹ Henry Samuel, “Two policemen injured in Brussels stabbing in suspected terror attack,” *The Telegraph*, October 5, 2016, available at: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2016/10/05/two-policemen-injured-in-brussels-stabbing-in-jihadi-hotbed-dist/>.

³² Harriet Alexander, “Suspect is fit to stand trial for Charleston Shooting,” *The Telegraph*, November 26, 2016, available at: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2016/11/25/dylann-roof-ruled-mentally-fit-stand-trial-charleston-church/>.

gunman shot Philadelphia police officer Jesse Hartnett, who was driving a marked police car. Hartnett survived, despite being shot multiple times in the left arm. He was able to get out of his car to shoot the fleeing suspect, Edward Archer. Later in the hospital, Archer claimed that he pledged allegiance to Islamic State (IS).³³

- Forty-nine people were killed when a lone-wolf gunman entered the Pulse gay nightclub. Hostages were taken and the perpetrator, Omar Mateen, was shot dead by local specialist police units in an attempt to storm the building. The FBI classified the attack as an act of "domestic terrorism" motivated by "Islamic leanings."³⁴
- Ahmad Khan Rahami set pipe bombs and a pressure cooker bomb in New Jersey and Manhattan.³⁵
- Abdul Razak Ali Artan rammed his car into a group of students at the Ohio State University. Artan then proceeded to stab several others with a knife, with the Islamic State claiming responsibility for the attack.³⁶

In Australia:

- A 59-year-old dog walker was attacked by a knife wielding Muslim man, suffering from Schizophrenia crying "Allah Akbar" in suburban Sydney. He was later found to have self-identified with the Islamic State, and have made social media posts in respect of previous international lone wolf incidents.³⁷ A 29-year-old French citizen killed a 21-year-old female British backpacker while shouting "Allah Akbar." One British man was critically injured, an Australian man suffered non-life-threatening injuries, and the attacker also killed a dog.³⁸

³³ Mark Berman, "Philadelphia police: Man who tried to kill officer pledged allegiance to the Islamic State," *Washington Post*, August 1, 2016, available at: https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/post-nation/wp/2016/01/08/philadelphia-police-say-attacker-tried-to-execute-officer/?utm_term=.5ccd63dc9f4a.

³⁴ Ralph Ellis, Ashley Fantz, Faith Karimi and Elliott C. McLaughlin, "Orlando shooting: 49 killed, shooter pledged ISIS allegiance," *CNN*, June 13, 2016, available at: <http://edition.cnn.com/2016/06/12/us/orlando-nightclub-shooting/>.

³⁵ Associated Press in New York, "Man charged with setting off bombs in New Jersey and New York heads to court," *The Guardian*, November 10, 2016, available at: <http://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2016/nov/10/ahmad-khan-rahami-court-new-york-new-jersey-bombs>.

³⁶ Pete Williams, Tom Winter, Andrew Blankstein and Tracy Connor, "Suspect Identified in Ohio State Attack as Abdul Razak Ali Artan," *NBC*, November 28, 2016, available at: <http://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/suspect-dead-after-ohio-state-university-car-knife-attack-n689076>.

³⁷ Robert Olding, "Wayne Greenhalgh was just out for a walk in Minto when Ihsas Khan attacked him," *The Sydney Morning Herald*, September 12, 2016, available at: <http://www.smh.com.au/nsw/wayne-greenhalgh-was-just-out-for-a-walk-in-minto-when-ihsas-khan-attacked-him-20160911-grdqwp.html>.

³⁸ David Chen, "Queensland backpackers' killing: Police probe 'Allahu Akbar' link in stabbing death of Mia Ayliffe-Chung," *ABC News*, August 25, 2016, available at: <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2016-08-24/allahu-akbar-police-probe-extremist>

In the UK:

- Thomas Mair shot and stabbed to death the Member of Parliament Jo Cox in the days preceding the EU Referendum, crying 'Britain First' as he did so.³⁹
- A 66-year-old man, stabbed four women outside a supermarket in Hampton, while shouting Arabic Terms and referencing the previous murder by Islamists of British Soldier Lee Rigby.⁴⁰

The diversity of causes outlined above is obvious. While many attacks appear linked to jihadism open source reporting indicates that the religiosity of the attackers undertaking them is highly suspect. The far-right attacks have no 'religious' overtones whatsoever.

While the anarchists killed 160 and injured 500 over approximately a 34-year wave, in 2016 lone wolves involved in the incidents above have, by tallying open source reporting, killed and injured similar numbers in one year (168 and 663 respectively). Lethality apart (and the availability of automatic weapons to today's actor is acknowledged), the comparison in respect of methodology and target selection between current lone wolves and those of the anarchist past are striking. Where they diverge is that the anarchists sought to gain publicity for their actions, and draw attention to the cause through targeting significant public individuals. Such targeting today, although it would likely similarly attract massive public attention, is not undertaken, nor is it necessary to gain worldwide media exposure. Today's voracious 24 News cycle ensures that, in the West, all acts of terrorism receive significant coverage: the international nature of the referencing of the articles above is testament to this.

In line with the work of Berntzen and Sandberg I see from the open source reporting of these incidences of lone wolf terrorism actions where there may have been reference to wider terrorist groups or ideologies, particularly the prevalence of pledges of allegiance to Islamic State, but no *collaboration* (in keeping with Becker's definition above). The actors are instead acting independently based on rhetoric embedded in wider social

[link-in-backpacker-stabbing/7780632](#).

³⁹ Dominic Casciani and Daniel De Simone, "Thomas Mair: The man who murdered Jo Cox MP," *BBC*, November 23, 2016, available at: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-38071894>.

⁴⁰ Ben Quinn and Damien Gayle, "Four women stabbed in Sainsbury's car park in south-west London," *The Guardian*, May 20, 2016, available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2016/may/20/man-arrested-after-multiple-stabbings-in-sainsburys-car-park-hampton-london>.

movements.⁴¹ Berntzen and Sandberg reference the myriad of factors that drive independent actors including way of thinking, rationale, motivation, but also psychology, social factors, political opportunities, existential attractions, and plain old excitement. They note in respect of Breivik that “his ideology, world view, and narratives emerged from a large, sometimes radical, and relatively new anti-Islamic social movement. It is thus impossible to understand the Norwegian terrorist attacks without seeing how their rationale was embedded in anti-Islamic rhetoric.”⁴²

Lone wolf terrorism had previously been seen as exception to social movement theory. In common with many academic authors I view this classification as incorrect. I find myself in agreement with Kaplan, who writes that “lone wolves, however lonely they seem to be, are much part of a larger community of likeminded actors.”⁴³ For Kaplan the internet is a key enabler in driving these individuals to develop their ideas into action, through interaction with likeminded individuals they have no direct contact with. Aiken captures this well in describing individual’s online presences as: “bolder, less inhibited, and judgement impaired.”⁴⁴ It is Naim who captures though that it is not the internet alone that is at work in driving radical behaviors. There are far wider societal changes at work, to which the internet is simply a contributory factor, to a degree a catalyst. The wider changes in society, which he describes as the ‘More and Mobility’ revolutions have had the effect of “vastly broaden(ing) the cognitive, even emotional impact of more access to resources and the ability to move, learn, connect and communicate more broadly and inexpensively than ever before.”⁴⁵

A former Al-Qaeda member, Jesse Morton, in considering the attraction of terrorism per se articulates the motivation of members as not being a reaction to foreign policy but instead “a pre-existing anger and animosity, whether it is to do with child abuse or trauma, a lack of integration and assimilation, or socio-economic grievances. The foreign policy grievance is simply something that allows them to release tensions held deep within them.”⁴⁶

⁴¹ Berntzen and Sandberg, “The Collective Nature of Lone Wolf Terrorism,” 2014.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Jeffrey Kaplan, Helene Loow, Leena Malkki, “Introduction to the Special Issue on Lone Wolf and Autonomous Cell Terrorism,” *Terrorism and Political Violence* 26 (2014):1-12. doi: 10.1080/09546553.2014.854032.

⁴⁴ Mary Aiken, *The Cyber Effect* (New York: Penguin Random House, 2016).

⁴⁵ Moises Naim, *The End of Power* (New York: Basic Books, 2013): 65.

⁴⁶ Peter Stanford, “I was a jihadist who saw 9/11 as justified,” *The Sunday Telegraph*, November 9 2016, available at: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/men/thinking-man/i-believed-al-qaeda-when-they-said-911-was-justified-15-years-on/>.

This observation ties in well with identified notions of extreme thrill seeking.⁴⁷ This is coupled to a form of (perverse) redemption for past-perceived misdeeds, identified amongst contemporary terrorists.⁴⁸

In returning to Naim, he sees within the Mentality revolution the politics of the individual with a grievance. Individuals can now access twisted ideologies that were previously inaccessible, creating on many occasions a bespoke ideology tied to their own particular grievances and foibles. They may not fully understand this ideology, but can latch onto in ways never possible before. The significant societal changes Naim highlights echo the conditions that Burleigh describes as at work during the Anarchist wave, as illustrated above. For increased telegraphy, see perhaps the spread of the internet, in turn for successive newspaper cycles see the spread of live 24-hour news coverage on a plethora of platforms.

The tie to mental health in respect of recent developments cannot be understated. It is estimated that approximately 30 percent of lone actors have mental health issues.⁴⁹ The problem with properly assessing the scale of this aspects impact on terrorism is that the vast majority of incidents that would fit a lone wolf definition are not defined or prosecuted as acts of terrorism. Often, although not exclusively (Mair, the murderer of the British MP Jo Cox being a prime example) this is due to attribution to the mental health of the perpetrator.

Spaaij, writing in 2010 at a time when he saw no evidence of the lethality of lone wolf terrorism being on the increase, examined the cases of five lone wolf terrorists at length. He found they all suffered from a variable degree of social ineptitude, with 3 of the 5 diagnosed with personality disorders, and 4 of the 5 experiencing severe depression during their lives.⁵⁰ He also noted that lone wolf terrorists create their own ideologies that combine personal frustration, and aversion with broader political, social, or religious aims.

In the United Kingdom alone killings by those deemed to have mental health-issues have climbed by 92 percent, with 423 people killed by mental

⁴⁷ Christina Pazzanese, "How ISIS is Wooing Converts in the West," *Newsweek*, March 23, 2015, available at: <http://europe.newsweek.com/how-isis-wooling-converts-west-315990?rm=eu>.

⁴⁸ Clint Watts, "Why ISIS Beats al Qaeda in Europe," *Foreign Affairs*, June 4, 2016, available at: <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/2016-04-04/why-isis-beats-al-qaeda-europe>.

⁴⁹ Frank Gardner, "How MI5's scientists work to identify future terrorists," *BBC*, December 12, 2016, available at: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-38252470>.

⁵⁰ Ramon Spaaij, "The Enigma of Lone Wolf Terrorism: An Assessment," *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 33 (2010): 854-870. doi: 10.1080/1057610X.2010.501426.

health patients in the last 7 years.⁵¹

Fiona Petty describes killings by the mentally ill as an unintended consequence of more liberal mental health treatment regimes.⁵² In respect of terrorism and killings by those she describes as ‘lonely wolves,’ she sees such individuals as not having ‘slipped through the net’, but instead suggests that resources and treatment are so scarce that there is no net to slip through. Such self-evident truths are not, in her view, “popular or comfortable in western civilized society.”⁵³ In engaging with Islamic State and other radical viewpoints online “the lonely can find solace in internet sites offering self-esteem, a reason for living and above all rewards they can only dream of... our values and belief systems cannot understand this rationale but we need to stop bleating about their ideology being so abhorrent and tackle the issue that it has indeed been so successful.”⁵⁴

Bhui *et al.* see a spiral at play here.⁵⁵ Their groundbreaking study into depression and sympathy for violent protest and terrorism showed a direct correlation between weakened social cohesion, depression, and support for extreme views. It also identified a self-perpetuating pattern, with increased violence and terrorist acts leading to increased breakdown of social capital, depression, and higher sympathy for extreme acts.

Gardner notes the observation from British Secret Service contacts that those suffering from mental health difficulties are likely to be screened out by established terrorist groups.⁵⁶ The prevalence of those at liberty in Western societies, coupled to their obvious part in the incidents listed above cannot be dismissed. Mental illness is not a full explanation for the rise in lone wolf cases, however it must be acknowledged as a contributory factor. Following Bhui *et al.*’s argument of a potential spiral at play it may become of ever-increasing relevance, particularly seen against the context of the increase in killings as a whole by those suffering mental health difficulties.

This is not to say the influence of groups on individuals is a one-way street.

⁵¹ Nick Hudson, “TV programme spotlights ‘doubling of killings’ by mental health patients since 2009,” *Police Professional*, September 15, 2016, available at: <http://www.policeprofessional.com/news.aspx?id+27158>.

⁵² Fiona Petty, “Lonely Wolves and Preventing Terrorism,” *Police Oracle*, July 27, 2016, available at: http://www.policeoracle.com/news/Lonely-wolves-and-preventing-terrorism_92479.html.

⁵³ Fiona Petty, “Lonely Wolves and Preventing Terrorism,” 2016.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵ Kamaldeep Bhui, Brian Everitt, and Edgar Jones, “Might Depression, Psychological Adversity, and Limits Social Assets Explain Vulnerability to and Resistance against Violent Radicalisation?” (*PLoS One* 9, 2014). doi:10.1371/journal.pone.0105918.

⁵⁶ Gardner, “How MI5's scientists work to identify future terrorists,” 2016.

“Death to traitors, freedom for Britain,” echoes of the phrases Thomas Mair shouted when appearing in court charged with murdering the British MP Jo Cox have appeared as tag lines on the Google listing for National Action, a (recently proscribed terrorist) organization in the United Kingdom.⁵⁷

This interrelationship between lone wolves and established groups should be seen as symbiotic. Lone wolves carry out acts linked, however indirectly to a terrorist groups cause and perhaps motivated by it, which the group then claims as its own and appeals for more similar lone actors to come forward. Terrorist groups may not have wanted a lone wolf as a member (should they ever have attempted to join, which many won't have) but they appear only too keen to take kudos from their actions, no matter how indirect their role in inspiring them may have been. IS provides perfect illustration.

So What of the Future?

Accepting there has been some form of sea change in behaviors, and that as Europol note and the 2016 examples above suggest, these appear to be being carried out by those at the extreme of a social trend rather than terrorism by individuals pursuing religious goals leads one to question what is actually going on.

Kaplan and Costa consider the pull of IS in terms of their notion of New Tribalism, an undertow within Rapoport's fourth wave, where adherents of terrorist groups members have common bonds of kinship or shared history/ideals and aim to establish a lost (or mythical) Golden Age. For Kaplan and Costa IS are exemplars of this phenomena, with their drive to re-establish the Caliphate.⁵⁸ The bonds of kinship here and shared history/ideals do not need to be physical, as Speckhard illustrates with her interviews of jihadists showing a shared fictive kinship in defense of a global population of those ascribing to the Muslim faith.⁵⁹

IS continues to lose territory and it may well be that as time progresses their adherents and successors become more aligned to the notion of the Caliphate per se and statehood for those with common cause now exiled,

⁵⁷ Dipesh Gader, “Neo-Nazis face ban after Cox murder,” *The Sunday Times*, November 27 2016, available at: <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/neo-nazis-face-ban-after-cox-murder-ohgm3r93q>.

⁵⁸ Jeffrey Kaplan and Christopher P. Costa, “The Islamic State and the New Tribalism,” *Terrorism and Political Violence* 27:5 (2015): 926-969. doi: 10.1080/09546553.2015.1094306.

⁵⁹ Anne Speckhard, *Talking to Terrorists: Understanding the Psycho-Social Motivations of Militant Jihadi Terrorists, Mass Hostage Takers, Suicide Bombers and Martyrs* (Virginia: Advanced Press, 2012)

as opposed to the religiosity alone of the groups doctrine. Such a move would certainly fit with the decrease in the religiosity of IS members. Notably, as the Religiosity of the participants in Jihadist terrorism has decreased the number of lone wolves who find themselves able to describe themselves as fellow travelers, and ascribe allegiance, has risen.

Recent political changes (Brexit, the election of President Trump, the ascendance of far right political parties in Austria, France, and the Netherlands) indicate an increase in populism right across the Western world. The possibility of a backlash as the newly elected change policy direction, and introduce measures at odds with the consensus which has largely existed (for the West) since the end of the Cold War cannot be discounted. The likelihood of such a backlash sits well with Ekblom's notion of co-evolutionary developments in terrorism, counter terrorism and the politics of the extreme, where significant change in direction by one party is atypically met by a counter reaction, sometimes more violent and impactful than that which it has been engendered by, from those in opposition.⁶⁰

We need to remember Jenkins words from the start of this article, and it may well be neither of the issues that draw terrorist support. What seems evident is that individuals are going to be acting in a far more independent manner, and that whatever their cause *The Terror of the Individual* is a pervasive threat that must be addressed.

Conclusion

This article demonstrates that there is evidence that the religious wave identified by Rapoport is drawing to a close, and that actors with extreme social agendas are emerging who it has not, as yet, been possible to properly frame the geo political context their actions fit within.

These emerging actors have much in common with those of Rapoport's first wave, the Anarchists, however their lethality appears significantly greater so far than all lone wolves who have gone before. Indeed, only time will tell if we are going to experience a new wave, or if instead we are about to witness a loop, with the next phase of terrorist actions continuing to mirror, to a degree, their anarchist ancestors.

In terms of policy implications, the author strongly believes that a focus should be given to the emerging tactics of lone wolves to identify everyday

⁶⁰ Paul Ekblom, "Terrorism – lessons from natural and human co-evolutionary arms races," in M. Taylor, J. Roach, and K. Pease (Eds.), *Evolutionary Psychology and Terrorism* (London, UK: Routledge, 2015).

weapons of mass destruction (such as the use of trucks and such), and become proactive in instigating mitigating measures. At present law enforcement agencies are simply reacting to the relatively simple innovations lone wolves are undertaking. There is an obvious need to gain greater understanding of the symbiotic and enabling relationship that appears to exist between terrorist groups and 'lone wolves', no matter the degree of collaboration.

Finally, there must be an unequivocal acceptance that mental health is a factor in lone wolf terrorism, and that the actions of those who are ill need to be seen as those of a terrorist when appropriate. Only through this acceptance will a true picture of the terrorist threat that is faced be possible, and will there be the possibility for international progress in identifying treatment and preventative measures for those who are ill. If not, we may well face a descent into the spiral identified by Bhui, which will see the actions of lone wolves grow exponentially. The author accepts that such a change in tack will require a considerable refocusing of resource in a number of disciplines, including but not limited to, social work, mental health, counterterrorism, and criminal justice. However, the prevalence of mental health issues amongst terrorist participants cannot be ignored, and moving this dialogue into a more mainstream acceptance of the issue is the only way progress can be made.