# Comparative Lone Wolf Terrorism: Toward a Heuristic Definition

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Lone wolf terrorism has a long and bloody past, even if the motivations and context of this tactic over the last three decades by right-wing extremists and, more recently, jihadi Islamists, have witnessed a noticeable spike with the onset of the Internet Age. By approaching lone wolf terrorism as a generic phenomenon, this article will retrace both the historical trajectory and recent revival of this *self-directed* recourse to the "terrorist cycle." This extends to an overview of earlier waves of lone wolf terrorism (notably deriving from anarchist and leftist doctrines), as well as a survey of the surprisingly sparse academic literature on the subject in English. By way of contribution, this review of some key instances and interpretations of lone wolf terrorism pursues two straightforward aims. The first is the identification of a nearly 150-year tradition of lone wolf terrorism now at its most ideologically disparate and potentially destructive, and the second is a heuristic definition and accompanying discussion of pan-ideological, solo-activated terrorism.

**Keywords:**   Lone Wolf, Right-Wing Extremists, Terrorism

## INTRODUCTION

Even among those who fundamentally disagree over how to define the term, lone wolf terrorism is on the rise by all accounts, and by every indicator.[1] It is clear that, in the wake of Anders Behring Breivik's murderous rampage in Norway on July 22, 2011, both conceptual refining and a better understanding of the phenomenon itself are urgently needed to tackle a problem, significantly,

that has come to maturation alongside the development of new technologies—none more so, as we shall see, than the Internet. In attempting to flesh out the contours of this resurgent genus of terrorism, this article considers the rise of lone wolf terrorism over the last generation—roughly coterminous with the growing ubiquity of the Web—in Western Europe and the United States (the geographical points of reference in what follows). Sometimes also called *freelance terrorism*, *leaderless resistance*, *solo-actor terrorism*, or even, in the case of violent *takfiri* Islamism, *personal jihad*, these diverse terms center on the key feature of this kind of terrorism: a single actor undertaking ideological terrorism (especially political and/or religious) against non-military targets without external direction or coordination. But why has this self-activating terrorism spiked so greatly in the last handful of years; and just as pressingly, how does lone wolf terrorism relate to far-right populism?

Unfortunately, responses to these questions are not helped, quite simply, by the striking dearth of scholarship in this area.[2] Unusually, moreover, most of the information publicly available on lone wolf terrorism is to be found not in academic research but in reports by think tanks. One reason for this, to be sure, is that self-activated terrorism challenges some of our assumptions about terrorist violence itself. The most comprehensive study to date of lone wolf terrorism, by the Dutch Crisis Management Team, or COT, in 2007, argued that terrorism is generally understood to be a communal act licensed by an outside agency—clearly a view having little room for individually planned and undertaken violence:

> The imbalance between the perceived threat of lone-wolf terrorism on the one hand and the almost exclusive scholarly focus on group-based terrorism on the other hand indicates the need for more conceptual and empirical analysis to enable a better understanding of lone-wolf terrorism.[3]

The murder of 77 innocents in Breivik's shooting and bombing spree in July 2012 means that just such a "better understanding" matters now more than ever. By attempting to contribute in this area, this article briefly recounts the history and development of lone wolf terrorism as well as some debates about uses of this term before formulating a new, and hopefully, interpretatively useful definition of the nettlesome term *lone wolf terrorism*.

To do so, a concise history of this phrase is called for, again strikingly, to date most effectively provided not by pure academic research but in an impressive report from 2010 by The Hague's International Centre for Counter-Terrorism (ITTC). There, Edwin Bakker and Beatrice de Graaf suggest that the roots of lone wolf terrorism derive from nineteenth-century anarchism, specifically Mikhail Bakunin's "propaganda of the deed," first announced in his 1870 *Letters to a Frenchman on the Present Crisis* [e.g., the Paris Commune]: "we must spread our principles, not with words but with deeds, for this is the most popular, the most potent, and the most irresistible form of propaganda."[4]

Over the next 60 years, anarchist bombings—peerlessly fictionalized in Joseph Conrad's 1907 *The Secret Agent*—were directed at royal, bourgeois, and economic targets, including the assassination of King Umberto I of Italy in 1900, and a shocking 1920 bombing on Wall Street in New York, killing 33 and wounding more than 200. Excepting the latter, in perhaps the most notorious case of lone wolf anarchism—in a case championed by John Merriman as one that "arguably ignited the modern age of terrorism"—Émile Henry bombed the Café Terminus adjacent to the Gare Saint-Lazare in France on February 12, 1894, killing one and wounding twenty. At his subsequent trial, the 21-year-old terrorist proclaimed:

> In the merciless war that we have declared on the bourgeoisie, we ask no mercy. We mete out death and we must face it. For that reason I await your verdict with indifference. I know that mine will not be the last head you will sever [...] You will add more names to the bloody roll call of our dead.[5]

Far more recently, this apologia for self-declared war was eerily echoed in Breivik's closing trial statement on June 22, 2012, which opened by similarly claiming that "what happened on July 22nd was an act of barbarism." This "merciless war," Breivik lengthily continued, was a "preventative" one against the multicultural "treason" of the Norwegian—and more broadly, European—postwar establishment of "cultural Marxists":

> The attacks of July 22nd were preventive attacks, serving the defense of the Norwegian indigenous people, ethnic Norwegians, our culture, and I cannot declare myself guilty before the law for conducting them. I was acting in defense of my people, my culture, my religion, my city, and my country. Therefore I demand to be acquitted of all charges.[6]

Furthermore, from this first wave of anarchist lone wolf terrorism, two persistent features bear upon the current "fourth wave" of religious self-activating terrorism, as described by David Rapoport. (His overlapping waves are anarchist, anti-colonial, "new left," and religious terrorism; Jeffrey Kaplan has recently argued that we are now in a fifth wave characterized by "radical localism and rabid xenophobia."[7]) The first of these features is the influence of new media "shrinking time and space," which meant that the terrorist "propaganda by the deed" could be quickly circulated internationally through the nascent mass media—telegraphs, the penny press, and later, even the radio. Second, in most cases of terrorism—both lone wolf and its more familiar group-based form—protagonists commonly seem to view their acts of terrorism less as justified crimes than as acts of asymmetrical warfare. Correspondingly and significantly, lone wolf targets tend to be symbolic rather than strategic (such as the Labor Party's youth holiday camp on the island of Utøya—which translates into English as "listen"—targeted by Breivik). With the waning of anarchism between the world wars, so too did the nigh-indiscriminate violence in this

first phase of what might be considered "proto-lone wolf terrorism." But it was emphatically revived by the far right with the 1989 publication of *Hunter*—by the notorious author of *The Turner Diaries*, the National Alliance ideologue William Pierce—itself tellingly dedicated to Joseph Paul Franklin, a neo-Nazi serial killer who acted alone in trying to start a race war in the United States between 1977 and 1980. *Hunter* fictionalizes several of these episodes, before Oscar Yeager (based on *Jäger*; German for "hunter"), the novel's protagonist, moves on to targeting government officials, before concluding:

> By killing [FBI agent William] Ryan he had substantially increased the potential for flux. There certainly must be other men in key positions whose deaths also would influence the course of events. Both the worsening economy and the Black uprising would lead to a more unsettled climate in the country, the sort of climate which he ought to do everything in his power to exacerbate. Only in such a climate could the League hope to begin competing effectively with the Jews for the hearts and minds of the White public.
>
> He sighed. Well, he would be very busy during the next few days discharging responsibilities he already had incurred. But after that it would be time to do some more hunting.[8]

Still more relevant, this method for political violence was given theoretical impetus by an influential 1992 (first published in 1983) essay by leading Ku Klux Klan activist Louis Beam, entitled "Leaderless Resistance":

> It is the duty of every patriot to make the tyrant's life miserable. When one fails to do so he not only fails himself, but his people. With this in mind, current methods of resistance to tyranny employed by those who love our race, culture, and heritage must pass a litmus test of soundness [. . . .] participants in a program of *Leaderless Resistance* through phantom cell or individual action must know exactly what they are doing, and how to do it. It becomes the responsibility of the individual to acquire the necessary skills and information as to what is to be done. This is by no means as impractical as it appears, because it is certainly true that in any movement, all persons involved have the same general outlook, are acquainted with the same philosophy, and generally react to given situations in similar ways.

Beam also argued that pervasive state power made traditionally structured, pyramidal revolutionary movements too easy to penetrate and disrupt. "Leaderless resistance is a child of necessity," he therefore concluded:

> Utilizing the Leaderless Resistance concept, all individuals and groups operate independently of each other, and never report to a central headquarters or single leader for direction or instruction, as would those who belong to a typical pyramid organization.[9]

In the wake of FBI shootings at Ruby Ridge and Waco in the early 1990s—so exercising the imagination of the far right in the United States around

this time, with perceptions of a New World Order—in Jeffrey Kaplan's words, "suddenly the term leaderless resistance was on everyone's lips."[10] Particularly influential lips were those of American-based neo-Nazis Tom Metzger and Alex Curtis, leading proponents of lone wolf terrorism as a tactic—while the growth of the Internet has ensured its continued circulation among the far right in the US, Europe, and beyond.[11] In fact, populist right fears of a US government conspiracy to round up "patriots" at the end of the Cold War seems to have contributed to the spike in American militias and acts of terrorism—most horrifically, Timothy McVeigh's murder of 168 people at the FBI's Alfred P. Murrah building on April 19, 1995, of which more below—during the 1990s. Exemplifying the way in which pre-Internet radicalization typically took place at this time, McVeigh had decided to turn some 50 tons of fertilizer into a truck bomb, in part, after coming into contact with William Pierce's earlier neo-Nazi "novel," *The Turner Diaries*, at American gun shows in the Midwest. Perhaps for this reason, the Unabomber's revealing letter from the Terre Haute supermax penitentiary he shared with McVeigh asserted that the latter "did not fit the stereotype of the extreme right-wingers."[12]

Further diffusing these preexisting stereotypes of the far right has been the irresistible rise in digital technologies (especially the Internet and, more narrowly and pertinently here, social networking sites such as Facebook, Twitter, and others). Through often-anonymized websites and postings, the far right was an early adopter of this technology, stretching back to Don Black's *Stormfront* website, first founded in 1995 and recently home to literally hundreds of thousands of far-right members.[13] In turn, groups ranging from the "new far-right" counter-jihad movement—whose prejudice against European Muslims is typically manifested culturally rather than racially—to more traditional neo-Nazi forums exist principally online (as "groupuscules" in the academic literature).[14] Although all of these groups may be considered far-right, in large measure, because of the illiberal stereotyping of all members in a given group (such as Muslims; the religion of roughly a billion persons around the world), the historically significant trope of anti-Semitism, that long-standing shibboleth of the far right—often placed alongside biological and conspiratorial constructions of history—is as likely to play a dividing role today. Broadly put, the white supremacism so characteristic of the "Fascist Epoch" before 1945 seems to be in the process of giving way to a more cultural intolerance that is less concerned about skin color (and, in fact, purports to support any and all of Israel's actions against the Palestinians in the Occupied Territories) than religious difference. Yet whatever the case, the authoritarian and illiberal far-right continues its enthusiastic embrace of the Web, spawning thousands of online radio stations, videogames, file-sharing sites, mailing groups, newsrooms, and chatrooms, as well as websites containing all manner of extremist material. One compilation from 2010, aptly titled *The Hate Directory*, runs to fully 165 pages of listed Web addresses that are adjudged

to "advocate violence against, separation from, defamation of, deception about, or hostility toward others based on race, religion, ethnicity, gender or sexual orientation."[15]

To be sure, lone wolf terrorism is a pan-ideological tactic, forged in the fires of nineteenth-century anarchism before being taken up again in post-war Europe and the United States by, in particular, far-right extremists and, more recently, jihadi Islamist solo-actor terrorists. Nonetheless, in the last 20 years at least, as Ramón Spaaij's superb academic study of this phenomenon emphasizes, the American far-right remains the most enthusiastic proponent of "leaderless resistance." If solo-actor ideological murders of pro-life doctors are included as far-right actions, then roughly half of lone wolf terrorists have derived from far-right ideology since 1968. Since the turn of the century, more-over, this previously minuscule tactic (Spaaij places lone wolf terrorism at 1.8 percent of all terrorist attacks in the 15 Western countries included in the 45-year period of investigation, rising to 5 percent in the US during this time) has been palpably on the rise—and not just by American far-right extremists.[16] Yet at the same time, it is clear that the latter group and geographical area remains the most likely one to produce "self-activating" terrorism. While the specific push-and-pull factors are extraneous to the taxonomic discussion here, it bears noting that an outpouring of "pop theory" has tried to pin down compar-ative drivers such a "liquid fear" or "defending the nomos" for those interested in more general speculations over generic terrorist motivations.[17]

Rather more pressingly, in the words of the most recent study of lone wolf terrorism by establishment expert and former RAND analyst Jeffrey D. Simon, the "cyber world has undoubtedly been a godsend for the individual terror-ist," leading to "a proliferation of lone wolves around the world and allowed for anybody with a laptop to quickly become knowledgeable about terrorist tac-tics, targets, and weapons, including how to launch a terrorist attack."[18] To reiterate, far-right ideologues have been the most consistent champions of this embrace of both lone wolf terrorism and online extremism—the latter, at the aggresive end extending to what I have elsewhere understood, in the context of Breivik's and others' online progress through the terrorist "attack cycle," as *broadband terrorism*.[19] Short of the more overtly violent trade in terrorist manuals or weapons conversion kits, this far-right milieu daily traffics in a kind of online incitement to hatred that has been ignored for too long. A com-paratively mild example derives from the American Nazi Party website, White Revolution—proudly carrying the banners "EXTREME VIOLENT RACISM" and "WHITE REVOLUTION IS THE FINAL SOLUTION"—which claimed in 2009 that nearly half of informal poll respondents identified as lone wolves:

Your Involvement in a Pro-White Organization:
#1 - 47% said "Lone Wolf"
#2 - 34% said "Looking to Join, But Not Sure Which Org is the Best for Me"[20]

That same year, perceptively (if, frankly, surprisingly), a declassified "Intelligence and Analysis" report by the Department of Homeland Security concluded: "lone wolves and small terrorist cells embracing violent rightwing extremist ideology are the most dangerous domestic terrorism threat in the United States."[21]

Accordingly, this raises a definitional conundrum with respect to self-activating terrorism—namely, whether this typology of lone wolves can be extended to multiple individuals forming a "wolf pack" (essentially like leaderless "groupuscules" but in the physical rather than virtual world). In the words of one proponent of this view, this need not preclude "contact with operational extremists," but it does exclude "a formal connection" with "particular command and control features" vis-à-vis an established organization: "Instead, they appear to be a small group of similarly minded individuals who choose to engage together in an act of terrorism."[22] A good example would be the aforementioned Oklahoma City bombing in 1995, which was masterminded by Timothy McVeigh but logistically assisted by Terry Nichols, who was sentenced to life without parole in 1998. The most recent definition of solo-actor terrorism understands these packs as lone wolves given the lack of hierarchical organizational structure:

> Lone wolf terrorism is the use or threat of violence or nonviolent sabotage, including cyber attacks, against government, society, business, the military (when the military is not an occupying force or involved in a war, insurgency, or state of hostilities), or any other target, by an individual acting alone or with minimal support from one or two other people (but not including actions during popular uprisings, riots, or violent protests), to further a political, social, religious, financial, or other related goals, or, when not having such an object, nevertheless has the same effect, or potential effect, upon government, society, business, or the military in terms of creating fear and/or disrupting daily life and/or causing government, society, business, or the military to react with heightened security and/or other responses.[23]

Yet the objections to this taxonomy should be, *prima facie*, obvious: individuals and groups are not the same, even if questions of leadership and direction do not necessarily obtain regarding "wolf packs." Inversely, lone attackers can also be part of a terrorist group—even if (as is often intended) invisibly so. The case of would-be airline bombers Richard Reid (the "shoe bomber") and Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab (the "underwear bomber") are perfect examples of directed solo-actor terrorists, but not self-activating terrorists, because their instructions came from (increasingly decentralized) Al-Qaeda networks. This consideration is effectively addressed in Spaaij's *Understanding Lone Wolf Terrorism*, which is equally nuanced on the twin issues of lone vs. group terrorism *and* individual initiative vs. external directives:

they (a) operate individually, (b) do not belong to an organized terrorist group or network, and (c) their modi operandi are conceived and directed by the individual without any direct outside command or hierarchy.[24]

Clearly, a larger and more important distinction in these approaches, then, is between types of logistical support and hierarchical direction that, for the self-activating terrorist, is physically non-existent, but for explicit members and/or supporters of existing terrorist organizations may well be operationally necessary (such as in the case of the IRA in the 1980s and 1990s). Although here is not the place for further discussion on this issue, the difficulty seems to be the somewhat baggy area in the middle, whereby a degree of outside influence and assistance—if not control—is employed during the so-called terrorist cycle. At the very least, for present purposes, this is categorically different than self-activating terrorism, even when a (typically online) "community of support" may be instrumental with respect to radicalization, but not the command and control or logistical aspects of the terrorist cycle, which are instead undertaken individually.

In the most recent, and indeed historically destructive, case study of self-activating terrorism, the leading trends touched on already—far-right radicalization, the use of new media over time, and self-defined acts of asymmetrical warfare against unsuspecting targets—are collectively exemplified by Anders Behring Breivik's bombing outside the prime minister's office in Oslo; his choice of innocent Labor Party youths as sickening shooting targets on Utøya island later that afternoon; and, indeed, even the date of the attack itself. For on July 22, 1095, Jerusalem was sacked by the Ottoman Empire—which prompted the Crusades and, for Breivik, represented the first of the three so-called Muslim invasions of Europe. (Never mind the geography! The subsequent dates of invasion were 1683—date of the Battle of Vienna—and, for whatever reason, 1999. Hence the importance of the date 2083: both the 400th anniversary of the Battle of Vienna as well as the 200th anniversary of the death of Karl Marx, unsuspecting founder of the allegedly genocidal worldview and multi-ethnic praxis of "cultural Marxism.")

Chilling as it sounds, in a horrific inversion of the publicity sought as part of the normative terrorist cycle—exemplified, for instance, in the Unabomber's 35,000 word anti-technology rant published near the end of his 16-year bombing campaign—Breivik's acts are best understood as a kind of "terrorist PR."[25] Beyond his own (largely online) community of support, who would have read Breivik's approximately 775,000-word conspiratorial analysis about an Islamification of Europe had the document been released a year, or even a month, beforehand? Put another way, unlike terrorists seeking an *ex post facto* justification of their violent actions seen, for instance, in the behavior of the 1970s Baader-Meinhof Gang (or "Red Army Faction") terrorist organization, Breivik's Norwegian attacks were intended, on the

**Table 1:** Labor required vs. risk of apprehension for individuals who are not already on any watch list.

| Labor | Time required to complete | Risk of apprehension |
|---|---|---|
| 1 person | 30 days | 30% |
| 2 people | 20 days | 60% |
| 3 people | 16 days | 85% |
| 4 people | 13 days | 90% |
| 5 people | 12 days | 90–95% |

contrary, to create a *readership* for his *2083* manifesto as well as a *viewership* of his 12-minute, summative online video. This was less "propaganda of the deed" than murderous deeds intended to draw attention to far-right propaganda.

Moreover, in addition to concluding that a lone wolf attack was most likely to succeed against the state, the final sentence in Breivik's *2083* manifesto further makes plain that his last acts before launching his mass murders were the completion of his manifesto and sending it to many of hundreds of European "patriots" in the minutes before undertaking his terrorist attacks. Just as revealing—frightening, even—is Breivik's conclusion that self-activating terrorism is both the least complicated to logistically undertake while also holding the greatest prospect of success for terrorist actions (see Table 1):

> The old saying; "if you want something done, then do it yourself" is as relevant now as it was then. More than one "chef" does not mean that you will do tasks twice as fast. In many cases; you could do it all yourself, it will just take a little more time. AND, without taking unacceptable risks. The conclusion is undeniable.

> I believe this will be my last entry. It is now Fri July 22nd, 12.51.

> Sincere regards,

> Andrew Berwick
> Justiciar Knight Commander
> Knights Templar Europe
> Knights Templar Norway

It bears noting that these are not the writings of a crazy man: however much Breivik's actions smacked of utter madness, it takes rational thought to compose (and indeed, plagiarize!) more than 1,500 pages of text—let alone to successfully work through the terrorist cycle with such inhumane effectiveness. Although a vexed area perhaps best left to psychologists, individuals with severe mental illness are usually excluded from constructions of lone wolf terrorism.[26] In Breivik's case (he was found both sane and culpable on the final day of his trial in Norway), quite beyond a lengthy justification for his actions—another recurrent feature of lone wolf terrorism: the extensive apologia—*2083*

also acts as a self-contained terrorist DIY manual for other right-wing extremists to follow. This is especially significant given its widespread availability on the Internet, where *2083* and other paramilitary manuals have created, in Raffaello Pantucci's excellent phrase, the potential for *autodidactic extremists*: "The loner leaning towards violence can now easily teach himself the extremist creed, and then define his global outlook along the same lines, using it as a justification when carrying out an act of violence."[27] These terrorist tutorials online are also evident in Breivik's case—for example, he claims to have started working on manufacturing explosives by spending a fortnight scouring the Internet[28]—and his lessons from the Web were meticulously compiled and simplified for use by other autodidactic extremists:

> If I had known then, what I know today, by following this guide, I would have managed to complete the operation within 30 days instead of using almost 80 days. By following my guide, anyone can create the foundation for a spectacular operation with only 1 person in less than a month even if adding 2 "resting" days!:-)

A final consideration raised by Breivik's "terrorist PR" manifesto is also directly relevant to the present special issue of *Democracy and Security*: that of populist racism. Whatever his attacks against alleged "cultural Marxism" and multiculturalism, it is undeniable that anti-Muslim prejudice played a decisive role in the process of his radicalization. From Breivik's much-publicized contact with the English Defence League and its Norwegian offshoot, the NDL, to his frequent references to anti-Muslim bloggers—such as his countryman Fjordman (Peder Jensen; see Paul Jackson's article in this special issue for greater discussion of Fjordman), SIOA's Pamela Geller, Robert Spencer of *Jihad Watch,* and many others in the counter-jihad movement—the far right's chosen scapegoat thus far this century, Muslim immigrants to Europe, was entirely shared by Breivik.[29]

As this suggests, Anders Behring Breivik did not operate in a vacuum, but drew on currents of populist racism against already-disadvantaged Muslims that has broken out like a rash in Europe and the US over the last decade. This raises a crucial terminological point raised in Gerry Gable and Paul Jackson's recent report *Lone Wolves: Myth or Reality?* As Gable argues, "far-right terrorists are not lone wolves but are connected with, influenced by and often helped by organizations whose beliefs they share."[30] Gable rightly cites the case of Timothy McVeigh, who was earlier radicalized by the far right and later directly assisted by Terry Nichols prior to his solo-actor attack on April 19, 1995. This position is in stark contrast to most definitions of lone wolf terrorism, like that offered by the aforementioned COT:

> In the case of lone-wolf terrorism, such intentional acts are committed by persons:
> *(a)* who operate individually;
> *(b)* who do not belong to an organized terrorist group or network;

*(c)* who act without the direct influence of a leader or hierarchy;

*(d)* whose tactics and methods are conceived and directed by the individual without any direct outside command or direction [. . . .]

Their terrorist attack or campaign, however, results from their solitary action during which the direct influence, advice or support of others, even those sympathetic to the cause, is absent.

This point merits stressing still further: competing definitions also emphasize the solitary nature of lone wolf attackers.[31] Yet Gable and Jackson's *Lone Wolves: Myth or Reality?* is surely right to point out that, in all but the most rare of cases—such as the notoriously reclusive Unabomber, Theodore Kaczynski, whose mails bombs between 1978 and 1995 killed 3 and wounded 23 others— earlier approaches to lone wolf terrorism quite simply fail "to understand both the particular context from which 'lone wolf' ideology comes, and the community of support that backs up such solo actor terrorism."[32] That this is true, however, should not disqualify the term *lone wolf terrorism*; instead, it should properly add nuance to constructions of this phenomenon, understood here as self-directed rather than solo-actor terrorism; again, as individuals often operate on behalf of established terrorist movements.

Thus far, several features of lone wolf terrorism have been identified for their heuristic use in approaching self-activating terrorism as a generic phenomenon. Whether targeting the bourgeoisie, colonial powers, postwar capitalism, or multiculturalism in Europe and the United States, lone wolves have tended to see their acts as symbolic strikes in an asymmetrical war against parts of their own society. This "self-directed terrorism" is personally constructed and undertaken in terms of motivation, targets, and justification—with the latter sometimes extending to lengthy texts, such as 2009 self-activating Holocaust Memorial Museum shooter James von Brunn's approximately 400-page manifesto, instructively subtitled "The Racialist Guide to the Preservation and Nurture of the White Gene Pool." Reinforced by the easy availability of the latter hate-tract online, the Internet has facilitated the dissemination and organization of lone wolf tactics, training, manuals, and not least, radicalization and endorsement. Yet it should also be remembered that such connections with like-minded individuals and movements ought not to invalidate the term *lone wolf terrorism*: if complete and total isolation were a definitional feature, perhaps the only lone wolf terrorist since 1945 would be Theodore Kaczynski, the Unabomber. But surely, the definition has greater utility and applicability than this.

In addition to these characteristics, recent scholars have observed that lone wolf terrorists tend to be overwhelmingly male, under 50, and principally operate in the US and Western Europe.[33] Furthermore, as Vic Artiga helpfully maintains, this taxonomy extends to political and/or religious terrorism rather than emotionally disturbed, mentally ill, or reactive individuals taking violence

into their own hands.[34] This raises, derivatively, two decisive points. First, self-directed attackers, if they are to be considered lone wolf terrorists, individually go through the oft-cited terrorist attack cycle. Sometimes called preparations "to the left of the bang," this includes operational planning, target selection, deployment, and attack, as well as the aforementioned attempt to disseminate a justificatory message (the latter is not always considered part of the terrorist cycle).[35] This attack cycle is a helpful reminder that mental illness or reactive spree killings should be distinguished from self-activating terrorism, which—despite being undertaken by an individual rather than by a terrorist movement or small cell—nevertheless must plot, prepare, and prime in a manner familiar to counterterrorism experts.[36] Second, and correspondingly, unlike "emotional" mass murderers, or those driven by a specific personal grievance, these are actions undertaken by calculating, determined, "rational" individuals. Whatever the psychological world of lone wolf terrorists, consequently, it is both tautological and unhelpful to simply describe them as "crazy" following attacks that, seemingly, only a lunatic would envision, let alone undertake.[37] On this point, Fred Burton and Scott Stewart have separated an alleged prevalence of some form of severe psychological disorder—such as depression or lack of social skills—found in loner terrorists by usefully distinguishing between lone wolves and "lone nuts":

> A lone wolf ["a rare individual indeed"] is a person who acts on his or her own without orders from — or even connections to — an organization [. . . .] A lone wolf is a standalone operative who by his very nature is embedded in the targeted society and is capable of self-activation at any time [. . .] We distinguish between lone wolves and "lone nuts" because, although many politically motivated attackers do have some degree of mental illness, rational and irrational individuals operate differently.[38]

A final and perhaps obvious caveat bears mentioning here as well, despite the foregoing emphasis. Even if lone wolf terrorism's most enthusiastic supporters in the last few years have been extreme-right activists, they are not the only ones— there have also been individual acts of "eco-terrorism" against symbolic targets, "single issue"[39] animal rights or abortion activists, and even, with sad irony, antiwar campaigners. That is to say, lone wolf terrorism is a terrorist *method*, and racism is by no means a defining feature of self-activating terrorism. This is underscored by a prescient intelligence analysis by the Canadian Integrated Threat Assessment Centre (ITAC) in 2007, titled "Lone Wolf Attacks: A Developing Islamist Extremist Strategy?":

> For the purpose of this assessment, a "lone wolf" is an individual who is inspired by a terrorist ideology or organization to conduct independent attacks. They may receive support from friends, but plan and conduct the attack alone. Lone wolves in North America have traditionally taken their inspiration from right-wing groups, single-issue causes, or national liberation movements.

Lone wolves motivated by Islamic extremism are a recent development. Islamist terrorist strategists are now advocating that Muslims take action at a grassroots level, without waiting for instructions. Non-ideological factors, such as personal revenge, greed or coercion, do not appear to be motivators.[40]

Raffeallo Pantucci's typological approach offers the most extensive discussion of lone wolf Islamist terrorism to date; a recent phenomenon seemingly sparked by "influential ideologues" such as Anwar al-Awlaki and Abu Musab al-Suri—the latter a prominent jihadi Islamist and author of the Breivik-length call for self-activating terrorism, *The Global Islamic Resistance Call*. "Similarly," writes Pantucci, "Al Qaeda's American spokesman Adam Gadahn openly praised Nidal Hassan Malik (the man who opened fire at Fort Hood)."[41] Needless to say, like Breivik's shooting rampage on Utøya island, the murder of 13 American soldiers and wounding of 29 others at Fort Hood in November 2009 not only highlights the general dangers posed by lone wolf terrorism, but more specifically, could portend a frightening change in tactics among violent *takfiri* Islamism.[42]

With these characteristics to hand, it is thus possible to define lone wolf terrorism as *self-directed political or religious violence undertaken through the "terrorist attack cycle" by individuals—typically perceived by its adherents to be an act of asymmetrical, propagandistic warfare—which derives from a variable amount of external influence and context (notably now online), rather than external command and control.* This definition is slanted consciously toward perpetrator motivation rather than *ex post facto* perception (as in Jeffrey D. Simon's definition, cited earlier). It also excludes impromptu acts of violence, even if they are politically or religiously motivated. This could, contentiously, for example, include individual sleeper agents, who might have trained or radicalized with a hierarchical group or movement, but whose attack is self-activated with respect to timing, targeting, and the terrorism cycle. By focusing more squarely on lone wolf terrorism motives and logistical capabilities (not least those powered by the Internet) rather than perceptions by governments or other targets, it is hoped that this definition of self-directed, individual, ideological terrorism will go some way toward comprehending an old vinegary tactic in new, online terrorist bottles.

## NOTES

1.  For four recent, and widely differing, approaches to lone wolf terrorism over the last decade, see Peter J. Phillips, "Lone Wolf Terrorism," *Peace Economics, Peace Science and Public Policy* 17, no. 1 (2011): 1–29; Chris Dishman, "The Leaderless Nexus: When Crime and Terror Converge," in *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 28, no. 3 (2005): 237–252; Steven M. Chermak, Joshua D. Freilich, and Joseph Simone, "Surveying American State Policies Agencies About Lone Wolves, Far-Right Criminiality, and Far-Right and Islamic *Jihadist* Criminal Collaboration," *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 33, no. 11 (2010): 1019–1041; and Dennis Pluchinsky, *The Global Jihad: Leaderless Terrorism?* (Washington, DC: Woodrow Wilson International Center, 2006).

2.    Despite the word being coined over 100 years ago (in 1909), there was virtually nothing written on the subject before 2007; indeed, as Ramón Spaaij noted recently: "Research into lone wolf terrorism remains extremely scarce"; in "The Enigma of Lone Wolf Terrorism: An Assessment," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 33, no. 9 (2010): 855; see also, perhaps, the earliest academic approach to the phenomenon of lone wolf terrorism by Ze'ev Iviansky, "Individual Terror: Concept and Typology," in *The Journal of Contemporary History* 12, no. 43 (1977): 10.

3.    See the report by the Dutch Instituut voor Veiligheids- en Crisismanagement, *Lone Wolf Terrorism* (COT Study, published 7/6/2007), 5.

4.    Edwin Bakker and Beatrice de Graaf, "Lone Wolves: How to Prevent this Phenomenon?," in *ICCT Expert Meeting Paper* (Nov. 2010), 3; see also the American government texts and legal amendment by CRS, "Intelligence Reform and Terrorism Prevention Act of 2004: 'Lone Wolf' Amendment to the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act" (Dec. 2004); and Patricia L. Bellia's assessment of this bill, "The 'Lone Wolf' Amendment and the Future of Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Law," in *Villanova Law Review* 50 (2005): 425–455.

5.    See, for example, John Merriman, "Is This the First Terrorist of the Modern Age?," *BBC Magazine*, http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/magazine/8263858.stm (all websites last accessed March 20, 2013).

6.    Among many other documents pertaining to Breivik's trial, see "Anders Behring Breivik Court Statement 2012-06-22" on the (admiring) website *The Breivik Archive*, http://sites.google.com/site/breivikreport/documents/anders-breivik-court-statement-2012-06-22. On the conspiratorial construction of "cultural Marxism" in Breivik's formulation, see Chip Berlet, "Breivik's Core Thesis is White Christian Nationalism v. Multiculturalism," *Talk to Action*, www.talk2action.org/story/2011/7/25/73510/6015.

7.    See David Rapoport, "The Four Waves of Modern Terrorism," in *Attacking Terrorism: Elements of a Grand Strategy*, eds. Audrey Kurth Cronin and James M. Ludes (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2004), 46–73; see also the four-volume collection for the Critical Concepts in Political Science series, *Terrorism* (Vol. 1: The First or Anarchist Wave; Vol. 2: The Second or Anti-colonial wave; Vol. 3: The Third or New Left Wave; Vol. 4: The Fourth or Religious Wave), ed. David Rapoport (London: Routlege, 2006), revealingly containing only two essays dealing with lone wolf terrorism in the final volume. See also Jeffrey Kaplan, "Terrorism's Fifth Wave: A Theory, a Conundrum and a Dilemma," in *Perspectives on Terrorism* 2, no. 2 (2008), www.terrorismanalysts.com/pt/index.php/pot/article/view/26/html; and more recently, Kaplan, "The New/Old Terrorism," in *Phi Kappa Phi Forum* (Fall 2011), www.phikappaphi.org/forum/fall2011/terrorism/ pkpforum_fall2011_kaplan.pdf.

8.    Andrew Macdonald [William Luther Pierce], *Hunter* (Privately Published, USA: 1989), 178.

9.    Louis Beam, "Leaderless Resistance," *The Seditionist* 12 (Feb. 1992 [first published 1983]), www.louisbeam.com/leaderless.htm (bold text in original). For an important discussion of this far-right trope, see George Michael, "Leaderless Resistance and the Extreme Right," in *Lone Wolf Terror and the Rise of Leaderless Resistance* (Nashville: University of Vanderbilt Press, 2012), ch. 2.

10. Jeffrey Kaplan, "Leaderless Resistance," *Terrorism & Political Violence* 9, no. 3 (1997): 87, which continues: "With Beam's formulation, the theory of leaderless resistance was essentially complete. All that remained was to adapt and disseminate it to ever wider constituencies of the far right wing" (89).

11. See, for example, the groundbreaking monograph by Ramón Spaaij, *Understanding Lone Wolf Terrorism: Global Patterns, Motivations and Prevention* (London: Springer, 2012), 25.

12. See Theodore Kaczynski's letter to the authors, reproduced in Appendix B to Lou Michel and Dan Herbeck, *American Terrorist: Timothy McVeigh and the Oklahoma City Bombing* (New York: Reagan Books, 2001), 400.

13. For an excellent update on Stormfront and its current "major storm" of financial and logistical difficulties, see Heidi Beirich, "Gathering Storm" in *Intelligence Report: The Year in Hate and Extremism*, Southern Poverty Law Center 149 (Spring 2013), 63–66.

14. For more on the term *groupuscule*, see the special issue of *Patterns of Prejudice* 36, no. 3 (2002); and on the far-right use of the Internet, see, for example, the recent report "Hate 2.0: Online Terror + Hate: The First Decade" (Los Angeles: Simon Weisenthal Center, 2010), www.wiesenthal.com/atf/cf/%7BDFD2AAC1. . ./IREPORT.PDF. For a general approach to the distinction between the "new far-right" and more familiar manifestations of neo-fascism, see Paul Jackson et al., "The EDL: Britain's New Far-Right Social Movement" (Northampton: RNM Publications, 2011), www.radicalism-new-media.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/09/The_EDL_Britains_New_Far_Right_Social_Movement.pdf.

15. See Raymond Franklin, *The Hate Directory*, April 1, 2010, www.hatedirectory.com/hatedir.pdf.

16. Spaaij, *Understanding Lone Wolf Terrorism*, 31.

17. See, for example, Zygmunt Bauman, *Liquid Fear* (Cambridge: Polity, 2006), ch. 1; and Roger Griffin, *Terrorist's Creed: Fanatical Violence and the Human Need for Meaning* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2012), ch. 2.

18. Jeffrey D. Simon, *Lone Wolf Terrorism: Understanding the Growing Threat* (New York: Prometheus Books, 2013), 21.

19. See Matthew Feldman, "Breivik's Three Acts of Terrorism," *Society and Space: Environment and Planning D* 30, no. 2 (2012), www.envplan.com/openaccess/ d303.pdf.

20. Contained on the American Nazi Party straw poll, "White Revolution" (2009), www.whitehonor.com/FRAMEPAGE.htm. See also my "Hate Globally, Act Locally: A Case Study of Universal Nazism Online," in Christian Deitrich and Michael Schüßler, eds., *Jenseits der Epoche* (Münster: Unrast, 2011), 89–101; and "Broadband Terrorism: A New Face of Fascism?" (Sept. 2009), *History & Policy*, www.historyandpolicy.org/opinion/opinion_15.html.

21. DHS/I&S, "Rightwing Extremism: Current Economic and Political Climate Fuelling Resurgence in Radicalization and Recruitment" (2009), 7; see also Johnston's account of this report and the substantial internal resistance to its findings on right-wing extremism in the American government, Daryl Johnston, *Right Wing Resurgence: How a Domestic Terrorism Threat is Being Ignored* (London: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2012). This approach to revolutionary terrorism was expanded to include potential jihadi Islamist lone wolves by CIA Director Leon Panetta, who claimed in a 2010 "terror assessment to Congress": "It's the lone wolf strategy that I think we have to pay attention to as the main threat to this country"; "Intel Chief: Al-Qaeda Planning Attacks," www.usatoday.com/news/washington/2010-02-03-terror-threats-cia_N.htm.

22. Raffaello Pantucci, "A Typology of Lone Wolves: Preliminary Analysis of Lone Islamist Terrorists," *Developments in Radicalisation and Political Violence* (ICSR, March 2011), 25.

23. Simon, *Lone Wolf Terrorism: Understanding the Growing Threat,* 266.

24. Spaaij, *Understanding Lone Wolf Terrorism*, 16.

25. See Matthew Feldman, "Slaughter Was the Killer's Appetiser. It Is the Trial That Is His Main Course," www.independent.co.uk/voices/commentators/dr-matthew-feldman-slaughter-was-killers-appetiser-it-is-the-trial-that-is-his-main-course-2325910.html.

26. See Donald G. Dutton, "Individual Transitions to Extreme Violence," in *The Psychology of Genocide, Massacres, and Extreme Violence* (London: Praeger, 2007), ch. 9.

27. Pantucci, "A Typology of Lone Wolves: Preliminary Analysis of Lone Islamist Terrorists," 11.

28. As Breivik claimed in his manifesto *2083: A Declaration of European Independence*: "The first week of my 'explosive research phase' I googled for 200 hours over the course of 2 weeks. I was worried that I had to use obscure search engines if google had banned many search phrases or sources, but to my surprise google seemed to be fully functional in this regard. There are a lot of various explosives forums around (for example: roguesci.org/theforum) which will discuss in depth concerning hundreds of different recipes and methods of manufacture explosives. There are hundreds of various books out there about this subject."

29. See Joe Mulhall, "Top Individuals," in *The Counter-Jihad Movement: The Global Trend Feeding Anti-Muslim Hatred* (London: Searchlight Educational Trust, 2012), 20; and more recently, Matthew Goodwin, *The Roots of Extremism: The English Defence League and the Counter-Jihad Challenge,* Chatham House Briefing Paper, March 18, 2003, www.extremisproject.org/2013/03/putting-counter-jihad-groups-under-the-microscope.

30. See Gerry Gable and Paul Jackson, *Lone Wolves: Myth or Reality?*, Searchlight Educational Trust Report (2011), 5.

31. See the COT report, *Lone Wolf Terrorism*, 6.

32. *Lone Wolves: Myth or Reality?*, 81. This view is endorsed in the fourth edition of a popular overview; see Frank Bolz, Kenneth J. Dudonis, and David P. Schulz, *The Counterterrorism Handbook*: *Tactics, Procedures and Techniques* (London: Routledge, 2011), which argues: "in reality there are whole networks of supporting enablers for these [apparently lone-wolf] operatives, including publicists, counselors, tacticians, and legal advisors who communicate via websites, publication, blogs and other media to encourage and advise," 197.

33. Pan Pantziarka, *Lone Wolf: True Stories of Spree Killers* (London: Virgin Books, 2002), 214; for arguments regarding the age range and geographical scope of lone wolf terrorism, see the recent postgraduate thesis by Liesbeth van der Heide, "Individual Terrorism: Indicators of Lone Operators" (University of Utrecht: Unpublished MA Thesis, 2011), which argues that 62.5 percent of lone wolf terrorist attacks took place in Western Europe or the United States (67), and were mostly carried out by men under 40 (61).

34. See, for example, Vic Artiga, "Lone Wolf Terrorism: What We Need to Know and What We Need to Do," www.takresponse.com/index/homeland-security/lone-wolf_terrorism.html, which argues: "Many lone wolves have difficulty obtaining professional level training in using weapons or explosives, have difficulty translating their rhetoric into action, and often make some sort of key mistake. In addition, lone wolves are still constrained by the terrorist attack cycle and consequently must conduct target surveillance by themselves."

35. See, for example, Stratfor's "Defining the Terrorist Attack Cycle,'" February 23, 2012, available at (paywall): www.stratfor.com/image/defining-terrorist-attack-cycle.

36. See, for example, the British Home Office's Office for Security and Counter-Terrorism most recent, guidance for countering violent extremism, "The *Prevent*

Strategy" (London: Home Office Publications, 2011), 23–25; and more generally with respect to counter-terrorism (the overarching CONTEST strategy), see "What perceptions do the UK public have concerning the impact of counter-terrorism legislation implemented since 2000?," http://rds.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/pdfs10/ occ88.pdf.

37. For two recent studies approach to these psychological questions, see Roger Griffin, "Shattering Crystals: The Role of 'Dream Time' in Extreme Right-Wing Political Violence," *Terrorism & Political Violence* 15, no. 1 (2003): 57–95; and more recently, Sophia Moskalenko and Clark McCauley, "The Psychology of Lone-wolf Terrorism," in *Counselling Psychology Quarterly* 24, no. 12 (2011): 115–126.

38. Fred Burton and Scott Stewart, "The 'Lone Wolf' Disconnect," *Statfor*, January 30, 2008, www.stratfor.com/weekly/lone_wolf_disconnect.

39. This is one of Jeffrey D. Simon's five categories of lone wolf terrorists, in *Lone Wolf Terrorism*, 43–46; the others are religious, secular, criminal, and "idiosyncratic" (largely mentally ill).

40. Integrated Threat Assessment Center (Unclassified Intelligence Report), "Lone Wolf Attacks: A Developing Islamist Extremist Strategy?," June 29, 2007.

41. Pantucci, 6; the lone wolf "types" he identifies range from loner (wholly self-radicalizing), lone wolf, lone wolf pack to lone attackers ("with clear command and control links with actual Al Qaeda core or affiliated groups"), 29–30.

42. See Gabriel Weimann, "Lone Wolves in Cyberspace," *Journal of Terrorism Research* 3, no. 2 (Autumn 2012): 3.