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Abu Salah Md. Yousuf

COUNTERING LONE WOLF TERRORISM: CHALLENGES AND STRATEGIES

Abstract

The increasing trend of lone wolf terrorism has emerged as a new security threat for many nations of the world. Though it is not a new phenomenon, due to technological expansion and online radicalisation, the fear of lone wolf attacks is rising all over the world. When countries have developed a strong surveillance mechanism against group terrorism, the terrorist masterminds are spreading extremist ideologies to motivate individuals for lone wolf attacks. However, there are many unresolved questions among the academics and practitioners on the issue of understanding and countering lone wolf terrorism: How to define lone wolf terrorism? What are the challenges to face lone wolves and what types of strategies are necessary to counter lone wolf attacks? Based on the existing literature, this study tries to review the ongoing debates on the definition of lone wolf terrorism and summarises some common features of lone wolf attackers. Nevertheless, due to diversified motivational and ideological factors, it is difficult for security forces to identify lone wolf attackers. Moreover, many lone wolves have psychological disorders and mental instability which is a problem to identify or convict them as a criminal before they carry out any attack. In addition, since lone wolves do not maintain any connected network, it is difficult to adopt preventive measures against them. To face lone wolves, the security forces need special surveillance mechanism and strong community engagement. Three dimensional strategies are recommended in the existing literature: motivational, surveillance and hard security approaches. The strategies need to be context-specific and compatible with particular country's cultural and legal traditions.

1.   Introduction

Lone wolf terrorism is emerging as an important area of study in the contemporary terrorism literature. The threat of lone wolves is felt by the policy makers and security practitioners alike. In 2011, the then President of the United States (US), Barak Obama noted, "the most likely scenario that we have to guard against right now ends up being more of a lone wolf operation than a large, well-coordinated terrorist attack".[1] A report by the Department of Homeland Security of

Abu Salah Md. Yousuf is Senior Research Fellow at Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies (BIISS). His e-mail address is: yousuf@biiss.org

[1] "Obama says "lone wolf terrorist" biggest U.S. threat", *Reuters*, 16 August 2011.

the US in 2009 concluded, "lone wolves and small terrorist cells embracing violent right-wing extremist ideology is…the most dangerous domestic terrorism threat in the United States"[2]. However, the academic contributions in the area are not very old and the resources to understand lone wolf terrorism is still limited.[3] In 2003, Christopher Hewitt published a book titled *Understanding Terrorism in America: From the Klan to Al- Qaeda* where he surveyed three thousand terrorist incidents drawn from the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) terrorism reports and identified thirteen lone wolf attacks in the United States of America (USA) from 1955 to 1999. He argued that lone wolf terrorism is predominantly a US phenomenon and claimed, "in that a significant portion of terrorist attacks have been carried out by unaffiliated individuals rather than members of original groups".[4] Renowned terrorism scholar Bruce Hoffman made an important point, "…the traditional way of understanding terrorism… in some cases is no longer relevant. Increasingly, lone individuals with no connection with or formal ties to establish or identifiable terrorist organizations are rising up to engage in violence"[5]. In the revised edition of his famous book, *Inside Terrorism* (2006), Bruce Hoffman tried to develop a working definition of lone wolf terrorism.[6] In 2011, Alex P. Schmid mentioned the phenomena in the *Routledge Handbook of Terrorism Research* primarily in the context of radical right.[7] Ramon Spaaij in 2012, for the first time, made a comprehensive argument about the patterns, motivations and prevention mechanisms for lone wolf terrorism.[8] Spaaij took a case study approach to understand micro-dynamics of lone wolf terrorism and studied five cases: Austria, Israel, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom and the USA. In addition, security professionals of many countries are now concentrating to refine their strategies against lone wolf attacks and reshaping their surveillance mechanism against individuals who they think can individually pose a security threat.

There are a number of debates on how to define lone wolf terrorism. One argument is that an individual who is motivated himself without any direction or guidance from outside can be identified as lone wolf. But, it is very difficult to prove that a lone wolf is motivated by others or not. Rather, every terrorist subscribes to at least one particular ideology for perpetrating clandestine activities; although the individual may not have direct connection with the masterminds. On the other hand,

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[2] "Rightwing Extremism: Current Economic and Political Climate Fueling Resurgence in Radicalization and Recruitment", Washington, D.C.: Department of Homeland Security, 2009, p. 9.

[3] Mark S. Hamm and Ramon Spaaij, *The Age of Lone Wolf Terrorism*, New York: Columbia University Press, 2017, p. 13.

[4] Christopher Hewitt, *Understanding Terrorism in America: From the Klan to Al-Qaeda*, New York: Routledge, 2003, p. 78.

[5] Bruce Hoffman, "Al Qaeda, Trends in Terrorism, and Future Potentials: An Assessment", Santa Monica: RAND, 2003, pp.16-17.

[6] Bruce Hoffman, *Inside Terrorism*, New York: Columbia University Press, 2006.

[7] Jeffrey Kaplan, Helene Loow and Leena Malkki, "Introduction to the Special Issue on Lone Wolf and Autonomous Cell Terrorism", *Terrorism and Political Violence*, Vol. 26, Issue. 1, 2014.

[8] Ramon Spaaij, *Understanding Lone Wolf Terrorism: Global Patterns, Motivation and Prevention*, London: Springer, 2012.

some scholars argue that lone wolves may maintain very close connections within their very limited network, which is not widespread like group terrorists.[9] Therefore, question arises, when the Islamic State in Iraq and Levant (ISIL) instigates its followers to mount lone attacks, but attackers do not maintain any connection with ISIL, can these lone actors be termed as lone wolf terrorist? Moreover, the motivational and ideological factors of lone wolf terrorists are also an interesting area of study. What is their psychological status and how they become involved in such activities need proper understanding. Since lone wolves do not have connected networks, therefore, detection of their activities is very difficult. Their motivational factors and tactics of operation are also different from terrorist organisations. It is often argued that the spread of the internet and social media are responsible for individuals' motivation towards lone wolf terrorism.[10] Therefore, what types of challenges states are facing to counter lone wolves and what should be an effective strategy to face the menace of such kinds of terrorism are getting wider attention from the policy makers, security professionals and academia.

In this backdrop, based on the existing literature, this paper is an endeavour to understand lone wolf terrorism and challenges to counter lone attackers. It also evaluates response strategies recommended by different stakeholders in the field of counterterrorism. The paper is divided into five sections including introduction and conclusion. Section two explores definitional debates on lone wolf terrorism. Section three highlights the challenges of countering lone wolf terrorism. Section four analyses the response strategies to face lone wolves. The key debates on the issues of countering lone wolf terrorism are summarised in conclusion.

2.   Understanding Lone Wolf Terrorism

The term "terrorism" itself is a "contested and intensely political concept, and there is neither academic nor policy consensus on its definition"[11]. Alex P. Schmid notes, "the term is used promiscuously for such a wide range of manifestations...that one wonders whether it is a unitary concept."[12] Like terrorism, "lone wolf terrorism" is also a contested concept and no academic consensus has been achieved yet to understand this phenomenon.[13] The way radical actors explain themselves, in the scholarly

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[9] Group terrorists denotes the terrorist groups who have financial and physical networks with a hierarchical command structure.

[10] Jeffrey D. Simon, "What makes lone-wolf terrorists so dangerous?", *UCLA Newsroom*, 18 April 2013, available at http://newsroom.ucla.edu/stories/what-makes-lone-wolfe-terrorists-245316, accessed on 02 February 2018.

[11] Ramon Spaaij, *Understanding Lone Wolf Terrorism: Global Patterns, Motivations and Prevention*, *op. cit.,* p. 15.

[12] Alex P. Schmid, "Terrorism - The Definitional Problem", *Case Western Reserve Journal of International Law*, Vol. 36, Issue. 2, 2004, p. 380.

[13] Catherine Appleton, "Lone Wolf Terrorism in Norway", *The International Journal of Human Rights*, Vol. 18, No. 2, 2014, p. 128 and Michael Becker, "Explaining Lone Wolf Target Selection in the United States", *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism,* Vol. 37, Issue. 11, 2014.

writings the term refers to different meaning.[14] There are a number of buzzwords that characterise lone wolf terrorism: loner, lone actor, solo actor, solo terrorist, solitary, freelancer, self-starter, lone offender, lone avenger, leaderless, self-directed, self-motivated, lone wolf pack, one-man pack, self-activating and idiosyncratic.[15] Nevertheless, the nomenclature debate does not hamper the understanding of lone wolf terrorism in the academic literature. When policy makers and security experts subscribe to a particular understanding of lone attackers, it plays significant role in the policy making and counterterrorism strategy. Therefore, the existing definitions of lone wolf terrorism need an assessment.

Lone wolf terrorism is as old as the history of terrorism. David Rapoport's wave theory of terrorism recorded the terrorism history from the anarchists originated in 1880s in Russia, when Russian anarchist Mikhail Bakunin carried out political assassinations and bombings under the strategy of "propaganda by deed"[16]. Records suggest that lone wolves were active in all four waves of terrorism depicted by Rapoport: the anarchist, the anti-colonial, the new left and the religious.[17] However, some scholars identify "lone wolf" as the fifth wave of terrorism.[18] While others argue that "comparative historical analysis" of Richard English[19] would be relevant to understand lone wolf terrorism.[20] Because, a broader and historical understanding of lone wolf terrorism can specify the context for policy making. Therefore, Ramon Spaaij evaluated lone wolf data from 1968 to 2008 and tried to understand the incidences and motivations. In the contemporary literature, there is a tendency to understand lone wolf terrorism from a context-specific perspective. Because, every lone wolf has some unique features which may not be applicable to others. But, still scholars and policy makers are keen to identify some common features of lone wolf terrorism.

Bruce Hoffman provided a working definition of lone wolf terrorism drawn from the Strategic Plan 2004-2009 of the FBI of the USA. According to the definition, lone wolves "typically draw ideological inspiration from formal terrorist organizations, but operate on the fringes of those movements. Despite their *ad hoc* nature and generally limited resources, they can mount high-profile, extremely destructive

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[14] Ramon Spaaij and Marks S. Hamm, "Key Issues and Research Agendas in Lone Wolf Terrorism", *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*, Vol. 80, Issue. 3, 2015.

[15] *Ibid* and Burcu Pinar Alakoc, "Competing to Kill: Terrorist Organizations Versus Lone Wolf Terrorists", *Terrorism and Political Violence*, Vol. 29, Issue. 3, 2017, p. 6.

[16] Walter Laqueur, *A History of Terrorism*, London: Transaction Publishers, 2012, p. 49.

[17] Raffaello Pantucci, Clare Ellis and Lorien Chaplais, "Lone-Actor Terrorism: Literature Review", Countering Lone-Actor Terrorism Series No. 1, the Royal United Services Institute for Defence and Security Studies (RUSI), 2015.

[18] Jeffrey D. Simon, "Technological and Lone Operator Terrorism: Prospects for a Fifth Wave of Global Terrorism", in Jean E. Rosenfeld (ed.), *Terrorism, Identity and Legitimacy: The Four Wave Theory and Political Violence*, London: Routledge, 2011, pp. 44-65.

[19] Richard English, *Terrorism: How to Respond,* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009.

[20] Raffaello Pantucci *et. al., op. cit.*

attacks, and their operational planning is often difficult to detect".[21] Jeffrey D. Simon identified five basic types of lone wolf terrorism: secular, religious, single-issue, criminal and idiosyncratic.[22] He also mentioned, "some lone wolves fall into more than one category"[23]. According to him, secular lone wolves attack for political, ethno-nationalist and separatist causes. Religious terrorists attack in the name of their respective religion which may be Islam, Christianity, Judaism, or some other belief system. The single issue lone wolves are those who try to propagate any special issue like abortion, animal rights, or the environment. The criminal lone wolf terrorists are those who attack for money or personal gain as opposed to political, social, religious, or ethno-nationalist goals. Lastly, the idiosyncratic lone wolves commit attacks for any particular causes, which may be irrational and they may have severe personality and psychological problems.

However, like group terrorism, the political nature of lone wolf has raised controversies about its definition. In addition, lack of adequate academic study also made it difficult to formulate an effective framework for understanding lone wolf terrorism. The main definitional debates are surrounded by three critical arguments: the number of perpetrators, the ideological contingency and the degree of external connection.

The first debate is regarding the number of perpetrators. Jeffrey D. Simon argues that lone wolf terrorism is "the use of threat of violence . . . by an individual acting alone or with minimal support from one or two other people".[24] Christopher Hewitt also studied lone wolf attacks in the USA between 1955 and 1999. He accepted that the terrorist act of any "close group", less than four individuals, can be identified as lone wolf terrorism.[25] On the contrary, Burton and Stewart argue that a lone wolf is a person, "who acts on his or her own without orders from or even connection to – an organisation"[26]. In terms of number of perpetrators, they divide terrorism in three categories: lone wolves, sleeper cells and group terrorists. They consider that if more than one individual engaged in terrorist activities and if they are not connected like terrorist groups, such terrorists would be termed as sleeper cells. They argue that sleeper cells infiltrate in a society and wait for the direction from any terrorist groups. Burton and Stewart emphasise that a lone wolf is a "stand alone operative who by his very nature is embedded in the targeted society and is capable of self-activation at any time"[27]. Ramon Spaaij defines three features of lone wolf terrorists: (a) operate

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[21] Bruce Hoffman, *Inside Terrorism*, *op. cit.*, p. 40.

[22] Jeffrey D. Simon, *op. cit*.

[23] *Ibid*.

[24] Jeffrey D. Simon, *Lone Wolf Terrorism: Understanding the Growing Threat*, New York: Prometheus Books, 2013, pp. 37-38.

[25] Christopher Hewitt, *op. cit*.

[26] Fred Burton and Scott Stewart, "The "Lone Wolf" Disconnect", *STRATFOR: Global Intelligence*, 30 January 2008.

[27] *Ibid*.

individually, (b) do not belong to an organised terrorist group or network, and (c) whose *modus operandi* are conceived and directed by the individual without any direct outside command and hierarchy.[28]

The second debate emanates from the ideological contingency of lone wolf attackers. As mentioned, Burton and Stewart argue that lone wolves must perpetrate as a lone actor. But, they think that lone attackers can take their ideological motivation from a network or from terrorist organisation, either through personal connections, inspirational speeches or materials, or via online access.[29] Mark S. Hamm and Ramon Spaaij note, "Lone wolves do not operate in isolation, and their radicalization can be traced in various social networks. Often they are radicalized more than one network"[30]. But, Kaplan identifies the lone wolf operation "in which an individual, or a very small, highly cohesive group, engages in acts of anti-state violence independent of any movement, leader, or network of support"[31]. This definition underlines that ideological linkage is also important in defining lone wolf terrorism. Kaplan's definition is similar to the understanding of Simon and Hewitt in terms of numbers of perpetrators. However, it is very difficult to claim that an individual perpetrated terrorist activities without any ideological motivation. Because of the expansion of social media and internet connections, it has been possible for any individual to be motivated by extremist ideology.[32] Therefore, if anyone receives motivations from internet sources, Kaplan has no objection to identify him as lone wolf terrorist.

The third debate involves the external connection of lone wolf attackers. The question lies on the issue of individual initiative versus external directives. The proponents of "lone wolf pack" argue that lone wolves do not maintain any "contact with operational extremists", but they may have "a formal connection" with any terrorist organisation.[33] Ramon Spaaij's definition also denies any *modus operandi* directed by the individual with any outside command and hierarchy.[34] His argument excludes many high profile terrorist acts where the perpetrators were motivated by extremist ideological groups. For example, the Oklahoma City bombing on 19 April 1995 is well known as lone wolf attack where Timothy McVeigh was the main attacker and Terry Nichols played a critical role in the operation. Ramon Spaaij's features may not include such incidents as a lone wolf attack. On the other hand, Pantucci defines lone wolf terrorism as "individuals who, while appearing to carry out their actions alone and

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[28] Ramon Spaaij, "The Enigma of Lone Wolf Terrorism: An Assessment", *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, Vol. 33, Issue. 9, 2010, p. 856.

[29] Fred Burton and Scott Stewart, "The "Lone Wolf" Disconnect", *op. cit.*

[30] Mark S. Hamm and Ramon Spaaij, *op. cit.*, p. 59.

[31] Jeffrey J. Kaplan, "Leaderless Resistance", *Terrorism and Political Violence*, Vol. 9, Issue. 3, 1997, p. 80.

[32] Ramon Spaaij and M. Hamm, "Key Issues and Research Agendas in Lone Wolf Terrorism", *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*, Vol. 38, Issue. 3, 2015, p. 170.

[33] Matthew Feldman, "Comparative Lone Wolf Terrorism: Towards a Heuristic Definition", *Democracy and Security*, Vol. 9, Issue. 3, 2013, p. 276.

[34] Ramon Spaaij, *Understanding Lone Wolf Terrorism: Global Patterns, Motivations and Prevention*, *op. cit.*

without any physical outside instigation, in fact demonstrate some level of contact with operational extremists"[35]. In this context, some analysts differentiate between "solo terrorism" and "lone wolf terrorism". As reported by the Danish Security and Intelligence Service, if an individual was connected with any terrorist organisation, terrorist activities would be termed as "solo terrorism", but if individual terrorists were not connected with any groups, they would be termed as "lone wolves".[36]

Within such debates, the Countering Lone-Actor Terrorism (CLTA) project by the Royal United Services Institute for Defence and Security Studies (RUSI) has developed a working definition as, "the threat or use of violence by a single perpetrator (or small cell) not acting out of purely personal material reasons, with the aim of influencing a wider audience, and who acts without any direct support in the planning, preparation, execution of the attack, and whose decision to act is not directed by any group or other individuals (although possibly influenced by others)"[37]. The CLAT project subsequently divided their definition in certain criterion, which gives a wider understanding regarding lone wolf terrorism[38]:

- Violence, or the threat of violence, must be planned or carried out.

- The perpetrator(s) must be an individual, dyad or triad.

- The perpetrator must act without any direct support in the planning, preparation and execution of the attack.

- The perpetrator's decision to act must not be directed by any group or other individuals.

- The motivation cannot be purely personal-material gain.

- The target of the attack extends beyond those victims who are immediately impacted by the act.

All scholars of lone wolf terrorism agree that the attacker must be alone and every lone wolf has an ideological motivation. The debate comes regarding their ideological connection and linkage with hierarchical command. The CLAT project included a broader understanding of lone wolf terrorism and tries to focus the target of the lone attackers. However, the policy makers and security institutions mainly

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[35] Raffaello Pantucci, "A Typology of Lone Wolves: Preliminary Analysis of Lone Islamist Terrorists", London: International Centre for the Study of Radicalisation and Political Violence, 2011, p. 19.
[36] "The Threat from Solo Terrorism and Lone Wolf Terrorism", the Danish Security Intelligence Service, 05 April 2011, p. 3.
[37] Clare Ellis, Raffaello Pantucci, Jeanine de Roy van Zuijdewijn, Edwin Bakker, Benoît Gomis, Simon Palombi and Melanie Smith, "Lone-Actor Terrorism: Final Report", Countering Lone-Actor Terrorism Series No. 11, the Royal United Services Institute for Defence and Security Studies (RUSI), 2016.
[38] *Ibid*.

divide terrorism in two groups: group terrorism and lone wolf. From a policy making perspective, any individual or close group who do not take any instant command from any hierarchical command can be termed as a lone wolf. Some common features of lone wolf terrorists can be identified: the ideological motivations of all lone wolf terrorists are not same, lone wolf terrorists may be sympathiser to an extremist movement, but they are not part of such movement, the spectrum of motivations for lone wolf terrorists may be same with any terrorist organisation and lone wolf terrorists do not necessarily seek to establish their own group or join an existing group, and may be disconnected from group terrorism.

3.   Challenges to Counter Lone Wolf Terrorism

The increasing attacks by lone wolf terrorists are emerging as a global concern. The Institute for Economic Peace (IEP) in the Global Terrorism Index 2017 shows that while in 2008 there was only one lone wolf attacks in the Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) countries, in the first half of 2017, 58 such kinds of attacks were recorded (Figure 1).[39] As such, dealing lone wolf terrorism has become a challenge for many countries. Since lone wolves do not act like group terrorists, it is difficult for the security forces to detect them and to take any necessary actions against them. Their ideological and motivational factors are also varied and multi-dimensional. The new and emerging challenges necessitate new policies and strategies. In most cases, the challenges of all types of terrorism are same, but lone wolves need more attention due to their special features in terms of motivation, operation, tactics and target. Ramon Spaaij identified five features of lone wolf terrorists[40]: (a) lone wolves make a combination of their ideological and broader political and religious grievances, (b) while previous studies did not focus on mental illness of lone wolf terrorists, Spaaij identified that lone wolves are likely to suffer from some forms of psychological disturbance, (c) they normally live an isolated life and to a varying degree, they are loners with few friends and prefer to act alone, (d) they may not maintain any connection with any terrorist group, but they are sympathiser to a terrorist organisation or group, and (e) even though lone wolves live isolated, before their activities they try to disclose their demands to the society. Due to such unique features, facing lone wolf terrorism is an issue of concern for the policy makers and security practitioners.

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[39] "Global Terrorism Index 2017: Measuring and Understanding the Impact of Terrorism", Institute for Economics and Peace (IEP), 2017.
[40] Mark S. Hamm and Ramon Spaaij, *The Age of Lone Wolf Terrorism, op. cit.*

Figure 1: Lone Actor Attacks and Fatalities (2008 - June 2017) in OECD Countries (Excluding Israel and Turkey)
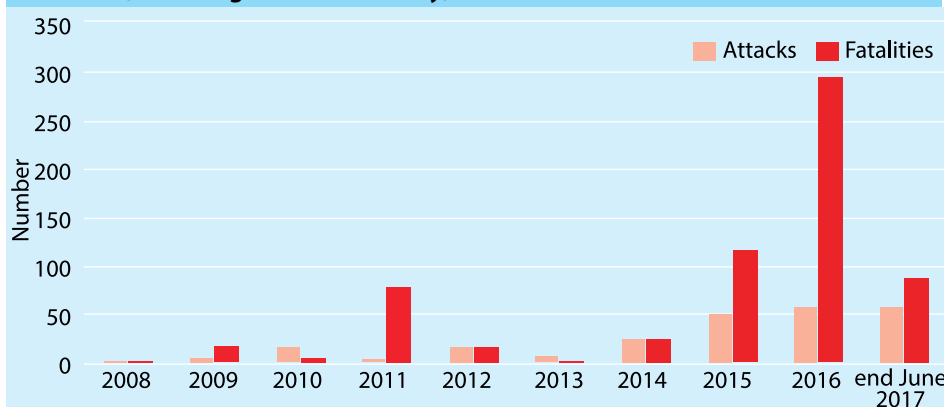
Source: Global Terrorism Index 2017, Institute for Economics and Peace, 2017.

A key counterterrorism challenge to face lone actor terrorism is identifying the interaction points between lone actors and their social environments.[41] In this respect, challenges to counter lone wolf terrorism can be divided into three criteria: prevention, interdiction and prosecution.[42] In all these three cases, lone actors present difficulties to authorities for a number of reasons: (a) large part of the activities of lone wolves is isolated in nature; hence, it is not easy for the security forces to identify them, (b) there are wide ranges of ideological and motivational factors influencing lone wolves to be violent. Thus, defining trends of them are difficult, and (c) lone wolves are mostly "self-tasking" and "self-radicalising". Sometimes, they take very shorter time to be radicalised than group terrorists. Former US Department of Homeland Security Secretary, Janet Napolitano noted that lone terror actors are "the most challenging" from the perspective of law enforcement "because by definition they're not conspiring. They're not using phones, the computer networks...they're not talking with others".[43] David Irvine, former Director General of the Australian Security Intelligence Organisation, mentioned, "the rampant use of internet" caused new and effective means for individuals to propagate and absorb unfettered ideas and information and to be radicalised – literally, in their lounge room."[44] Therefore, challenges for countering lone wolf terrorism can be categorised in threefold: ideological and motivation centric, psychology centric and challenges for security forces.

Since lone wolves are not connected with any group, hence, how an individual gets motivated is difficult to detect. There are widespread extreme ideologies, which

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[41] Ramon Spaaij, "Lone Actors: Challenges and Opportunities for Countering Violent Extremism" in Aaron Richman and Yair Sharan (eds.), *Lone Actor – An Emerging Security Threat*, Amsterdam: IOS Press, 2014, p. 120.
[42] *Ibid.*
[43] *Ibid.*
[44] *Ibid.*

can influence any individual to be motivated towards clandestine activities. It has been widely discussed how an individual can be motivated by internet sources and be involved in the terrorist activities, where he may not need any help from any other individual. When an individual is indoctrinated in any extremist ideology, he becomes violent and acts accordingly to attack people. Since lone wolves are isolated from society, it is difficult to identify the responsible ideologies and motivational factors which instigate an individual to be a lone wolf terrorist. When lone wolves act, they do not share their actions with others. It is also not clear who is motivated by which ideology and how he comes in touch with that ideology. Global Terrorism Index 2017 identified five motivational factors for lone wolf terrorism: white supremacist, political, Islamic fundamentalism, individual issues and unknown issues.

Figure 2: Motivations for Lone Wolf Terrorist Attacks (2008-June 2017) in OECD Countries (Excluding Israel and Turkey)
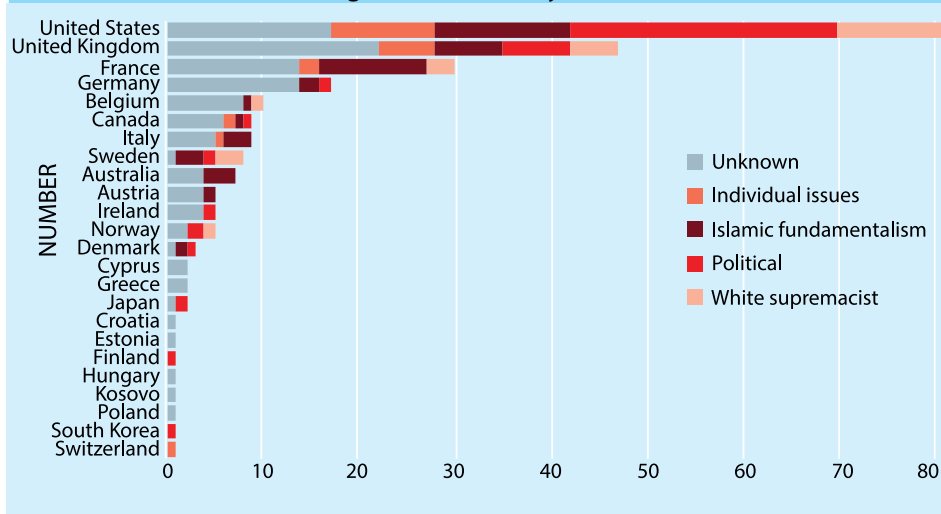
Source: Global Terrorism Index 2017, Institute for Economics and Peace, 2017.

Among a wide spectrum of issues, it is difficult to monitor which factors influence an individual and which sources of internet attract any one to be engaged in violent and terrorist activities. In addition, lone wolves have a wide variety of ideological, social and political background. Therefore, the motivational factors are also diversified and it is difficult to monitor the sources of motivation. The local factors are also important to understand lone wolf terrorism. Hamm and Spaaij claimed that forty per cent of world's lone wolf attacks occurred in the USA and the causes behind such trend is "America's tradition off individualism, its gun culture, or its foreign policies, the echoes of slavery, the appeal of conspiracy theories, celebrity worship, or what Richard Hofstadter famously called the "paranoid style" in American Politics".[45]

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[45] Mark S. Hamm and Ramon Spaaij, *The Age of Lone Wolf Terrorism*, *op. cit.*, p. 261.

The European Police Chiefs convention concludes, "the changing dynamics in our societies, together with technological advances, may encourage isolated, disaffected individuals to turn into violent extremists, to the extreme of becoming 'lone wolf' terrorists"[46]. Motivational factors are mainly context-specific. What may be applicable in the context of the USA, may not be applicable for rest of the world.

By analysing lone wolf terrorism data of 15 years from 1968 to 2010, Spaaij identified main ideological sources of lone wolf terrorism: right-wing terrorism/white supremacy (17 per cent), Islamism (15 per cent), anti-abortion (8 per cent) and nationalism and separatism (7 per cent).[47] Spaaij showed that most of the recent terrorist attackers are mainly inspired by radical Islam. He thinks that it is a response "to the call by Al-Qaeda ideologues for individual Jihad."[48] In 2014, Paul Gill, John Horgan and Paige Deckert analysed the motivations and the antecedent behaviours of 119 lone wolves in Europe and the United States, and listed ideological motivations as Al-Queda 43 per cent, right-wing ideology 34 per cent, single issue (such as anti-abortion and environmental campaign) 18 per cent and others 5 per cent.[49] Analysing 98 lone actor terrorist plots in Europe between 2000 and 2014, the CLAT project highlighted increasing trend of religiously inspired terrorist attacks and the right-wing terrorist attacks. The data set verified that 2000-2014; right-wing attacks caused 260 injuries and 94 fatalities, while religiously inspired attacks killed 16 and injured 65 people.[50] The CLAT project also highlighted that the main motivational factor for religiously inspired groups are taking political revenge against Western European Foreign Policy towards Middle East, national governments support and relations with Israel and insult to the prophet of Islam.[51] On the other hand, most of the other right-wing attackers are inspired by anti-migration or Islamophobic beliefs, which are mainly supported by white supremacists.[52] European Union Terrorism Situation and Trend Report (TE-SAT) 2017 mentioned about ethno-nationalist and separatist terrorism in Europe, left-wing and anarchist terrorism and single issue terrorism.[53] All types are analysed under the act of group or individuals rather than being studied under lone wolf terrorism. The report only made some references to lone actor terrorism and the discourse to focus lone wolf terrorists or individuals. The issue of lone terrorists is only referred by "*Jihadists*", who are mainly motivated by Al-Qaeda and the ISIL. However, it is still a major concern to identify the motivational factors of lone wolf terrorists and before an attack no one can identify that who is motivated for terrorist activities.

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[46] European Police Chiefs Convention, Counter Terrorism Working Group Conclusions, Europol, The Heague, 2011.
[47] Ramon Spaaij, *Understanding Lone Wolf Terrorism: Global Patterns, Motivations and Preventions*, *op. cit.*
[48] *Ibid*.
[49] P. Gill, J. Horgen and P. Deckert, "Bombing Alone: Tracing the Motivations and Antecedent Behaviors of Lone-Actor Terrorists", *Journal of Forensic Sciences*, Vol. 59, Issue. 2, pp. 425-435.
[50] Clare Ellis *et. al., op. cit.*
[51] *Ibid*.
[52] Melanie Smith, Sabine Barton and Jonathan Birdwell, "Lone-Actor Terrorism Policy Paper 3: Motivations, Political Engagement and Online Activity", Countering Lone-Actor Terrorism Series No. 7, the Royal United Services Institute for Defence and Security Studies (RUSI), 2016.
[53] "European Union Terrorism Situation and Trend Report 2017", *Europol*, European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Cooperation, 2017.

Psychological factors of a lone wolf terror are also difficult to identify. In some cases lone wolves are mentally disturbed and remain disconnected from mainstream society. Their regular behaviour and lifestyle are not similar to other people. They become obsessed with their target and do not consider the consequences of terrorist attack. Obsession on particular issues deviate them from rational thinking and they can easily attack anything, which may be disastrous for them also. Fred Burton argues that "Mentally disturbed lone wolves pose particular problems because they often have an extremely narrow focus of interest and cannot be diverted to an easier target by heightened security measures. . . Mentally disturbed lone wolves also frequently have an almost total disregard for the consequences of their actions, and quite often show no concern about escaping after they attack."[54]

Though there is "no unified, consistent profile of a lone wolf terrorists, it is widely argued that lone wolf terrorists suffer greater degrees of mental illness"[55]. CLAT project identified that 35 per cent of lone wolves are affected by mental health disorders.[56] Pantucci claimed that psychological disorder and general social inability are the main causes of many lone wolf terrorists.[57] Spaaij studied five cases regarding lone wolves' mental state. He found that four of the five were diagnosed with personality disorders and four of the five case studies have experienced depression during one particular stage of their lives.[58] A study by Gruenewald, Chermak and Frelich also found that 40 per cent of lone wolves experienced mental illness, which is significantly higher than the 7.6 per cent among the group base terrorist actors.[59] It needs to be mentioned that though a good portion of lone wolf terrorists are "mentally ill", it would not be right to think that lone wolf terrorists are irrational actors or "emotional" mass murderers. Rather, in most of the cases, these acts of violence are launched by determined and rational individuals.[60] Till the end of their operation, they remain very silent and lone. Therefore, it is not possible for other members of the community to prevent them from their brutal activities.

Detecting terrorist activities is difficult for the security forces. In the case of lone wolf terrorism, security forces face some special difficulties, which are not applicable for group terrorists. Since lone wolves have no connection or network, therefore, it is difficult for security forces to identify the perpetrators. Moreover,

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[54] Fred Burton, "The Challenges of Lone Wolf", *Security Weekly,* Strat for, 30 May 2007, avaiable at https://worldview.stratfor.com/article/challenge-lone-wolf, accessed on 22 February 2018.
[55] Ovgu Kalkan Kucuksolak, "Lone Wolf Terrorism: Discussions on Definitions and Constructions", in Ovgu Kalkan Kucuksolak (ed.), *Current Debates in International Law*, Vol. 4, London: IJOPEC Publication Limited, 2017, p. 34.
[56] Clare Ellis *et. al., op. cit.*
[57] Raffaello Pantucci, Clare Ellis and Lorien Chaplais, *op. cit.*
[58] Ramon Spaaij, *Understanding Lone Wolf Terrorism: Global Patterns, Motivations and Preventio*n, *op. cit.*
[59] J. Gruenewald, S. Chemak and J. Freilich, "Distinguishing "Loner" Attacks from Other Domestic Extremist Violence", *American Society of Criminology and Public Policy*, Vol. 1, Issue. 12, 2013, pp. 65-91.
[60] Matthew Fledman, *op. cit.*

gathering information and engaging communities are also major challenges for security forces when they operate for detecting lone wolf terrorists. Therefore, methods like community policing may not be always effective, because it is difficult for communities to ensure surveillance of the activities of every individual.

It is extremely difficult to differentiate between who intends to commit attacks and who simply expresses their radical beliefs or hollow threats.[61] In addition, in cyberspace, they may operate which is not legally right, but it is difficult for the security forces to detect. However, if anyone does not violate any existing law, it is difficult for the security forces to arrest them or to take any legal measures against one who is going to be a lone wolf attacker. As Bakker and de Graaf pointed out, "Knowing that all terrorists are radical, but that most radicals are not terrorists, it is extremely difficult to single out potential lone wolves before they strike, even with the help of most sophisticated intelligence gathering tools"[62]. They went further by commenting that lone wolf terrorists, "provide the most puzzling and unpredictable form of terrorism" for counterterrorism organisations, the police and intelligence communities.[63] Every lone wolf bears unique character, which does not match with others. Therefore, pre-emptive measures by the security forces are difficult.

4.   Response Strategies

Increasing trend of lone wolf terrorism has raised the attention of policy makers, security forces and academic communities to develop an effective counterterrorism strategy. Existing literatures suggest that counterterrorism strategy for both kinds of terrorism, lone wolf or group, can be same. Nevertheless, some additional measures may be necessary in the case of lone wolves. Academic literatures suggest that counterterrorism strategy needs to be a country *or* region specific. Every country's counterterrorism strategy should be developed based on its historical factors, experiences with terrorism, political system and its culture.[64]

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[61] Catherine Appleton, *op. cit.*
[62] Edwin Bakker and Beatrice de Graaf, "Lone Wolves: How to Prevent This Seemingly New Phenomenon", The Hague: International Centre for Counter-Terrorism, 2010.
[63] Edwid Bakker and Beatrice de Graaf, "Preventing Lone Wolf Terrorism: Some CT Approaches Addressed", *Perspective on Terrorism*, Vol. 5, No. 5-6, 2011, p. 46.
[64] Alex P. Schmid and Ronal D. Crelinsten (eds.), *Western Responses to Terrorism*, London: Frank Cass, 1993; Marianne van Leeuwen (ed.), *Confronting Terrorism: European Experiences and Policies*, The Hague: Kluwer Law International, 2003; Yonah Alexander (ed.), *Combating Terrorism: Strategies of Ten Countries*, Michigan: Michigan University Press, 2002; Karin Van Hippel (ed.), *Europe Confronts Terrorism*, London: Palgrave, 2005; Jørgen Staun, "Radicalisation, Recruitment and the EU Counter-radicalisation Strategy", Transnational Terrorism, Security & the Rule of Law (TTSRL), 2008 and "The European Union's Policies on Counter-Terrorism Relevance, Coherence and Effectiveness", The European Parliament, 2017, available at http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2017/583124/IPOL_STU(2017)583124_EN.pdf, accessed on 30 March 2018.

Academics, policy makers and security analysts have recommended multi-dimensional strategies to face attacks of lone wolf terrorism. Ramon Spaaij has shown three broad categories of strategies: legalistic, repressive and conciliatory.[65] Legalistic responses include national and international legal regimes where states unilaterally and multilaterally develop legal systems to face lone wolf terrorists. At the national level, states develop different institutions and laws to respond to terrorism. At the global level, nation states formulate different types of regimes, which can facilitate nations to counter terrorism. The repressive responses include criminal justice system of a country, strengthening security forces and effective intelligence network. Criminal justice system identifies terrorist activities and defines punishment for terrorist groups. State strengthens capacity of security forces in the surveillance and for doing operation against terrorists. In the case of countering lone wolf terrorism, internet surveillance by the security forces is very important. Close monitoring of internet and specific websites help security forces to identify the ideological roots of lone wolf terrorism. However, repressive measures need to be considered carefully, because an extreme level of repressiveness may undermine human rights concerns. The final strategy mentioned by Spaaij is conciliatory responses. It is about improvement of socio-economic conditions, increased political rights, government recognition of ethno-nationalist or religious sentiments and public recognition of the validity of grievances. Lone wolves do not communicate with audience by only violent measures, rather they communicate through statements, letters, manifestos or videos sent to news media. Therefore, conciliatory measures may be useful to prevent lone wolves from terrorist activities.

Edwin Bakker and Beatrice de Graaf have recommended for seven strategies specifically for countering lone wolf terrorism.[66] Firstly, since it is difficult to identify lone wolf terrorists, therefore, instead of locating lone wolf terrorists, security forces need to visualise how such attacks occur. It will help them to take necessary measures, where they apprehend any kinds of threat. Such strategy needs sufficient information management and effective intelligence networking. Secondly, engagement with the communities those are afflicted by the lone wolf terrorist is helpful to develop effective strategies. The role of community in countering terrorism is inevitable. Communities can engage all individual to be aware about the activities in their community, they can motivate perverted individuals and they can take help from security forces. The influential community members can engage all members of the community to face threats. Thirdly, in most of the cases lone wolves consider them as catalysts. Therefore, it is necessary to study what types of issues and activities motivate to attack and to organise violence. It is also necessary to know what are their grievances and what triggers them to be violent. Fourthly, though lone wolves act alone, but they are motivated by extremist ideologies. Therefore, disseminating counterterrorism narratives is an essential strategy to face all kinds of terrorism. However,

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[65] *Ibid*.
[66] Edwin Bakker and Beatrice de Graaf, "Preventing Lone Wolf Terrorism: Some CT Approaches Addressed", *op. cit.*, p. 47.

such narratives have to be context-specific and the ingredients of the strategy should delegitimise the perpetrators and their acts. Fifthly, awareness programme can be effective when parents, schools and universities can motivate individual on certain context. Since lone wolves have no "organisational hierarchy", motivations from family and community can prevent them from violent activities. Sixthly, the lone wolves sometimes develop their manifestos. For example, Norwegian lone wolf Breivik sent email to his possible supporters and posted a video and 1,500 pages manifesto containing what he wanted to establish. In such cases, the security forces can be active to identify such kinds of activities to prevent any types of attack. Seventhly, the security forces need to know the *modus operandi* of lone wolf actors. Defining context based *modus operandi* may help states to determine the nature and operational strategy of the lone wolves. However, these seven strategies are mentioned in the context of the USA.

Referring to the Indonesian context, Kumar Ramakrishna identified five dimensions of countering lone wolf terrorism: Sender, Message, Recipient, Mechanism and Context.[67] The idea is that every lone wolf terrorist is motivated by an ideology where eloquent speeches of motivating masters instigate lone wolves to act violently. In the case of Indonesia, Anwar al-Awlaki[68] was one of them who instigated lone wolf actors to operate at different points of times. Such actors are known as "Senders" of lone wolf terrorism. The speeches of them also motivate lone wolves to target a certain group. The "Message" of "Senders" is another significant dimension of lone wolf terrorism. The "Senders" articulate message based on the theological and ideological context. Such "Messages" spread in the society through different mediums and lone wolves follow such "Messages". The third dimension is "Recipients" who are vulnerable individuals emotionally motivated by these "Messages". However, due to internet such "Messages" spread very quickly all over the world and many individuals are easily motivated. The fourth dimension is "Mechanism" of spreading extremist ideologies. Open societies emphasise on "freewheeling" of ideas. But, extremists abuse this opportunity by spreading elements, which cause lone wolf terrorists to be directed towards violent activities. Therefore, the arguments for legal means to restrict anti-social elements are increasing. Moreover, spreading moderate ideas can help to delegitimise theological weaknesses of lone wolf terrorists. The last dimension is "Context" of the region where lone wolf terrorists have born and grown. If the justice system of the region is weak, governance system is poor and people are grossly marginalised, the region may generate lone wolves. Hence, "Context" can be a factor for lone wolf terrorism. A strategy should be developed by addressing all such dimensions.

In the context of the US, Daniel Byman identified four strategies to counter lone wolf terrorism. Firstly, lone wolves must be kept isolated. It will prevent them to be organised and connected. The communication among lone wolves may help them to be organised to

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[67] Kumar Ramakrishna, "Countering the Self Radicalised Lone Wolf: A New Paradigm?", RSIS Commentaries, No. 019/2014, S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies, 28 January 2014.
[68] Daniel Byman, "How to Hunt a Lone Wolf: Countering Terrorists Who Act on Their Own", *Foreign Affairs*, March/April 2017.

create clandestine activities. Secondly, law enforcement agencies have to develop relations with communities. A good relation with communities will help them to get information about lone wolves, which will facilitate security forces to counter lone attackers. Thirdly, government can engage private sector in monitoring, motivating and reducing security threats from lone wolf terrorism. Fourthly, countering terrorist ideologies can prevent expansion of lone wolf terrorism. In this respect, detection of extremist ideologies and developing counter narratives are essential. However, this strategy focuses on the engagement of public and private sector in the process of countering lone wolf terrorism. In addition to state actors, Non-State Actors (NSAs) also can play important role in countering terrorism. Particularly, state actors need NSAs to communicate communities and to motivate individuals. Basing on the existing literature, at least three strategies can be recommended for countering lone wolf terrorism: motivational, surveillance and hard security.

Motivational factors are intrinsically connected with lone wolf terrorism. Motivation is the main cause of an individual to be a terrorist. Therefore, addressing motivational factors should be the main strategy to face lone wolf terrorism. As mentioned earlier, when lone wolves get obsessed with particular ideology, they become intolerant and act violently. The "Message" they receive from the masterminds, they want to implement it. Moreover, by using internet sources, they become obsessed with such ideologies and acts abnormally. In those cases, motivations for lone wolf terrorism are essential. An individual's family, community and society can influence him to act rationally. Engaging community in monitoring and de-radicalisation of lone wolves would help to motivate lone wolves to return in normal life. Moreover, some of the socio-economic and political factors which motivate an individual to be a lone attacker need to be addressed adequately.

Surveillance is always an important element in countering lone wolf terrorism. Electronic surveillance can help security forces to monitor lone wolves effectively. Moreover, developing a network to collect information from people may help security actors to identify the location and activities of lone wolf terrorists. At the tactical level, countering lone wolf terrorism is an intelligence-centric challenge. In a context where anticipation and prediction are low, intelligence operations must focus, not on knowing *who* is planning an attack, but rather one knowing *how* such attacks are formulated.[69] Community engagement may facilitate intelligence forces to know about the individuals who spread extremist ideologies.

Hard security issues will include legal system which should define and develop legal processes to take necessary actions against lone wolf terrorism. The legal systems must define what types of activities would be identified as terrorist acts and what are the rational punishments for such activities. The security forces need to act

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[69] Alex Shone, "Countering Lone Wolf Terrorism: Sustaining the Contest Vision", The Henry Jackson Society, 17 May 2010, available at http://henryjacksonsociety.org/2010/05/17/countering-lone-wolf-terrorism-sustaining-the-contest-vision/, accessed on 30 March 2017.

according to law and ensure preventing activities of the lone wolves. It is sometimes difficult to prosecute lone wolves before their operations. Security forces should get permission to intervene when they find any one's activities are not usual and seem to act violently. The institutional development to ensure surveillance of threats from lone wolf terrorism is important. The timely surveillance of internet by identifying radical websites through developing "cyber surveillance" or "cyber intelligence" can be effective to ensure long term prevention of lone wolf activities.[70] However, it may not be possible to detect lone wolves before their clandestine operation. Hence, emergency preparedness and resilience to minimise the impacts of lone wolf attacks are necessary.

Some of the features of lone wolf terrorism collate with the acts of group terrorism. Therefore, the strategies to counter group terrorism are applicable in case of lone wolf terrorism. But, lone wolf terrorism has some extra features which need to be dealt carefully. Lone wolves always try to remain isolated and their communication networks are very sophisticated. Hence, the engagement of communities is necessary. NSAs have to play a proactive role in the process of motivation and detection of lone activities. The state and NSAs have to fight together against extremist ideologies which motivate individuals to be violent. The existing literature shows that a wide range of counterterrorism strategies has been adopted by many countries with mixed success and there are substantial differences among such counterterrorism strategies of different countries. Responses to lone wolf terrorism need to be "context-specific, reflecting a variety of counterterrorism and police cultures and legal traditions"[71.]

5.   Conclusion

The increasing fear of lone wolf terrorism has drawn attention of the policy makers, security practitioners and academia to understand the trend, motivation and operational nature of such attackers. But, due to diversified profile of lone wolf attackers, developing a common understanding on the issue of lone wolf terrorism remains a challenge. Therefore, like terrorism, lone wolf is still a contested concept. The main debates are boiled down in three points: the number of perpetrators involved in an attack, the ideological contingency of the attackers with any other groups and finally, the level of external connection of an attacker. Within such debate, the CLAT project has developed a working definition of lone wolf terrorism, which tried to bring all the debates in a common understanding of lone wolf terrorism. Therefore, it can be argued that a lone wolf attacker may take ideological motivation from any terrorist group or from online sources, but his operational tactics are designed by himself. Sometimes, a close group may act together to perpetrate any attack, but lone wolves do not have any physical and

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[70] Ramon Spaaij, *Understanding Lone Wolf Terrorism: Global Patterns, Motivations and Preventions, op. cit.*, p. 87.
[71] *Ibid*.

financial network like terrorist organisations. They do not maintain any hierarchical command to perpetrate their clandestine activities.

Due to the uniqueness of every individual lone attackers, it is difficult to ensure effective surveillance for detecting lone wolves. Their motivational and ideological factors are diversified and some of them are motivated by more than one ideology at a time. The expansion of technology and internet sources makes it easy for them to be indoctrinated in violent path. The existing studies identified a number of motivational factors, *i. e.*, rightist or white supremacist ideology, religious, political, environmental and Islamophobic. The security forces may take help from the communities, when an individual has a psychological problem. But, accusing any lone wolf before carrying out an attack is always challenging. When a lone attacker is motivated by online sources, it is difficult to identify him. Since lone wolves do not maintain any network, effective surveillance and gathering intelligence against them is a major difficulty.

In the context of emerging realities, nations are developing their own counterterrorism strategies to face the threats of lone wolf terrorism. It is argued that counterterrorism strategy for group terrorism and lone wolf terrorism do not differ much. But, due to unique features, lone wolves need some specific attention, which may not necessary in case of group terrorism. The existing literature suggests that an effective counterterrorism strategy to face lone wolf terrorism should be composed of three components: motivational factors, surveillance mechanism and hard security approaches. State and NSAs need to work together for developing narratives against the ideologies which motivate an individual to operate as a terrorist. At the same time, it is necessary to identify which social and political factors deviate an individual to act as radical. Therefore, security forces need to design their surveillance and intelligence network in line with the emerging threats. To face lone wolf terrorism, a proper and continuous surveillance of internet and effective community engagement is essential. Nevertheless, the existing literature also suggests that counterterrorism strategy of every country has to be context-specific and compatible with the cultural and legal systems. It is more applicable in the context of lone wolf terrorism. Because a lone wolf is mostly motivated by the socio-cultural, political and religious realities of the respective society.