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Lone Wolf Terrorism and the Influence of the Internet in France

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Lone Wolf Terrorism and the Influence of the Internet in France
By Meredith Boyle

CISLA Senior Integrative Project
Professor William Rose
Spring 2013

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Introduction

This paper treats the question of the Internet and its influence on conventional theories of lone wolf terrorism. I argue that increasing use of the Internet by terrorists makes it more difficult to determine whether or not individuals are truly lone wolves. I apply this hypothesis to the complicated French case study of Mohamed Merah, whose lone wolf status is still disputed even a year after his attacks. This paper finds that the influence of the Internet has contaminated the traditional idea of a pure lone wolf, and thus multiple concepts must be defined to address the spectrum of behavior of lone individuals. I forward the terms “lone wolf” and “lone actor” to achieve this aim. These terms are then applied to the French case of Mohamed Merah, a complex case rife with misinformation and contradictory testimonies. This research is especially pertinent in the wake of the Boston marathon bombings, suspected at this writing to have been perpetrated by the Tsarnaev brothers who self-radicalized and may have acted alone. Fittingly, I conclude this paper with a brief discussion of this case and overarching theoretical and policy implications for both France and the United States.

This research evolved since my sophomore year, when my original CISLA research proposal suggested study of the French counterterrorism policies against homegrown terrorism. Courses taken at Connecticut College – including GOV 494B Countering Terrorism and Insurgency, REL 304 Fundamentalisms, FRH 422 Black Blanc Beur and an independent study (FRH 491) in the French department – as well as courses taken while abroad at Sciences Po Paris – including War and Peace in the Global Village and Transnational Islam in Europe – have greatly shaped the direction of this project since its inception. This research was augmented by my internship with the French Ministry of the Interior in the summer of 2012 and two weeks spent in Paris and Brussels in January 2013. For the latter trip, I was the recipient of a travel grant that funded additional scholarly research abroad. During the two week span I interviewed Claude Moniquet: Director of the European Strategic Intelligence and Security Center (ESISC) in Brussels, Mathieu Guidère: professor at the University of Toulouse and author of the book *Les Nouveaux Terroristes*, Mohamed-Ali Adraoui: noted research scholar and expert on Salafism in France and professor at Sciences Po Paris, and finally Anne-Sophie Lamine: expert on religious plurality in France and professor at the University of Strasbourg.

This research is pertinent because homegrown, lone wolf terrorism is increasingly a menacing threat on the radar of many Western countries. Marc Sageman (2008) notes that since 9/11 there were over 2,300 arrests connected to Islamist terrorism in Europe compared to 60 in the United States.¹ Ramon Spaaij (2012) claims that “the most marked increase” in lone wolf terrorism in recent decades was in Europe where he calculates attacks have quadrupled between the 1970s and 2000s.² In 2011, the European Police Chiefs Convention estimated, “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.”³ These figures suggest that something in the global security environment has changed, and it is imperative that governments understand the threat in order to create effective policy responses.

For many countries, especially the United States, the focus must now turn away from Al Qaeda. Al Qaeda no longer plays a major role on the current security landscape. Many training camps were destroyed and central members killed in the aftermath of September 11 and as a result, Al Qaeda began advocating individual resistance in 2011. In a video in early June of

2011, the group said, “Muslims in the West have to remember that they are perfectly placed [to commit attacks].”⁴ Scholars disagree over whether or not this change in tactic is admission of defeat or simply adaptation to the changing conditions under which Al Qaeda operatives function. However, Raffaello Pantucci (2011) argues that Al Qaeda’s strength has been in providing an ideology “with transnational appeal” which allows individuals to commit attacks of their own accord with only inspiration from Al Qaeda and its affiliates.⁵ Moreover, this tactical change has great potential for increasing the success of terrorism. Individual jihadists can easily confuse or remain entirely anonymous to intelligence services.⁶ Furthermore, liberated from the group structure, lone wolves have the freedom to be motivated by ideologies that combine personal frustrations and radical beliefs.

The Internet is of increasing utility for terrorist recruitment and communication as well as attack purposes. One of the earliest attempts by a jihadist group to use the Internet for its purposes was Azzam.com in 1997.⁷ Interestingly, those who are commenting on online texts and videos about bomb making are mainly from the United Kingdom and the United States; only 10% are consulting these sites from the Middle East and Muslim Africa.⁸ Individuals can consult terrorist propaganda online, but they can also interact with one another on chat forums, which creates a “replacement social environment” that facilitates lone radicalization.⁹ Terrorists can also make use of social networking sites like Facebook and LinkedIn in order to recruit and expedite attack planning. The ease with which individuals can connect across the world today is what allows leaderless strategies to not only work, but also to flourish.

This research focuses on radicals of Muslim faith because this population is consistent with the major threat facing Europe, as well as the case study examined in the final section; this does not suggest, however, that any causal connections should be made between Islam and terrorism. The *ummah* – the Arabic term for community – has become increasingly important in this newest wave of globalization and serves as the umbrella under which Muslims across the world unite without distinction of origins or nationality.¹⁰ This transnational community can establish an identity for Muslims who may feel isolated in other societies where they are a minority. On the other hand, it also may create a dangerous environment where strong group solidarity leads individuals to seek revenge against entities who have somehow harmed the group. “Regardless of the absurdity of the violence, it is perceived as an adequate response to the injustices [felt by members of the Muslim community].”¹¹ Moreover, the transnational community makes it easy for lone wolves to operate alone while still being reinforced by a perceived community of like-minded individuals. While his research sample of lone wolves indicated Islamism motivated only 15%, Spaiij’s analysis deemed lone wolves of Muslim faith to be on the rise, which is why studying this portion of the population is of particular relevance.¹²

This paper will first provide a literature survey on root causes of radicalization and proceed to an exploration of terrorist use of the Internet, followed by discussion and development of lone wolf theories. I will use this information to examine the case study of Mohamed Merah in France. My final section will discuss my findings, suggestions for future research and implications for theory and policy. Notably, the implications of this research include a brief comparison with the recent Boston marathon bombings. Inclusion of this case serves to elevate my findings from the French context to the pertinent debate in America concerning self-radicalization and homegrown terrorism.

Introduction

Section Endnotes

- ¹ Sageman, Marc. *Leaderless Jihad: Terror Networks in the Twenty-first Century*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 2008. Print. P. 90.
- ² Spaaij, R. F. J. *Understanding Lone Wolf Terrorism: Global Patterns, Motivations and Prevention*. Dordrecht: Springer, 2012. Print.
- ³ Ibid., p. 2.
- ⁴ Ibid.
- ⁵ Pantucci, Raffaello. *A Typology of Lone Wolves: Preliminary Analysis of Lone Islamist Terrorists*. *The International Centre for the Study of Radicalization*. N.p., 5 Apr. 2011. Web.
- ⁶ Spaaij, *Understanding Lone Wolf Terrorism*.
- ⁷ Amble, John C. "Combatting Terrorism in the New Media Environment." *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 35.5 (2012): 339-53. Print.
- ⁸ Guidère, Mathieu. *Les Nouveaux Terroristes*. Paris: Autrement, 2010. Print.
- ⁹ Spaaij, *Understanding Lone Wolf Terrorism*.
- ¹⁰ Guidère, Mathieu. Personal interview. 7 January 2013.
- ¹¹ Guidère, *Les Nouveaux Terroristes*, p. 60.
- ¹² Spaaij, *Understanding Lone Wolf Terrorism*. The database on terrorism upon which Spaaij's analysis is based cited 17% of lone wolves were right wing and White supremacist extremists, 8% anti-abortion, 7% nationalism/separatism. The other half of the sample did not have an identified ideology. Spaaij's database was made through an analysis of the Global Terrorism Database (GTD) and the RAND-MIPT Terrorism Knowledge Base (TKB)

1. ROOT CAUSES OF RADICALIZATION

When addressing radicalization, it is useful to derive not only the root causes that lead an individual to embark on the process of radicalization, but the process of radicalization itself. Understanding the causes and steps in the process helps to facilitate recommendations for counter-terrorism measures. I will begin this section with the findings of an analytic essay I wrote sophomore year for a seminar titled, Countering Terrorism and Insurgency (GOV 494B), because it was this research that inspired my SIP. I will follow this with an overview of my research conducted last semester in an independent study in the French department, and finally I will incorporate theories I have explored this semester.

Previous Research – Spring 2011

In the spring semester of 2011, I analyzed Max Abrahms' essay "What Terrorists Really Want" (2008). Abrahms puts forth the argument that individuals turn to terrorism not because of political ideology, rather a desire for social solidarity.¹ Abrahms seeks to explain the role of social benefits both in recruitment of terrorists and in the actions of terrorist organizations. It is important to note here that he does not include analysis of lone wolves. However, his model is important for understanding radicalization and, like many other theories explored in this section, may have explanatory power when considering Internet communities and lone wolves.

Abrahms argues that group dynamics constitute the sole motivation for individuals to join terrorist organizations. Abrahms' theoretical causation defines the independent variable as the degree of social alienation in society (high or low) and the dependent variable as high or low motives for an individual to join a terrorist organization. The prime hypothesis is that a high level of alienation in society leads to high motives to join an organization, while low alienation, or inclusion in society, corresponds with low motivation to join an organization. Abrahms did not discuss condition variables or antecedent conditions, but I assumed in my paper that in order for the theory to work, social exclusion must exist in society and terrorist organizations must be willing to exploit that for recruitment purposes.

In my own theory development in the spring of 2011, I suggested some condition variables of my own; these variables determined the level of isolation in society to further code Abrahms' theory. First, I stated that the level of success in society would contribute to the degree of alienation primarily because higher success correlates with lower grievances, but also because the more successful an out-group is, the more they are included and respected by the in-group. Second, I claimed that government policy has a role to play in the feeling of isolation – if the government is not providing programs that promote inclusion, or if they pass laws that directly limit cultural and religious rights, the degree of social alienation increases. The third and final proposed condition variable concerned existing prejudices towards an out-group. For example, Western countries increasingly perceive Muslim immigrants as threats, especially in the wake of September 11, regardless of how baseless these fears are. This existing prejudice in the host country leads to a high degree of immigrant alienation. Many of my original ideas are echoed in the following theories of group radicalization, and a large number of them in turn resonate with Abrahms' emphasis on the importance of social solidarity.

Section One: Root Causes of Radicalization

Amendments

Two years have passed since I conducted the research above and it is clear that certain amendments should be made. First, concerning my variable on level of success in society, subsequent research shows that unemployment (a key indicator of failure) is not a determining factor in terrorist motivations. John Rosenthal (2006) argues that in fact, in a survey of inmates in France suspected to be Al Qaeda sympathizers, many held advanced degrees and were from privileged milieus.² Marc Sageman (2008) argues similarly that the extent of college degree and employment varies over time; the most recent terrorists, for example, are the least educated and have the highest unemployment rates. Furthermore, Sageman argues that terrorists themselves are usually not poor; they tend to be motivated by the destitution of others in a phenomenon he calls “vicarious poverty.”³ His idea got me thinking. I posit, therefore, that unemployment and poverty lead to lower purchasing power, which has ramifications for identity. In many Western countries, the ability to consume is very important for identity. Therefore, if we assume that the unemployed and poor are isolated from the consumer society, we could conclude that this still impacts a feeling of isolation from an identity perspective.

Concerning my second condition variable, I do believe government policy is still an important factor in the radicalization process, though it is categorized by the 2011 Transnational Terrorism, Security, and the Rule of Law paper (explained below) as an “external” factor and thus not very determinant.⁴ Furthermore, Claude Moniquet, director of the European Strategic Intelligence and Security Center (ESISC), claimed that “[cultural laws are] a way of radicalization for some people. But these people would be radicalized anyway. It’s just an occasion, it’s just a pretext.”⁵ I would argue, however, that a country’s integration policy does have an influence on radicalization. Jonothan Laurence’s (2012) piece on integration in Europe is particularly interesting because he believes cultural laws and strict integration policies put moderate Muslims at risk for radicalization.⁶ Typically, it is assumed that inequitable government policies act as catalyzers for individuals already considered to be radical. Laurence’s claim that moderate Muslims are actually catalyzed by such policies highlights the substantial influence that discriminatory policies can have on the radicalization process. Beyond domestic government policies, I didn’t consider in my original paper the idea that government *foreign* policy also may play a role in the creation of grievances. Mathieu Guidère, in a personal interview in January 2013, said that he believes many individuals turn violent because of identification with external factors.⁷ For example, the perceived favoritism of Israel over Palestine in France’s foreign policy doctrine may resonate in the minds of Muslims who identify with a transnational Muslim identity more than their national French identity.

Previous Research – Fall 2012

Before discussing the literature on root causes and radicalization processes, it is useful to incorporate my previous research conducted in an independent study last semester with French Professor Nathalie Etoke. For this research, I analyzed radicalization in France, largely drawing from a paper called “Radicalisation, Recruitment and the EU Counter-Radicalisation Strategy.” This work was published by the European research project Transnational Terrorism, Security, and the Rule of Law (TTSRL). Rather than using radicalization theories put forth by American theorists, this paper provided a useful analysis of radicalization because it forwards a European

perspective using the EU-official definition of radicalization. The project concretely defines radicalization as a process of socialization using the Council of the European Union's definition: "The phenomenon of people embracing opinions, views and ideas which could lead to acts of terrorism."⁸

While this is a vague definition, the analysis that followed describes radicalization as distinct from terrorism, which is notable because in many cases the two are conflated. Instead, the TTSRL group states that terrorism is the worst possible outcome of the radicalization process; all terrorists have undergone the process but not all radicals are terrorists. An even more important distinction is that "radicals can engage in non-violent behavior without terrorist intent yet still be considered radical."⁹ This is true, specifically in France where certain individuals may be considered radical for holding beliefs that run counter to French Republican values (wearing the headscarf in school, for example) without having committed violent acts against France. The TTSRL paper categorizes root causes of radicalization into different sets of factors (external, social and individual) and each has different degrees of influence on the individual. These categories are further broken down into causes and catalysts: causes provide the basis for radicalization and catalysts suddenly hasten the radicalization process. External factors include political, economic and cultural causes while social factors include social identification, network dynamics and relative deprivation causes. Finally, individual factors include psychological characteristics, personal experiences and degree of rationality. All three can be catalyzed by recruitment or trigger events.¹⁰

First, external factors are considered to have an indirect effect on radicalization while social and individual factors are more likely to have a more immediate impact. External factors are considered to be less dominant because they constrain an individual's environment, but that individual is assumed not to have a large influence on his or her environment in the first place.¹¹ Second, social factors are most relevant to my analysis because they "refer to mechanisms that position the individual in relation to relevant others", in other words, they concern relative deprivation.¹² Relative deprivation is important for my case study analysis because many of the societal problems in France reveal inequalities between the in-group (white, occidental French) and the out-groups (most recently, Muslims of immigrant descent). Third and finally, individual factors are those that are the most personal for the individual; however, this does not mean they have the most profound impact on the radicalization process. Instead, all three levels of causation interact to dictate the radicalization process.¹³

Last semester, I applied the TTSRL framework in the context of the general French model of integration and its neocolonial tendencies. I then discussed its relevance to the concept of *laïcité* (French secularism) and the headscarf controversy, as well as the Parisian *banlieue* (ghetto) dismal standards of living and finally, the hybrid French-Muslim identity crisis facing many second and third-generation immigrants. Using these concepts, I found that the TTSRL framework is relevant to the European Union in combatting radicalization and terrorism. However, on a country-by-country basis, my research found that it is inadequate because it is too vague. The concepts of integration, colonization, secularism, ghettos and identity politics are important for understanding the political, historical and cultural context that makes France an important case study for the incubation of potential terrorists. In the final section of this paper, I will discuss this case study of France and elaborate on these concepts.

Section One: Root Causes of Radicalization

Radicalization Theories

While the TTSRL paper presents an interesting argument, I don't find it strong enough to employ as the basis of my present research. In this section, I will discuss various radicalization theories that I have come across throughout my CISLA research. These theories will be divided in two categories according to divisions in the literature. The first will discuss the root causes of radicalization according to various authors. The second category will discuss particular processes authors have suggested in hopes of elucidating the steps in the radicalization process. It is important to note that these theories tend to address either group terrorism (when an individual radicalizes/is recruited and joins a group) or lone wolf terrorism (when an individual self-radicalizes, is inspired by a group's ideology but acts separately from a group). To avoid confusion, I will treat these groups of theories separately and add a category of "alternative" theories for clarification purposes. The lone wolf categories will be the most sparse, as these theories will be more deeply explored in the following section.

A. Root Causes of Radicalization

I felt it necessary here to divide the discussion of root causes according to the context within which each author was operating. I don't believe if an author is discussing group terrorism that his findings can necessarily be extrapolated to lone wolf cases. This stratification is thus useful for clarity purposes.

i. Root Causes in the Group Context

Although my research focuses mainly on lone wolves, theories about radicalization to group terrorism emphasize the importance of social solidarity and group dynamics in motivating an individual to terrorist acts. These group theories are included because they shed insight on the difficulties of self-radicalization and suggest potential implications for the existence of pure, true lone wolves.

Jessica Stern's 2010 research on de-radicalization proves useful in reinforcing Abrahms' ideas about group dynamics as motivation to join a terrorist group. She emphasizes the role of the group in youth decisions to join terrorist organizations, "...once youth join an extremist group, the group itself can become an essential part of their identity, maybe even their only community."¹⁴ Jocelyne Cesari (2011) concurs, arguing that joining the jihad is inherently a social process because the more discrimination that the members of a minority confront, the more they will unite around the perceived cause of that discrimination.¹⁵ Group dynamics, however, is only one factor that Stern considers in her analysis of motives to join terrorist organizations. She also analyzes the effects of social disadvantages such as unemployment and prejudice, as well as the role that ideology plays in motivation. Stern argues that all of these motivations can contribute to individual decisions to join a terrorist organization, "The reasons that people become terrorists are as varied as the reasons that others choose their professions."¹⁶ Thus, Stern's discussion of group dynamics reinforces Abrahms' theory, but her assertion that terrorists are motivated by more than just social benefits, and instead a plurality of factors, counters Abrahms' argument.

Philippe Migaux, in his 2012 book *Al Qaida: Sommes-nous menacés?* (Al Qaida: Are we threatened?), says that feelings of exclusion are the primary motivator for individuals' radicalizing. He says that whether one is a foot soldier or an individual in an executive or administrative position in a terrorist group, exclusion plays a role, albeit in different ways. Foot soldiers are typically excluded from the society, for example, whereas the chief will make a voluntary decision to exclude himself in the process of radicalization. Here is an interesting distinction between theories emphasizing social solidarity (like Max Abrahms') and those emphasizing *exclusion*. The two are not the same. For example, an individual may be motivated by feelings of exclusion, but these feelings don't necessarily lead him to want to join a group. This factor will be important in my later discussion of lone wolf theories.

Finally, John Rosenthal (2006) points out that exclusion does not necessarily mean Islamist extremists hail from underprivileged milieus. Instead, he claims that jihadists are often recruited from more privileged social classes and are not only educated but also well traveled. He also said "openly avowed enthusiasm for jihad is clearly not the product of a spontaneous reaction to desperate circumstances, but rather the outcome of an often highly intellectualized process of reflection."¹⁷

ii. Root Causes in the "Alternative" Context

The term "alternative" is simply meant to distinguish the following theories as anything other than strictly group or lone wolf theories. Authors like Marc Sageman, for example, who talks about "leaderless jihad" that occurs outside an established group yet is not necessarily considered to be limited to lone wolf actions.

Just as in group theories, the sentiment of exclusion is pervasive among authors discussing "alternative" theories. Mathieu Guidère (2010) discusses "new terrorists" who are often lone operators who communicate minimally with an outside terrorist group. He does, however, distinguish them from lone wolves, which justifies his placement in the "alternative" section. Guidère emphasizes the importance of isolation, resentment and a feeling of victimization in the creation of these "new terrorists." Claude Moniquet, who spoke about radicalization in general during our interview, believes that this feeling of relative deprivation can actually be interpreted as an intellectual construction in order to place the blame for failure on someone else.¹⁸ Feelings of exclusion for alternative actors can, however, concretely derive from European integration policies. Sageman notes in his discussion of "leaderless jihad", "Europeans seem reluctant to admit their ethnic diversity and cling to the myth of this national essence...Exclusion on the basis of a national essence makes it more likely for Muslim Europeans to believe [that they are a part of a war against Islam]."¹⁹ This resonates with my previous research on Max Abrahms, social solidarity theory and the role of government policy in the creation of grievances.

Another theme in the "alternative" literature was the narrative of social solidarity. Guidère emphasized the importance of social solidarity saying, "...the solitary terrorist is searching, above all, for a fraternal bond."²⁰ Moreover, many terrorists in this category were described as acting in the name of others or the *ummah* – the Arabic word meaning community. Moniquet claims that though outside factors (like the Palestinian struggle against Israel) could

Section One: Root Causes of Radicalization

influence terrorists, he argues that individuals originally come to jihad for personal reasons. Whether they personally have grievances against society or whether they have been “guilted” in to acting on the part of disadvantaged Muslims around the world, there is often a general feeling that they must act to avenge perceived injustice.²¹ Sageman terms a similar phenomenon “vicarious poverty” and explains that while terrorists aren’t typically poor themselves, they can be motivated to action based on the indigence of others.²² Sageman forwards a similar concept called “moral outrage” which he says is an emotional response to a tragedy caused by other humans (as opposed to a natural disaster). In order to catalyze “moral outrage” the tragedy must resonate with an individual’s personal experiences and be enlarged within a group. Even without being physically a part of a group, then, an individual actor or leaderless resister can still be greatly influenced by group dynamics. For example, an individual who watches a news story about persecution of fellow Muslims and has experienced personal discrimination in France may experience “moral outrage.” “They interpret their perceived discrimination in the context of moral violations against Muslims elsewhere, and the notion that their local grievances are part of a more general hostility against Islam appears more compelling to them.”²³ Sageman does specify, however, that local grievances are extremely important. For example, all Muslims are likely to see persecution of Palestinians on the nightly news and yet not all Muslims radicalize.

iii. Root Causes in the Lone Wolf Context

Many of the root causes that affect the above theories also apply to lone wolves. However, because lone wolves operate outside a traditional command and control structure, the ideologies that act as root causes expand beyond the limits of political or social goals. Ramon Spaaij, a noted lone wolf terrorism scholar, claims in his most recent book *Understanding Lone Wolf Terrorism* (2011) that lone wolves may use larger terror ideologies to disguise personal motives for gain or revenge. Unlike terrorists who are members of a larger group, lone wolves “tend to create their own individualized ideologies from a mixture of broader political religious or social aims and personal frustrations and aversion.”²⁴ Roger Bates (2012) concurs saying that lone wolves can be motivated by “personal agendas”.²⁵ Specifically concerning Al Qaeda ideology, Raffaello Pantucci (2011) argues that the terrorist can “with certain ease superimpose upon [their own rationale] their understanding of the Al Qaeda narrative.”²⁶ Often, lone wolf motivations take on a “macro-nationalist” sentiment, which Spaaij describes as “a variant of nationalism applied to clusters of nation states held together by a notion of shared (transnational) identity.” Individuals who strongly identify with macro-nationalism will perceive “their people” as under attack.²⁷ In a way, lone wolves are thus more vulnerable to radicalization because absent a group hierarchy, they are free to turn any grievance into a root cause of radicalization, whereas members of groups are limited to actions within the group ideology.

B. Theorizing the Radicalization Process

Historical events and the passing of time have naturally changed the structures available to facilitate the radicalization process. Following the destruction of Al Qaeda training camps abroad, the group has resolved to serving in a more inspirational role.²⁸ In a communication from June 2011, the group advocated more individual radicalization processes and attacks.²⁹ It is important to note that all authors discuss the path to radicalization on an individual level, however the result of this radicalization is what defines the categories below: an individual

joining a group, an individual doing terrorism in an alternative way or an individual carrying out actions completely alone.

i. Individuals Joining a Group or Organization

In one of the most developed group radicalization theories, Tomas Precht (2007) names four stages in the radical path to homegrown terrorism: pre-radicalization, conversion and identification with radical Islam, indoctrination and increased group bonding and actual acts of terrorism or planned plots. He claims that background factors, trigger factors and opportunity factors influence these various stages. Background factors include personal traumas, the Muslim identity crisis, experience of discrimination and perceived injustice. Trigger factors include Western foreign policy, the myth of Jihad and presence of a charismatic leader or spiritual advisor. Finally, opportunity factors include the mosque, the Internet, prison, and universities.³⁰ Precht places significant emphasis on the influence of group bonding on homegrown terrorism. A similar theory by Mitchell D. Silber and Arvin Bhatt (2007) include the stages: pre-radicalization, self-identification, indoctrination and jihadization. One of the major facets of their theory is the role of the “spiritual sanctioner” who is valuable in producing the “us versus them” discourse and provides the moral justification for violence in the name of jihad. The importance of the sanctioner sheds light on the large amount influence Silber and Bhatt place on the role of social interaction and suggests further implications for the lone wolf path to radicalization.³¹

Scott Helfstein (2012) terms four stages for his radicalization process: awareness, interest, acceptance and implementation. His focus is on the individual’s process to radicalization and seems to be applicable in both the group and lone context. It is included in the group section because it is not solely lone wolf-oriented, though it does lend interesting insight into the process for lone wolves. Helfstein argues that social interaction is important to a varying degree at the different stages of radicalization. It is most important at the acceptance stage, the most difficult stage to progress through because the individual is most vulnerable. In the implementation stage, on the other hand, social validation is not necessarily important.³² This helps explain why individuals may appear to be lone wolves when they attack, but further analysis over time shows encouragement and support existed in earlier stages of their radicalization. One pertinent example is the Boston marathon bombings: the Tsarnaev brothers appeared to be working alone at the outset of their attack, but evidence has since mounted implicating various potential co-conspirators, including their mother.

Petter Nesser (2009) distinguishes four types of terrorists who join jihadi cells specifically in Europe: the entrepreneurs, the protégés, the misfits and the drifters. He further claims that each of these groups undergoes a specific path to radicalization. While entrepreneurs and protégés are motivated by ideology and activism, the misfits are more driven by personal grievances. Finally, the drifters have less-specific reasons for engaging in jihad, and their recruitment is largely reliant on social and familial ties to individuals within the organization.³³ If we were to apply his categories to lone wolf terrorism, it seems most likely that the misfits would be the most attracted by a lone path that allows them to avenge their personal grievances.

ii. Individuals in Alternative Contexts

Section One: Root Causes of Radicalization

In his theory of “leaderless jihad”, Marc Sageman (2008) outlines a basic process to radicalization. The first step is feelings of grievance or resentment towards a society or another group. The next step is to seek guidance from individuals who share the same beliefs but are further along in the radicalization process.³⁴ This piece of information is important because it shows that Sageman’s “leaderless jihad” is truly an alternative theory, rather than a lone wolf theory. After making contact with similar individuals, a network begins to form. As individuals become increasingly radical, they tend to be abandoned by their “old friends”, or leave their mosque if it is not radical enough to suit their newfound piety. This double process creates “internal mutual reinforcement” and “intense group dynamics” among the newly radicalized and now isolated group.

iii. Individuals in Lone Wolf Terrorism

Ramon Spaaij notes that certain challenges face lone wolves in their radicalization process compared to group processes. Notably, he claims there can be a disconnect between “theory and action, intention and capability.” Lone wolves can only successfully attack if they overcome “confrontational tension” which, he says, is countered by group emotional solidarity in group settings.³⁵ In other words, it is difficult to progress to action without being surrounded by like-minded individuals. Jocelyn Cesari similarly notes, “joining the jihad is a social process.”³⁶ Nonetheless, later in Spaaij’s argument he claims that, “concrete personal relationships, kinship and friendship, as well as group dynamics and socialization into the use of violence are critical” in escalating an individual to violence.³⁷ This emphasis on group dynamics seems contradictory to the inherent nature of a “lone” wolf. However, Spaaij specifies that group dynamics can actually lead an individual to become more isolated, “Those lone wolves who yearned to be a member of a group often found in the end that they had difficulty being accepted, feeling a part of or succeeding in a group.”³⁸ Therefore, contrary to what previous scholars have said, group dynamics actually can be the reason an individual chooses to act alone.

Roger Bates attempts to code a process for lone wolf radicalization (his “General Model of Lone Wolf Terrorism”) including four dimensions. First, he determines the extent of social interaction in an individual’s self-radicalization process. This can range from reading literature online to organizational exposure and training. Second, he measures motivation on a spectrum between egoistic and altruistic. Third, he determines whether the terrorist is conducting chaos or career terrorism. Chaos terrorism is an event that is “singularly disruptive” with large casualties, like a suicide bombing, while career terrorism is a continuous series of smaller violent attacks over a long period of time. Fourth, Bates he assesses where the individual lies along the continuum of risk-averse to risk seeking. These various factors allow him to predict the progression of an individual’s radicalization process.³⁹

Conclusion

In conclusion, though the authors surveyed speak to different groups of terrorists and their analyses are thus inherently different, many of the root causes remain the same. We can isolate exclusion and social solidarity as prevailing themes in the root cause literature. Similarly, the scholars who define a process of radicalization show that at some point, social interaction is necessary for the majority of individuals to radicalize to the point of committing an attack. This

information will be important for the following section, dedicated to terrorist use of the Internet and the ways in which the Internet can at times substitute face-to-face interaction, making it easier for lone wolves to radicalization.

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Section One: Root Causes of Radicalization

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2. INFLUENCE OF THE INTERNET

As technology advances, so do terrorist tactics. Terrorists always seem to be one step ahead of security services, finding new and innovative ways to use increasing interconnectedness to their advantage. Research on the topic of the Internet is not scant in the United States, but is weaker in Europe and especially France, where currently only one book (*Les Nouveaux Terroristes* by Mathieu Guidère) addresses the subject. While the literature pertaining to the U.S. is plentiful, it largely neglects to discuss the impact of the Internet on lone wolves, lending further pertinence to this research. In 2012, the annual EU Terrorism Situation and Trend Report testified that the Internet is now the primary method of communication for lone actors recruited by Al Qaeda operating in Europe.¹ That being said, the Internet is also an important tool for lone wolves and lone actors not connected to a larger group. Almost every contemporary book on terrorism addresses the impact of technology and most importantly, the Internet on terrorist activities. The following section will provide a thematic literature review of the most prominent contributions.

Studying the Internet at this juncture is important because it is believed to be the specialty of the most recent Technological wave of terrorism.² Marc Sageman (2008) claims that, “The Islamist Internet has become the virtual invisible hand organizing global Salafi terrorism worldwide.”³ Moreover, Scott Helfstein (2012) claims “Online interaction through social media and other outlets can provide the critical catalyst needed for validation and norm adoption as people progress through the stages of radicalization.”⁴ It is important to distinguish between cyberterrorism and the multitude of other uses of the Internet. Cyberterrorism, as defined by Dorothy Denning in a testimony before the House Armed Services Committee in 2000, is:

“...The convergence of cyberspace and terrorism. It refers to unlawful attacks and threats of attacks against computers, networks and the information stored therein when done to intimidate or coerce a government or its people in furtherance of political or social objectives. Further, to qualify as cyberterrorism, an attack should result in violence against persons or property, or at least cause enough harm to generate fear. Attacks that lead to death or bodily injury, explosions, or severe economic loss would be examples. Serious attacks against critical infrastructures could be acts of cyberterrorism, depending on their impact. Attacks that disrupt nonessential services or that are mainly a costly nuisance would not.”⁵

Gabriel Weimann, noted cyberterrorism scholar, claims that cyberterrorism must further be distinguished from hacktivism – the fusion of hacking and activism. Weimann defines hacking as “activities conducted online and covertly that seek to reveal, manipulate, or otherwise exploit vulnerabilities in computer operating systems and other software.”⁶ He explains that hackers differ from hacktivists mainly in that they tend not to have political agendas. In addition to cyberterrorism, hacking and hacktivism, the Internet is a weapon in the hands of terrorists simply because of the access to information and social networks that it provides.

The Internet is tactically useful for many reasons. Philippe Migaux (2012) establishes four principal functions: recruit and nourish radicalization, train militants in ideology, prepare operations and remind the adversary about the permanence of the threat.⁷ Sageman claims that the Internet is comprised of two major systems. The first is the Web, which provides a resource

Section Two: Influence of the Internet

for terrorists to inactively consult in order to reinforce pre-existing beliefs. The second is the structure of communication systems within the Internet that strengthen beliefs or feelings through discussion.⁸ These will serve as helpful categories in analyzing disparate forms of Internet use below.

The Internet is attractive to terrorist groups because its own structure mimics the new, evolving and less-conventionally-connected structure of terrorist organizations. One of Weimann's main points is that the structure of modern terrorism today is suitable to the structure of the Internet. Organizations are no longer able to meet and train in person, but the Internet has stepped in and facilitated a "virtual Afghanistan".⁹ Moreover, the Internet is anonymous. This means that individuals can hide behind a screen name, helping them avoid the authorities and perhaps giving them confidence to make bolder assertions in online forums and chats. Furthermore, the structure of the Internet is perceived as free, meaning that any surveillance is considered by the public to be an infringement on civil liberties. An illustrative example of this dynamic is that, as of 2004, U.S. companies hosted 76% of Islamic terrorist websites.¹⁰

This decentralized Internet structure is appealing for lone actors because of the absence of authorities and "elite-dominated media platforms."¹¹ This absence gives disaffected individuals the ability to author their own identity and beliefs, a freedom they may not be afforded in real life. This section will analyze Internet usage for terrorist purposes by breaking down that usage into three categories. The first is instrumental uses, which includes any use of the Internet for planning and execution of attacks. This section largely concerns Internet usage by terrorist group leaders or site managers, while the following two sections concern the individuals who consult these resources for help and guidance. The second section thus involves those "passively" consuming Internet material or terrorist propaganda; the third section discusses how the Internet can form a replacement social environment for disaffected individuals when they use it in a more active way.

Instrumental Uses of the Internet

The Internet provides many tools for terrorists. Weimann names seven different instrumental uses including data mining, networking, recruitment and mobilization, instructions and online manuals, planning and coordination, fundraising and attacking other terrorists. Most interesting among these is data mining, recruitment and mobilization, instructions and online manuals and fundraising. Data mining is the use of the Internet to assemble data and intelligence about potential targets. In early 2003, Donald Rumsfeld said a recovered Al Qaeda training manual revealed "using public sources openly and without resorting to illegal means, it is possible to gather at least 80 percent of all information required about the enemy."¹² Furthermore, terrorists can easily gather information about potential followers who browse their websites, meaning that the Internet is an important tool for recruitment. Moreover, because the Internet is democratic, these potential followers can easily access online manuals; two of the most popular such manuals are "The Terrorist's Handbook" and "The Anarchist's Cookbook." Weimann claims that "sophisticated" terrorists as well as "disaffected individuals" use these manuals, leading some to nickname certain sites as "online terrorism university."¹³ A realistic manifestation of this nickname arrived in 2004 when Al Qaeda launched its online Al Battar Training Camp. Finally, Weimann says that terrorists both directly and indirectly solicit funds

for operations using the Internet. Some sites advertise a donation option, while others masquerade behind the facades of charities, NGOs or mosques that ultimately funnel the donations to terrorists.¹⁴

Passive Consumption of Active Recruitment Propaganda

Terrorist online propaganda is dynamic because websites often disappear and appear under new names on a daily basis. In 2006, Weimann estimated there were 4,300 websites serving terrorists and their supporters.¹⁵ Interestingly, these sites are available in many different languages but “almost invariably available in English”, making them very accessible to Americans and Western Europeans.¹⁶ Weimann claims that terrorists’ use of the Internet is part of a “psychological warfare” strategy to reach beyond those directly impacted by an attack to create a general sense of instability and anxiety in the target society.¹⁷ Moreover, the Internet is a useful propaganda tool because it has the potential to reach a large audience and, like the strategies behind marketing and advertising, can be tailored to specific target populations such as women and children.¹⁸ In a 2008 publication, Weimann points out that terrorists have adopted the marketing strategy of “narrowcasting”, by which they target their recruitment efforts to demographics like women and children. The logic of narrowcasting claims that, “Sophisticated persuasion is more likely to succeed when the medium, stimuli, appeals and graphics are tailored to specific receivers.”¹⁹

Furthermore, consumption of this material can actually be beneficial to individuals who feel vulnerable in the radicalization process – specifically lone wolves. The previous section on radicalization noted the importance of validation at certain points along the radicalization process. It was previously believed that this validation came from social interaction, however the Internet may now obviate the need for social contact. Silber and Bhatt point out particularly that consumption of terrorist propaganda can serve as spiritual justification for violence.²⁰ It is important to point out that most individuals don’t haphazardly come across terrorist sites. Rather, they arrive at a site with already established religious convictions and grievances.²¹ Claude Moniquet echoes these sentiments, saying that many use the Internet to reaffirm their feelings and seek solidarity rather than as an embarking point for radicalization.²² These opinions reduce the explanatory power of passive consumption as a root cause of radicalization, but enhance the power of passive consumption as an accelerator during the radicalization process.

Replacement Social Environment

In addition to passive consumption of online material, individuals can access chat rooms and forums that allow an interactive element in the radicalization process. “[The forum] provides them with a sense of belonging to a greater community on the basis of what they have in common: Islam.”²³ This online community often provides the confidence needed to move from radicalization to committing a terrorist act.²⁴ Scott Helfstein notes, “online interaction through social media and other outlets can provide the critical catalyst needed for validation and norm adoption as people progress through the stages of radicalization.”²⁵ Mathieu Guidère (2010) notes that the “emir” of the site uses the pronoun “us” when posting in order to create an inclusive environment.²⁶ Ramon Spaaij (2012) claims that these forums and chat rooms can act as “a replacement social environment” for disaffected people.²⁷

Section Two: Influence of the Internet

Furthermore, not only does the Internet replace a physical social environment, but interaction online can be so powerful that it can encourage action in real life.²⁸ Just as passive consumption can help a lone wolf along the radicalization process, so can direct interaction online. Guidère states that spiritual guides operate both in person and online and serve as the spiritual “green light” for a terrorist attack.²⁹ Various authors posit that the online structure of communication systems fosters social interaction, and this interaction is of varying degrees of importance throughout the radicalization process. Helfstein’s aforementioned four stages of radicalization demonstrate that social interaction, whether virtual or in-person, is most important at the acceptance stage. Individuals in this stage are often vulnerable and in need of support. It is here, he claims, that the majority of lone wolves, “seeking social ties and validation,” were arrested by security services.³⁰ Similarly, Silber and Bhatt (2007) claim (based on their four stages: pre-radicalization, self-identification, indoctrination and jihadization) that the Internet is helpful in the indoctrination phase and fully manifests itself in the jihadization phase where radicals “challenge and encourage each others move to action.”³¹

The decentralized structure provided by the Internet is nonetheless dangerous. Marc Sageman notes that chat forums can quickly become a type of “echo chamber” because while strong believers actively voice their opinions, those who are not so sure of the validity of these opinions tend not to voice dissenting arguments. This creates a groupthink atmosphere. John Curtis Amble (2012) defines this as “crowd sourcing” when a sense of group membership builds as individuals identify more and more strongly with an ideology; the group atmosphere makes individuals more likely to act on behalf of that ideology.³² Moreover, Sageman notes that leaders have no way of enforcing their control on the Internet structure.³³ Alternatively, Guidère cautions that exclusion can also exist on websites between truly dedicated and less-dedicated members.³⁴

Finally, it is important to note that beyond chat rooms and forums on designated terrorist or terrorist-sympathizer websites, radicals use everyday social networking tools like Facebook, Twitter and YouTube. Weimann calls social networking in general the “terrorist apparatus”, especially for the newer, younger generation of terrorists.³⁵ Regardless of how it is used, the mere existence of the Internet has large consequences for the study of terrorism, especially lone wolf terrorism.

Implications

Most scholars do not believe that an individual can fully radicalize using the Internet. Sageman claims that the Internet can “encourage” lone wolves while Cyndi Mellon (2012) states, “[Internet action] is often not the end of the road for the jihadist.”³⁶ Tomas Precht deems it “unlikely” that an individual could completely radicalize using only Internet means.³⁷ Ramon Spaaij claims that “Internet can be an incubator or accelerator of lone wolf terrorism” but is not a cause of lone wolf terrorism.³⁸ Experts like Claude Moniquet believe that face-to-face interaction at some point is still crucial. However, the power of the Internet in facilitating radicalization is undeniable and has significant implications for conventional lone wolf definitions. Can a lone wolf be considered such if he/she has interacted in chat forums online? Does a pure lone wolf exist in the information age? These questions will be addressed in the next section, focusing solely on lone wolf terrorism.

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3. LONE WOLF TERRORISM

It is clear that throughout history, the power of lone wolves have been underestimated. Jeffrey Simon (2013), one of the leading lone wolf scholars, estimates that it was lone wolves who conducted the first midair plane bombing, vehicle bombing, hijackings, product contaminations and anthrax attacks in the United States.¹ While Western governments focused their energy on Al Qaeda, a more menacing threat was evolving – one that would prove less deadly than group terrorism (so far), but more difficult to detect. Lone wolves like Anders Brevik in Norway and Nidal Malik Hassan in the United States show the deadly potential of this evolving trend. For my discussion of lone wolf terrorism, I focused mainly on the two most recent academic books: *Understanding Lone Wolf Terrorism* by Ramon Spaaij (2011) and *Lone Wolf Terrorism: Understanding the Growing Threat* by Jeffrey Simon (2013). I sought out further sources from the footnotes of these books. This research is augmented by primary source interviews conducted in France and Belgium in January 2013.

History: “Waves” of Terrorism

When talking about the evolution of lone wolf terrorism, it is useful to categorize the phenomenon into historical time frames. David C. Rapoport is credited with the idea of “waves” of terrorism, designated as such in 2002.² The waves are as follows: the Anarchist wave (began in 1880s), the Anti-Colonial wave (began in the 1920s), the New Left wave (began in the 1960s) and the Religious wave which began in 1979 and is expected to continue until 2020.³ The waves typically span the length of one generation and are launched by major events. The Religious wave, for example, came about in the context of the Iranian Revolution, Muslim resistance and victory against the Soviet Union in Afghanistan, as well as the fact that 1979 marked the start of a new century on the Muslim calendar.⁴ Simon, in a 2010 publication “Technological and Lone Operator Terrorism: Prospects for a Fifth Wave of Global Terrorism”, proposed a fifth wave of terrorism called the Technological wave.⁵ This fifth wave differs from its predecessors because it is not dominated by a particular ideology; rather it equally benefits all ideologies that take part.⁶ Simon argues that this wave was sparked by the invention of the Internet and it is not mutually exclusive from the Religious wave. It is in this unique overlap that we find the case study of Mohamed Merah, to be discussed in the following section.

Marc Sageman also suggests the idea of “waves” in his book *Leaderless Jihad* (2008), though his categories are more defined by the catalyzing events that characterized and inspired each distinct group of terrorists. Sageman identifies three waves in global Islamist terrorism. The first wave is considered “the old guard” – those who fought against the Soviets and today form the core of Al Qaeda central. Sageman claims that these men are extremely loyal to one another even though some differ ideologically. They hail for the most part from the middle and upper class. The second wave is made up of those who joined the Islamist social movement in the 1990s. They come mainly from the middle class and were inspired by the persecution of Muslims in Bosnia, Chechnya, Kashmir and the Philippines.⁷ Sageman considers the end of the second wave to be the military invasion in Afghanistan following 9/11, when many training camps were destroyed. The third wave he terms the “post-Iraqi invasion generation”, which is comprised of those who live in the West who are second generation or children of Muslim immigrants – they thus belong to lower social classes than the previous two waves.

The European Context

As in the United States, the threat of lone wolf jihadi terrorism is currently considered to be one of the major menaces facing Europe. It is important to note that many of the studies in the literature survey treat lone wolf terrorism and jihadi terrorism separately. Until the Madrid train bombings in 2004, the jihadi terrorist threat was perceived to be one external to Europe.⁸ However, since 9/11 there have been over 2,300 arrests related to Islamist terrorism in Europe compared to 60 in the United States.⁹ Concerning lone wolf terrorism, the most marked increase in recent decades was in fact in Europe – attacks quadrupled between the 1970s and 2000s.¹⁰ Sageman posits that the reason behind this is that Europeans “cling to the myth of [their] national essence” and neglect to fully recognize the diversity and multiculturalism within their borders.¹¹ Claude Moniquet, Director of European Strategic Intelligence and Security Center (ESISC), mentioned that the lone wolf terrorist threat is the most serious challenge to Europe, specifically in France because “France is exciting for extremists” given its insistence on secularism.¹² Furthermore, France was involved in the War on Terror in North Africa, Afghanistan and most recently in Mali – foreign policy decisions that can potentially create grievances among Muslims living in France.

Definition

In my research I encountered many definitions of lone wolf terrorism; I will discuss these below and offer my own suggestion for use in this paper. Ramon Spaaij defines lone wolves as “terrorists who carry out attacks individually and independently from established terrorist organizations.” He further specifies this by saying that the attacks are carried out by someone who operates individually, does not belong to an organized group or network and whose *modi operandi* are “conceived and directed by the individual without any direct outside command or hierarchy.” In his definition of lone wolf terrorism, Spaaij leaves open the possibility that the lone wolf may have interacted with others during his radicalization process and may even have received training. His theory hinges upon the influence of group dynamics at some point in the individual’s trajectory to terrorism.¹³

In his book *Leaderless Jihad*, Marc Sageman discusses the new phenomenon of leaderless actors committing attacks in the name of Al Qaeda but with no direct affiliation with the group. He does not specifically talk about lone wolf terrorism, but addresses lone actors and small cells that operate without a higher authority structure. Various authors employ the idea of “leaderless resistance” as a characteristic of lone wolves and their ideologies, therefore the mention of Sageman’s work is useful in this section.

Stricter than the authors above is Gabriel Weimann; in his 2012 article “Lone Wolves in Cyberspace,” he defines the lone wolf as an individual using traditional terrorist tactics to achieve political or ideological goals. He emphasizes the fact that the individual must be acting outside a command structure and without cooperation with others, or membership in a group. He does say, however, that lone wolves “are not really alone.”¹⁴ Furthermore, Scott Helfstein, in his 2012 article titled “Edges of Radicalization: Ideas, Individuals and Networks in Violent Extremism”, employs a similarly severe definition stating a “strict definition” of lone wolf terrorism would exclude any individuals who had contact with a larger organization or received

Section Three: Lone Wolf Terrorism

training at any point along the radicalization process. Moreover, he mentions “individuals cease to be lone wolves once they become part of the social community be it physical or virtual.”¹⁵ This has implications for the growing use of the Internet among lone wolves, demonstrated in the previous section to have the power to create a formidable virtual community.

Many authors chose to define the lone wolf with leniency, allowing for more social interaction or guidance in the radicalization process. Jeffrey Simon, the most recent scholar to publish on this topic in 2013, suggests that lone wolves are only permitted “minimal support from one or two people” to be considered as such.¹⁶ Moreover, conversations with scholars and intelligence professionals in France yielded interesting insights on the topic of lone wolves. Claude Moniquet said that he doesn’t believe the “pure” lone wolf exists. At some point or another, Moniquet believes that physical contact is necessary for reassurance and comfort and this physical contact compromises an individual’s lone wolf label.¹⁷ Mathieu Guidère, prominent scholar and author of the book *Les Nouveaux Terroristes* (2010), coined the term “new terrorist” to designate individuals who self-radicalize, outside of an organized group but who are often inspired by the ideologies of larger groups. His book delved in to case studies of “new terrorist” online interaction, implying that even though the new terrorist may self-radicalize, he can receive online help.¹⁸

A final strategy adopted by these terrorism scholars was an attempt to define a typology model for lone wolf terrorists that indicated the disparate levels of authority and socialization involved in various cases. Two authors engaged in this work; the first is Raffaello Pantucci (2011) who categorizes lone wolves into loners, lone wolves, lone wolf packs and lone attackers.¹⁹ These categories will be further explored in the social identification section below. Building on Pantucci’s work is Robert Bates (2012) who formulates what he calls the “General Model of Lone Wolf Terrorism” which is comprised of four dimensions: extent of involvement in radicalization (level of socialization), motivation (egoistic or altruistic), form of terrorism (chaos or career) and degree of risk (risk-seeking or risk-aversion).²⁰ Each dimension can interact with the others in ways to produce varying versions of lone wolves. These scholars thus do not give explicit definitions; rather they realize that the term “lone wolf” has many variations.

Multiple Levels of Social Identification

One of the most interesting aspects of different lone wolf theories is their residual tie to group dynamics and social identification. Obviously, various definitions permit different degrees of social interaction, but these dynamics came into play in ways I hadn’t expected. For example, Spaaij claims that even lone wolves experience “social identification” with broad struggles (be they political, social or religious). This identification from afar allows the lone wolf to categorize the world into “us” versus “them” even though he or she is not physically a member of the group in question. Spaaij notes, “concrete personal relationships, kinship and friendship, as well as group dynamics and socialization into the use of violence are critical in escalating someone to terrorist attacks.”²¹ This seems contradictory to the lone wolf definition; however, his later explanation clarifies this assertion. He notes that lone wolves tend to be socially inept and thus may purposefully stay away from group settings.²² Furthermore, these individuals may be isolated based on bad experiences with group membership in the past.²³ Therefore, the social dynamics that lead them to terrorism don’t necessarily need to be positive. It is interesting to

question whether identifying with a movement ideologically is as socially gratifying for lone wolves as Max Abrahms' idea of social solidarity is for individuals who are physically a part of terrorist organizations. The idea of negative identification as a result of group rejection may prove useful in the Mohamed Merah case study because as a Muslim, Merah felt largely marginalized and rejected by the French and thus isolated from the French identity. Applying Spaaij's idea of ideological movement identification to the question of *national identity* may be an interesting research avenue to explore.

Sophia Moskalenko and Clark McCauley in their 2010 article "The Psychology of Lone Wolf Terrorism," suggest that group identification can occur without the lone wolf physically belonging to a group through a theory they call "strong reciprocity." They state, "We can come to care about the welfare of groups that we are not a part of."²⁴ The identification with this group can, at a certain point, eclipse personal welfare, "Positive identification with a group, combined with the perception that this group is being victimized, produces negative identification with the group perpetrating the injustice."²⁵ This would explain lone wolves who act to avenge a group that they are not a part of.

Pantucci suggests in "A Typology of Lone Wolves: Preliminary Analysis of Lone Islamist Terrorists" (2011) that four types of lone actors exist and they differ primarily based on their social interaction and command structure. The loner uses Islam as a cover for other social or personal grievances; this individual does not have ties with other extremists "except through what they can access through passive consumption."²⁶ The term "passive consumption" denotes use of secondary sources and does not include online chat room interaction. The lone wolf, on the other hand, does communicate via email and chat rooms and may have experienced training or contact prior to committing a violent act. The lone wolf pack is a group of individuals who have self-radicalized and communicate via the Internet.²⁷ Finally, a lone attacker is an individual acting alone but within an explicit command and control structure affiliated with or directly related to Al Qaeda.²⁸

Finally, in Bates' first dimension of his General Model, he posits as a category the "extent of involvement in radicalization." This questions the extent to which the self-radicalization process involves socialization with external contacts. He deems self-radicalization to be "personal" when it concerns simple consultation of secondary sources, the "exposure to ideology and literature online," for example. A more involved radicalization process involves previous exposure to organizations and/or training.²⁹

Ideology

The ideology of a lone wolf reflects that this type of actor is "not 100% terrorist and not 100% criminal" – he occupies the space somewhere in between.³⁰ Spaaij states, "lone wolves tend to create their own individualized ideologies from a mixture of broader political, religious or social aims and personal frustrations and aversion."³¹ In fact, Simon elaborates that lone wolves are liberated from the group ideology and are thus free to combine ideology with personal, psychological or criminal motives.³² Conversely, some authors, like Gabriel Weimann, consider lone wolves to share a common ideology with a group even though they do not communicate with that group.³³

Section Three: Lone Wolf Terrorism

Given that the group I am studying is Muslim lone wolves, Islam is obviously an important ideological factor. It is often used as a religious justification for violence despite the fact that, as many authors have noted, terrorists typically have a very weak comprehension of their own religious texts.³⁴ Further, Bates suggests that the use of Islam is simply a cover for certain types of lone wolves disguising their true personal frustrations. Islam can also prove very associative for certain lone wolves – for example, it may act as the larger, transnational movement for which a terrorist wants to avenge past injustices. Based on my interview with Claude Moniquet, it seems that Islam is perceived as a very inclusive religion; he said, “You find a family when you find Islam.”³⁵ This indicates that for converts as well as those born into Islam, it is a fitting example to justify atrocities because for many, it may be the only community to which they truly feel they belong. Or, conversely, it may be a community with which an individual sympathizes and for which they will compromise personal welfare.

Analysis

The definitions of lone wolf terrorism offered above are ambiguous at best. It is obviously quite challenging to assess the level of outside contact an individual had (for example, if they received training in the past – how long ago must it be for that individual to still be considered lone?) and the nature of that contact (if online – did the individual “passively” consult texts online or actively participate in radical chat forums?). I tend to agree with Claude Moniquet and his assertion that a pure lone wolf does not actually exist. Theories of radicalization described in the previous section suggest the importance of affirmation and reassurance before committing a violent attack, and I do believe that in most cases an individual will seek social approval before turning violent. Nonetheless, it is useful to limit this definition.

For my purposes, a lone wolf cannot have had specific training with an authority figure within three years prior to his attack. By authority figure, I refer to an individual who has experience with terrorism and radicalization. I choose the number three because anything less than that would compromise the “leaderless” aspect of the attack. For example, if the authority figure in question trained the lone wolf for a specific attack, we wouldn’t imagine that the individual would perpetrate the attack immediately. However, after a period of three years without follow-up contact with the authority figure, it could be justified as a lone wolf attack. It is also useful to distinguish between individuals who seek training for social solidarity and those who are simply looking for information from a knowledgeable individual. This is arguably difficult to determine, and the abundance of authors indicating the importance of social dynamics even among lone wolves may actually point to a misunderstanding of individuals’ motivations in reaching out to authority figures.

Importantly, “training” is considered as such only if a member or leader of a terrorist organization (an authority figure) administers it. On the other hand, social interaction can also occur in other forms. A terrorist can be indoctrinated in prison, by family members or by a radical imam. While these interactions are very important for terrorists, they cannot be categorized as “training.” What distinguishes training from indoctrination is the degree of agency that the individual radicalizing holds. For example, if the individual actively seeks guidance from an authority figure, this can be considered training (even if it is not the type of training we imagine when picturing former Al Qaeda camps). This type of social interaction voids an

individual's status as a lone wolf. However, indoctrination can occur without an individual's consent. For example, if one is locked in a prison cell or around the family dinner table, escaping radical discussions is easier said than done. Moreover, continuous exposure may lead the individual to similar beliefs as those surrounding him. Thus indoctrination can happen to lone wolves and other individuals, however a lone wolf's exposure is more limited to this indoctrination whereas others may have trained as well.

Putting the difference between training and indoctrination in context is Raffaello Pantucci's idea of "passive" Internet consumption.³⁶ The same can be said for training and indoctrination – training represents a more active route to radicalization while indoctrination implies a more passive radicalization. A true lone wolf would not have sought out training within the three years preceding his attack, however he may have been indoctrinated in contexts like prison or the family structure. To distinguish between individuals who meet these criteria and those who deviate from this path yet still conduct attacks autonomously and alone, I introduce the term "lone actor." This is by no means my own term, but its origins cannot be traced to one specific author. In any case, I am applying my own definition to the term here. A lone actor differs from a lone wolf primarily in that his process of radicalization can include indoctrination and training, with no temporal limits, as long as he carries out his attack separately from any specific instructions from a group. This distinction is important and is derived from Pantucci's typology of lone wolves, where he differentiates between "lone wolves" (corresponding to my definition of lone actors) and other types of individuals acting alone."³⁷ In any case, both lone wolves and lone actors according to my definitions must act autonomously.

Determining a definition for autonomous action becomes increasingly difficult with the influence of the Internet. The literature from the previous section demonstrates the way in which a chat forum can become a "replacement social environment" for vulnerable individuals.³⁸ Especially when considering online environments that degenerate to groupthink, it is difficult to assess whether or not actions stemming from such conversations are truly autonomous. This is outside the perimeter of my current study, but may be an interesting future research avenue. Nonetheless, it is important to integrate some aspect of the Internet into my definitions of a lone wolf and lone actor. From the literature, it is clear that two types of online radicalization exist. Based on Pantucci's terminology, I will call them "passive" and active consumption. They also closely parallel my terms used above – indoctrination and training. Passive consumption indicates consultation of online materials and propaganda. Active consumption denotes interaction in chat rooms to exchange ideas, seek spiritual justification for violence or simply gain confidence. Fittingly, the true lone wolf only passively consults the Internet, while the lone actor actively utilizes chat rooms in preparation for an attack or at certain points along the radicalization process.

The following section considers the specific French context of my Senior Integrative Project and discusses the case study of Mohamed Merah. The terminology specified in the present section will be applied to this case in order to determine whether or not Merah was indeed a lone wolf.

Section Three: Lone Wolf Terrorism

Section Endnotes

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4. CASE STUDY – FRANCE AND MOHAMED MERAH

Assessing the Threat

In 1986, France passed anti-terrorism legislation that defined terrorism as “any act in relation to a terrorist enterprise individually or collectively, to seriously disturb public order through intimidation or terror.”¹ In fact, the term terrorism actually originated in France during the Reign of Terror in 1793; however, this does not mean that terrorism dominates national consciousness. In fact, my personal experiences in France with professors, coworkers and interview subjects showed me that people don’t generally perceive homegrown Islamist terrorism as a true threat. It is thus useful here to delineate how big the threat actually is.

In the decade following September 11, France fared better than its European neighbors. In fact, France’s experience with terrorism comes mainly from the mid-1990s. What follows is a summary of the main terrorist attacks. In December of 1994, four members of the Armed Islamic Group (GIA) hijacked an Air France plane and killed three passengers on board. In a series of attacks between August and October 1995, the GIA exploded gas bottles inside the Paris St. Michel metro station and near the Arc de Triomphe, planted an additional bomb found by police on the railroad tracks of a high-speed train near Lyon and exploded a car bomb at a Jewish school in the same town. Roughly a month later, another bomb exploded in the Maison Blanche station of the metro in Paris and another gas bottle exploded between two popular stations of a commuter rail line (RER C) in Paris. In March of 1996, a car bomb was found outside a police station in Lille, a few days before a G7 summit was to occur. The Roubaix Gang – a terrorist cell with supposed links to Al Qaeda – claimed responsibility for this attack. Since this time, there have been no major attacks, but the French police have disrupted multiple cells in the Paris region and all over the country.² Philippe Migaux (2012) estimated that the Salafist movement in France is made up of approximately 15,000 individuals.³ One important emerging trend is that of converts to Islam. Olivier Roy estimates that more than 10,000 converts live in France, though the majority of them converted for non-radical reasons.⁴ Nonetheless, Claude Moniquet (the director of the European Strategic Intelligence and Security Center), also pointed out the threat of converts and explained why Islam is attractive for disaffected individuals: “It is easy to convert, easy to leave. It is a very inclusive religion. When you become a Muslim you find a family, you find friends.”⁵

Marc Sageman (2008) notes that since September 11, there have been over 2,300 arrests connected to Islamist terrorism in Europe compared to 60 in the United States. Further, the rate of arrests per capita among Muslims is six times higher in Europe than in the United States.⁶ Moniquet claims, “Islamist terrorism is the biggest threat in Europe.”⁷ In the interest of not sounding alarmist, he specified that radicalization concerns approximately ten to fifteen percent of young Muslims in Europe.⁸ In a personal interview, Moniquet said that France is particularly exciting for extremists given the large population of Muslims, clear image of a secular state (including bans on the veil) and French involvement in the War on Terror. Moniquet also claimed that, as in many parts of the world, the threat has evolved from one of organizations like Al Qaeda to more solitary structures, like those of lone wolves.⁹

Section 4: Case Study

The French Jihadist

Migaux posits that French jihadist militants today, for the most part, were born and raised in France.¹⁰ Jean Luc Marret (2009) notes that between the mid-1990s and 2006, the French Muslims involved in attacks came from immigrant (primarily Algerian) communities with low levels of education.¹¹ They typically fall in to delinquency in their youth and progress to terrorism in their 20s and 30s.¹² Roy claims that many French Muslims who gravitated towards Al Qaeda came from destitute suburbs (called *banlieues*), but their motivation was not their own poverty but the “recasting of a lost identity.”¹³ While they may not be primarily motivated by disadvantaged circumstances, Marret argues that areas with high unemployment rates are “particularly sensitive to radical proselytizing.”¹⁴ It is clear that the biggest areas of contention for French jihadists are identity, integration, French secularism and the headscarf and burka limitations, and the *banlieue* ghettos. I will now discuss these salient factors, based on research conducted in the fall of 2012, to provide a more in-depth understanding of the following case study concerning Mohamed Merah.

Identity

In John Rosenthal’s 2006 analysis of interviews conducted with suspected members of Al Qaeda in French prisons, a unifying theme among inmates was an intense hatred of France based on a perceived impossibility to ever “be French” in the eyes of the white French majority.¹⁵ This sentiment was corroborated in the French media following Mohamed Merah’s killing spree; many questioned whether he was truly “French” despite having been born and raised in France.¹⁶ Furthermore, family reunification plans in the 1970s complicated an already-challenging colonial past by anchoring immigrants in France for good. France continues to have contentious relations with these populations today because of an inability to recognize colored people as French. This in turn makes identification with France difficult for some Muslims of immigrant origin.

Similarly, Kiran Grewal (2007) argues that even second and third-generation immigrants, legal French citizens, are considered foreigners, which “demonstrates the reality that true integration is not considered possible for certain groups within the French national space.” Hypothetically, following this logic, even if a French Muslim citizen of immigrant descent adopted a fully-French identity following the French integration guidelines, he or she could still remain a foreigner due to France’s own labeling of he or she as such.¹⁷ An example published in *The Economist* in 1999 shows the falsity in this argument because most immigrants have lost touch with the cultures of their ancestors; “The children and grandchildren of Algerians or Moroccans who stepped off the boats in Marseilles in the 1960s are French. The closest many of them have ever been to North Africa is the local Moroccan restaurant.”¹⁸

Identity crises are exacerbated in France because not only are immigrants definitively members of an out-group, but they are also stripped of their ability to define themselves. Here, media representations have a high capacity to influence definition of identity. Anne Sophie Lamine, Professor of Sociology at the University of Strasbourg, mentioned in a personal interview that the media is guilty of making amalgamations between “good” or “moderate” Muslims and radical Muslims, though she affirmed that media coverage is growing more sensitive to these issues.¹⁹ When a group is consistently represented in a demeaning or

amalgamating way, the group develops a prescriptive identity based on how others define them, as opposed to how they define themselves. Paradoxically, the Stasi Commission (established in 2003 to analyze secularism in French society) argued that the French concept of *laïcité* (secularism) should permit “one to define oneself in relation to one’s cultural and spiritual references without being subjected to them.”²⁰ Thus, while a cornerstone of French republican ideals encourages self-definition, white French society consistently manufactures an identity for Muslims of immigrant descent.

Furthermore, the Transnational Terrorism, Security, and the Rule of Law (TTSRL) paper – discussed in the first section of this paper, claims that “identity threat” can also be a factor leading to radicalization.²¹ The paper claims that when a social identity is threatened (for example, Muslim religious or cultural rights), the group tends to “withdraw into a strictly specified, inward-focused community.” Interestingly, the paper places the emphasis on the group’s action to withdraw. In France, however, because the white majority defines the identities of colored minorities it begs the question: are radical Muslims themselves withdrawing or are they being forced to withdraw? The paper continues on to say that depending on the strength of the identification with a certain group, reactions to identity threat will vary. Further, the authors hypothesize that “for high identifiers, perceived discrimination or stigmatization based on Islam is expected to trigger their religious identity to be the most prominent indicator of attitudes and behavior.”²² This analysis has interesting implications for counter-terrorism policy because, if we believe that French Muslims have taken on identities defined by white French instead of defined by themselves, any violent reaction stemming from identity threat can be seen as the fault of the French state. In other words: if French Muslims identify with a certain group based on media representations of their supposed identities, their identification with that group – and any actions they may commit in the name of that group – are thus directly attributable to France.

Integration

The French model of integration is very strict, specifically in the sense that it mandates the superiority of a French national identity above all others, be they religious, cultural, racial, sexual or gender-based. The goal is to see all citizens as French and thus, equal.²³ Alternatively, one could argue, as do Schnapper, Krief and Peignard (2007), that French integration isn’t a policy at all, “...the lack of a specific integration policy is the best way to integrate migrants, as they are simply considered as French citizens.”²⁴ The integration model functioned well, though never ideally, in the period after World War II. When the reconstruction period mandated additional labor sources, immigrants of former North African countries served this purpose. These immigrants, however, were always expected to return to their country of origin. It was only in the 1970s and 1980s, when the possibility of returning home for these workers diminished and the policy of family reunification anchored them in the Republic for good. This policy meant that the families of immigrant workers in France (primarily male workers) were able to migrate from their countries of origin to France. This led to a large influx of immigrants who didn’t speak the French language; many settled in disadvantaged ghetto communities today referred to as *banlieues*. Moreover, decades later, the experience of these second and third-generation immigrants is still characterized by segregation and discrimination. “Unlike early twentieth century European immigrants, these second-generation North Africans have been penalized not only by a sluggish economy but also because of their ethno-racial

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characteristics.”²⁵ Marco Oberti (2008) further posits the vulnerability of these populations to express their frustrations through Islam or violence.²⁶

Because many second and third-generation immigrants hail from former colonies, it is impossible to ignore the colonial legacy implicit in immigration and integration politics today. France continues to enforce “republican universalism” on immigrants as it did on the *indigènes* (indigenous people) during the civilizing missions of the colonial era. Matthew Gordner (2008) postulates that France is “unwilling to acknowledge and include [immigrants’] respective historical narratives” in the integration model.²⁷ But this statement alone shows a contradiction inherent in discussions of colonization: it is not simply the history of immigrants that must be recognized, but it is France’s own shared history with its former colonies and their peoples. However, for France, recognizing this shared history is tantamount to admitting past injustices. Instead of recognizing shared roots, France does the opposite. Kiran Grewal (2007) asserts that the confrontation between Islam and *laïcité* today is a “post-colonial reassertion of dominance.”²⁸ The problem is that the French continue to imagine the people of former colonies as “elsewhere” even though these now citizens are firmly established within France.²⁹ This concept is evoked by the documentary *Voyage en Bourgeoisie* whose title plays on the word bourgeoisie using the French word “*beur*”, meaning a French-born individual with parents from North African countries. One person interviewed said, “Je pense qu’une société ne peut pas se construire de manière harmonieuse sur ce qu’elle n’est plus.” (“I don’t think a society can construct itself harmoniously based on something it no longer is.”)³⁰ It is clear that French national identity is thus still imagined through a lens of homogeneity that hasn’t truly existed for a century.³¹ This results in the creation of an in-group (white, occidental French) and multiple out-groups, one of which is French Muslims of immigrant descent.

Multiple authors in my present research discussed the impact of European integration systems on homegrown terrorism. Precht (2007) claims that “structural problems in Western societies” contribute to grievances, while Rem Korteweg et. Al. (2009) argued “the fundamentalist perception of the world draws support for its actions precisely from the policies of Western states.”³² Claude Moniquet takes a position more defensive of French integration policy, saying that radicalized Muslims miss several steps in the integration process, often to their own fault.³³ Although I didn’t ask him to elaborate on this point in the interview, his assertion appears to have been that radicals somehow don’t commit to integration in French society. From my knowledge about the French integration system, this could mean any host of things: they may have refused to take French language classes, been convicted of delinquent crimes or affirmed radical beliefs like sending their daughters to school wearing headscarves. All of these are considered markers of integration, and it is likely that Moniquet’s reference to “steps” refers more to these indicators than to a specifically defined integration process.

Laïcité and Cultural Laws

One cornerstone of French integration policy, and French republican values in general, is *laïcité*, translated literally to mean “secularism.” *Laïcité* requires that all religious practices and identities remain in the private sphere. This concept plays out largely in educational institutions, which are considered responsible for social integration and the creation of good French citizens.³⁴ One of the most contentious issues of *laïcité* is the ban on the Islamic headscarf – a

law that resulted after numerous “headscarf affairs” in the late 1980s and 1990s.³⁵ At first glance, this law appears discriminatory but as Elaine Thomas (2008) explained, the first headscarf affair in Creil in 1989, and the controversy thereafter, can be interpreted in many ways. For example, school administrators were facing problems with a Jewish “clique” and limiting religious symbols was originally meant to temper the behavior of these Jewish students. It was only when Muslim girls began insisting on wearing the headscarf that the policy began to target them as well.³⁶ The headscarf affair can also be understood against the backdrop of the right-wing National Front political party dialogue, which treated Muslim girls as enemies of the Republic. Jean-Marie Le Pen (the president of the National Front at the time) called the headscarf affair “the implantation of foreign colonies in France”; put differently, he claimed these young girls were “colonizing” contemporary France.³⁷ Of a different argument was Valéry Giscard d’Estaing who said, “I would take my shoes off if I went into a mosque,” implying that Muslim girls should take headscarves off when entering a French, secular school. However, this quote reveals the real crux of the headscarf issue: true French-born (though Muslim) citizens are still being treated as guests who must respect the host country.³⁸

Since that first headscarf affair in Creil, not much has changed as it relates to the treatment of immigrants and French citizens of immigrant descent. In February 2004, France passed a law banning “the wearing of signs or dress by which students ostensibly express a religious belonging.”³⁹ As Thomas points out, however, between 1989 and 2004, the discourse around headscarves became increasingly centered on women’s rights. Thomas claims that the law is today understood within the conception that citizenship is a “realization of individuality” and an “emancipation of the individual as a rational agent from groups seeking to control their members.”⁴⁰ Essentially, the law was defended as emancipating women from an oppressive, patriarchal Islam. Furthermore, even though about 81 percent of Muslim women in France never wore a headscarf out of the house, the law can be interpreted in a larger framework of limits on religious and cultural rights. Thomas claims that the law was not conceived in hopes of cracking down on possible terrorists, but instead was in response to Islamic fundamentalism. The more recent law of April 2011, banning the burka or niqab face covering, was defended for the same reasons: women’s rights, facilitating better integration and the combatting fundamentalism.⁴¹ To Muslims, however, it is easy to see how such a law could be considered as restrictive of religious rights and could incite anger against France, regardless of whether one chooses to veil or not. Thomas claims that it is neither the extremely devout Muslims nor the non-practicing Muslims who react vehemently to restrictions on cultural rights. Instead, “Still in question are many moderate Muslims who are not particularly committed to wearing headscarves themselves but who may see France’s latest “scarf hunt” and more recent attacks on the burqa or niqab as evidence of a certain public, officially sanctioned, “islamophobia.”⁴² Further, Claude Moniquet claimed that for most Muslims in France, these cultural laws are not considered oppressive. “I think for most of the Muslims it is not a big deal [wearing the burka]. Clearly for extremists, Islamists it is a big deal but anything would be a big deal. They would just seize any opportunity to say that they are oppressed, Muslims are oppressed and so on.” He affirmed that the protestation of the laws is thus simply an affirmation of radicalization.

Section 4: Case Study

The Banlieue

In addition to the government policies that accompany integration, another major aspect of the French model is that which is visible – the places where disadvantaged Muslim immigrants once settled and still live today. In French, these ghettos are called *banlieues*, but they represent much more than impoverished areas as their literal translation might suggest. Recently, French scholar Gilles Kepel – in conjunction with French think tank Institut Montaigne – published a study called “Banlieue de la Republique” (2011). His introduction states, “Islam plays an important role, entangled with other issues – the city, education, employment, security, politics and religion. All of this forms the very notion of “banlieue” in the common usage of contemporary French.”⁴³ This highlights a very important distinction: that even the word *banlieue* has negative connotations and is thus highly stigmatized in France today.

Kiran Grewal elaborates this concept, arguing that the *banlieue* is used “as an indirect means of discussing ethnicity and national identity” and as an “opportunity for France to attempt to reinforce its particular founding national myths,” where “France’s problematic relationship with Islam is played out.”⁴⁴ Grewal claims that it was in 1981 that French discourse on the *banlieue* became particularly problematic. Since then, the *banlieue* has been represented as home to the “dangerous classes” – mainly constituted by “foreigners,” Muslims and Arabs, – who are well on their way to organized crime and terrorism.⁴⁵ Further, Grewal illustrates that the word “banlieue” is conflated with Islam and Islamic fundamentalism; during the 2005 *banlieue* riots in France, Muslim leaders were automatically and without question asked to quell the violence, even though the rioters had no apparent adherence to Islam. These amalgamations lead to a misunderstanding of integration problems in *banlieues*. If the French perceive *banlieues* as terrorist enclaves, it is easy to blame integration problems on incompatibility of *banlieue* (read: Muslim) values with Republican values. Overall, however, the Republic needs the *banlieue* because through it, France can reinforce her founding myths “upon which dominant hegemonic identity is built.”⁴⁶

Claude Moniquet expressed grave concern over the question of *banlieues* today; “we let this social tragedy develop in the suburbs for thirty years,” he explained. He referenced specific lawless areas across the country where even police forces are afraid to enter for fear of violence. He believes that two to three generations have lived in destitute *banlieue* conditions, which may have facilitated radicalization. Concerning the future of these enclaves he claimed, “I am afraid.”⁴⁷

This isn’t to say that Muslims in France never succeed, as illustrated by the documentary *Voyage en Beurgoisie*. The documentary highlights various “beurs” and through their stories demonstrates the emergence of a middle class of French citizens of immigrant origin against the backdrop of a discriminatory education system. One recurring theme in the film was family encouragement to stay in school. For many of those interviewed, it was their parents who encouraged education when their children began to stray in their teenage years. This brings out an important individual factor of the Transnational Terrorism, Security & the Rule of Law paper in particular: the influence of family dynamics. The paper cites that complicated childhoods can be personal experiences that shape an individual’s vulnerability to radicalization. Although the examples in *Voyage en Beurgoisie* relate only to education, a supportive family structure is

important for success in all aspects of life. When this structure is absent, it can be filled by the solidarity and identity offered by a group of radicals or terrorists. This idea will be particularly important in the following case study of Mohamed Merah.

The Scooter Killer – Mohamed Merah

Early Life

Mohamed Merah, a French citizen of Algerian descent, committed the worst terrorist attack in France in the last decade – killing seven people including three French paratroopers, three Jewish children and a rabbi between March 11 and 19, 2012 in French towns of Toulouse and Montauban.⁴⁸ Merah had a troubled childhood characterized by anti-Semitic influences and familial violence.⁴⁹ His parents, who moved from Algeria to a *banlieue* called Les Izards before Merah was born, separated when he was four. Merah’s father supposedly beat Merah’s older brothers – Abdelkader and Abdelghani – but didn’t abuse Mohamed as frequently because of his small size.⁵⁰ After Merah’s parents’ split, his father was jailed for drug trafficking.⁵¹ In search of a father figure, Merah turned to his older brother Abdelkader. Kader was known for violence; he would frequently insult his mother, beat his sister, Souad Merah, and was eventually jailed in 2003 for four years after stabbing his brother Abdelghani. Abdelghani Merah, in a tell-all documentary released in France last year, claimed that, “we [the Merah family] solved our problems with violence.” This documentary was released prior to Abdelghani’s book, “My Brother, That Terrorist.” Both the book and the documentary denounced his family’s penchant for violence and Salafism.

Mohamed Merah, like his brother Kader, was prone to angry outbursts and also abused his mother. He was placed in a care facility at age eight and, despite her promises, Merah’s mother never came to visit on weekends, leading to a great sense of neglect and abandonment in young Merah.⁵² In his early teenage years, a teacher who was interviewed for the documentary described Mohamed as unstable but intelligent. His report card from the academic year 2000-2001 noted an unacceptable number of absences and violence towards his classmates; Merah was eventually expelled for these reasons in 2003. It was at this time that he became involved in delinquent activities, including the trafficking of cocaine. According to a former friend interviewed in the documentary, Merah enjoyed the adrenaline rush from stealing cars, items from houses and shops.⁵³

Radicalization Process

It is believed that Mohamed Merah radicalized after serving a 20-month stint in prison in 2007 for stealing a purse.⁵⁴ In the documentary, Abdelghani explained that it was following his release from prison that Mohamed began saying things like, “I will get my revenge on France.”⁵⁵ During this time in prison, Merah also allegedly began reading the Koran according to conversations with police during the standoff that ultimately led to his death.⁵⁶ There are also rumors that Merah became acquainted with Forsane Alizza, a supposed jihadist group, during his time in prison.⁵⁷ After prison, Merah attempted to join the French army and the Foreign Legion but was rejected from both because of his delinquent record. In 2010, he traveled to Turkey, Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, Israel and Afghanistan, and spent two months in Pakistan in 2011 “to

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look for real brothers” according to his brother, Abdelghani.⁵⁸ In Pakistan, he claimed he trained with an Al Qaeda operative, but French intelligence services have been unable to corroborate this statement.⁵⁹ This travel raised red flags for French officials and in November 2011, intelligence officials questioned Merah about his travels. He provided photos claiming he was simply visiting as a tourist.⁶⁰ The documentary found among these photos, however, other photos of Merah wielding a large knife with what has been presumed to be a fellow jihadist.⁶¹ While this piece of evidence may suggest that he received training in Pakistan, the French government, including the Interior Minister at the time, Claude Guéant, has asserted that they do not believe Merah explicitly visited camps during his travels.⁶²

The extent to which Merah consulted with others during his radicalization process is disputed based on lack of information and mistrust of Merah’s own statements. The debate surrounds whether or not Merah frequented a mosque in Toulouse during his radicalization and to what extent his family aided him in preparation for his attacks. Many news articles claim that Merah belonged to no mosque, but the documentary suggests that he frequented a mosque in Toulouse with other Salafists and, although the imam there was not extremist, Merah’s visits served as “indoctrination sessions.”⁶³ The documentary also secretly interviewed interactions with Olivier Corel, who is considered to have been Merah’s spiritual adviser. Corel is known as the “white Emir”, and was investigated in 2007 for alleged recruitment of a group of jihadists south of Toulouse who were seeking to fight in Iraq; despite the accusations, Corel was never charged.⁶⁴ Abdelghani claimed that Merah frequently solicited advice from Corel, but the extent of Corel’s guidance in regards to Merah’s attacks is unknown. Clarification on this piece of evidence would be key in determining Merah’s status as a lone wolf.

Abdelkader, Merah’s violent older brother, is also suspected to have helped in the radicalization process of Mohamed, especially as Kader was considered a neighborhood proselytizer known for converting others to radical Islam. The documentary shows a video clip of the Merah family in the hospital when a family member fell ill, and uses the footage of Kader and Mohamed joking together as evidence of Kader’s “complicity” in Merah’s radicalization.⁶⁵ While this particular causation seems cursory, it is hard to ignore Kader’s influence on Merah’s childhood. Kader’s role in the attacks has yet to be substantiated, yet he has been in custody since March of 2012.

In addition to Abdelkader, it is important to acknowledge the role of Souad, Merah’s sister, once a “modern” Muslim who later radicalized and began wearing a hijab covering her entire body. A friend of the Merah family was interviewed in the documentary and said that of the three siblings, Kader was the most radicalized, Souad occupied the middle space and Mohamed was the least radical. The documentary secretly filmed Souad conversing with Abdelghani, and captures her defending Mohamed’s attacks and clearly demonstrating the extent of her radical beliefs and hatred of France. Souad also admits that she had knowledge of Merah’s travels abroad (Abdelghani claims his siblings kept such information from him, telling him Mohamed was in Algeria). Importantly, Souad claimed that Mohamed committed the attacks without a leader, though she may have been saying this to protect herself and her brother Kader.⁶⁶ Since the release of the documentary, Souad has been investigated by French authorities but not charged.⁶⁷

As this case relates to use of technology and the Internet, it is believed that Merah consulted Internet sources, including the “Global Encyclopedia of Security.”⁶⁸ One news source claimed that Merah spent months watching videos on the Internet.⁶⁹ Claude Moniquet, a source inside the intelligence community, concurs that Merah is known to have consulted Internet sites.⁷⁰ There is no knowledge of whether or not Merah participated actively in an online community, but it is well known that he enjoyed violent video games and movies. In the virtual world of video games is where Merah could have found a “replacement social environment”, but the connection between video games and radicalization is beyond the scope of this paper and a topic for future research. Furthermore, regardless of whether or not he interacted online in forums, Merah used the Internet to seek out his first victim: a paratrooper who listed a motorcycle for sale. Merah expressed a feigned interest in the bike, set up a meeting with the paratrooper and shot him at point blank range at the arranged meeting site. Merah’s knowledge of technology was further demonstrated by his use of a GoPro action camera to film his attacks, as well as his apparent disregard for security camera monitoring of his actions. The attacks were supposedly posted online, but they have not been found since.⁷¹

Surveillance and Attacks

Based on previous delinquency – including 18 minor crimes, some involving violence – and travels to suspicious countries, France began surveillance on Merah in 2009.⁷² Between September 1, 2010 and February 20, 2011, the Central Directorate of Interior Intelligence (DCRI) monitored the mobile phone Merah used, which was supposedly his mother’s.⁷³ During this time he made 186 calls to contacts in 20 different countries. While monitoring Mohamed Merah, the DCRI also monitored his brother Abdelkader and sister Souad because of their alleged ties to a Salafist movement.⁷⁴

On March 11, Merah took his first victim: a French paratrooper. Four days later, he killed two more paratroopers. All three were of North African origin and had recently returned from Afghanistan.⁷⁵ On March 19, he approached a Jewish school in Toulouse and killed a rabbi and three Jewish schoolchildren.⁷⁶ He fled the scene of each killing on a scooter, leading to the nickname “the scooter killer.” French police zeroed in on Merah after tracing the IP address of his mother’s computer, with which Merah planned a meet up with his first victim concerning a scooter for sale.⁷⁷ After tracing the IP address, an armed group of police surrounded Merah’s apartment block on March 21. Shortly after French police surrounded his home, a man claiming to be Merah called a French television channel to explain his justification for the attacks. He cited three specific grievances: the ban on the full Islamic veil, France’s participation in the war in Afghanistan and to avenge the deaths of Palestinian children killed by Israel.⁷⁸ Following a 32-hour siege overnight between March 21 and 22, 2012, Merah was killed in a five-minute firefight with police.

Despite the fact that he was killed, recordings between him, a police negotiator and intelligence officer during the siege provide a look into his psyche and rationale.⁷⁹ In the summer of 2012, the confidential recordings were leaked on television, causing a huge controversy but providing valuable information for scholars studying this case. During the siege, Merah claimed he acted alone and although his contacts in Waziristan suggested he should attack in Canada or the United States, he refused and continued on by himself. He also stated that he received no

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help from his older brother, Abdelkader, citing a long history of familial issues and sibling rivalry. He said, “My objective was to attack alone...in order to be entirely anonymous.”⁸⁰ A video namelessly sent to Al Jazeera, postmarked on March 21, showed the video footage of Merah’s attacks. The video was titled “Al Qaeda attacks France” and the footage was expertly edited, including background music between events. Although the video claims the attacks were affiliated with Al Qaeda, experts aren’t so sure due to a letter in French sent along with the video; Al Qaeda typically releases statements in Arabic.⁸¹ Given that the video was postmarked on the same day as the siege on Merah’s apartment, it is unclear whether Merah or an accomplice sent the video. Al Jazeera ultimately decided not to broadcast the video for respect of the victim’s families and fear of further glorification of the attacks. In the same vein, France requested that Facebook remove a page dedicated to honoring the scooter killer.⁸²

There is currently only one person being held in connection with the attack – Merah’s older brother Abdelkader who has been in custody since last year. Just recently, in March 2013, three people including a serving French soldier were arrested in connection with the attack.⁸³ They have not been charged and French officials have yet to provide context around their arrest.

Limitations to Analysis

The case study of Mohamed Merah is complicated for many reasons. The first is that my primary resource is a documentary released in order to promote Abdelghani Merah’s book *My Brother, That Terrorist*. There were obviously many motivations behind the documentary, not least of which may have been personal revenge against the Merah family. Because of this, some of the information could be exaggerated for dramatic effect. Furthermore, some of the news sources presented varying accounts of Merah’s childhood and because there has yet to have been a case study on him, there is no universal academic resource from which to draw accurate information. It is thus important to declare that the analysis of Merah’s case carries varying degrees of certainty based on the amount of knowledge concerning each aspect.

In addition to the informational limitations, French officials and terrorism scholars themselves are undecided over whether or not Merah was indeed a lone wolf. Bernard Squarini, the former chief of the DCRI said Merah “radicalized alone” and that he “didn’t belong to a single network.”⁸⁴ The French Interior Minister at the time, Claude Guéant, originally claimed that Merah was a part of a group of 15 individuals who ascribed to Salafist ideology.⁸⁵ However, a more recent article from March 2013 states, “detectives are convinced” that Merah had accomplices.⁸⁶ Many observers wonder how Merah was able to amass firearms (including three Colt .45s, a Sten submachine gun and a shotgun) and \$26,000 in cash without outside help. Philippe Migaux (2012), a French terrorism scholar, claimed that he acquired these firearms “with other delinquents from the suburb.”⁸⁷ On the other hand, these weapons are signals of amateur work, as sophisticated groups tend to work with explosives or weapons needing the same type of ammunition.⁸⁸ Olivier Roy, Professor of Political Science at the European University Institute in Florence called Merah “a loner and a loser” who didn’t belong to any religious congregation, radical group or local Islamic movement.⁸⁹

Another large constraint for this analysis is the contradictory information concerning Merah’s involvement with Al Qaeda. There has been much talk about the role of Al Qaeda in

Merah's radicalization, as he specifically claimed membership in the group. The Daily Beast pointed out in an article that even if Merah wasn't specifically a member (as French intelligence services have determined) he was nonetheless following directives given by the late Osama bin Laden and later, by Ayman al-Zawahiri.⁹⁰ In 2010, in an audiotape aired on Al Jazeera, bin Laden disseminated the first message specifically targeting France – mentioning the burka ban of 2011 and France's continued military involvement in Afghanistan.⁹¹ These remarks were repeated almost verbatim in Merah's justification for his own attacks. Moreover, noted terrorism scholar Bruce Hoffman said, "Even if [Merah] isn't directly part of the al Qaeda firmament, it may not matter because for Zawahiri looking at the news, he's thinking 'They are listening to me vicariously, and this strategy works.'"⁹² Similarly, indicating the inspirational power of Al Qaeda's ideology, Roy noted, "Merah found in Al Qaeda a narrative of solitary heroism."⁹³ Claude Moniquet placed Merah "somewhere in the middle" or "a lone wolf with friends" because his supposed contacts with Al Qaeda voided his status as a lone wolf, yet he carried out his actions alone.⁹⁴

A final complication faced in this analysis is Merah's own statements, which cannot be corroborated. For example, he said in the standoff with police that he attended training camps and is a member of Al Qaeda. While an affiliate of Al Qaeda apparently later praised Merah's actions, nobody from the group ever corroborated his membership. Furthermore, government officials have declared that Merah never did visit training camps, even though photos from his travels indicate some sort of violent, radical behavior. Regardless of these limitations, what follows is an attempt to categorize Merah as either a lone wolf or a lone actor, according to my own definitions.

Analysis – Was Merah a Lone Wolf?

Mohamed Merah's narrative resonates with the factors described above his case study: integration, identity, *laïcité* and the *banlieue*. The salience of these factors can be corroborated, and thus I have a high degree of certainty that they were influential in Merah's radicalization. It is evident that Merah's family was poorly integrated given the radical nature of the father and majority of the children.⁹⁵ As a second-generation immigrant, Merah likely struggled with his composite French Muslim identity. Eventual rejection by France (evidenced by his inability to join the army or French legion), led to an insistence on the radical Muslim aspect of his identity over the French aspect. Moreover, Merah invoked the French principle of *laïcité* in his standoff with the police and his phone call to a French television station when he claimed that his attacks were in part to seek revenge against France for the burka ban. As with many immigrants, the Merah family's location in a disadvantaged *banlieue* limited Merah's schooling options (as laws mandate children attend school in the geographic location of their home) and surrounded him in an environment of delinquency, drugs and radicalism. As the radicalization literature states, level of education is not a good indicator of terrorism. However, in Merah's case, when he dropped out of school he became more involved in petty delinquency, which eventually led to larger crimes. An argument can be made, then, that education as proof of intellect is not a determining factor, but education as a tool to occupy disadvantaged youth with dismal future prospects may be an interesting root cause to pursue in the future.

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Perhaps the most easily corroborated factor contributing to Merah's radicalization was his family situation. The lack of family support – a factor considered by the TTSRL paper – facilitated a downward spiral from an early age. His proclivity for violence and Salafism was directly derived from his violent childhood. But even this seemingly lucid factor is clouded. It is unknown, for example, whether or not family members helped him procure the materials for his attacks, or had knowledge about the attacks ahead of time. The documentary targets Abdelkader for his role in Merah's radicalization, but it is difficult to trust such a one-sided source, so the degree of certainty concerning Kader's specific role is somewhat low.

If this analysis was based on Merah's own statements, he would automatically be disqualified for lone wolf status given his claim that he trained with an Al Qaeda operative in Pakistan in 2011. However, because Al Qaeda didn't claim responsibility for the attack (thus not corroborating Merah's statement that he was a member of the organization), I don't believe this analysis can assume that any of his statements are valid. Therefore, while he most likely traveled abroad to meet fellow militants, I will categorize these visits as indoctrination rather than training. This indoctrination is obviously a supplement to that which he received growing up in an anti-Semitic, Salafist family. Unlike Merah's own statements, it is more likely that Abdelghani Merah's statements about the Merah family are indeed true because the French social welfare services and Abdelkader's own criminal records substantiated Abdelghani's assertions. Thus, assuming Abdelghani's statements to be accurate, it is clear that Merah was subjected to radical beliefs from his childhood onward. In the absence of his father, Merah looked to older brother Kader. In such a mentor situation, it is easy to imagine that Merah was attracted to radical Islam simply because Kader ascribed to similar beliefs. This would be the most benign association between the two one could assume. It is also possible that Kader and Merah were more directly involved in the lead up to the attacks, as French officials suspect. However, family indoctrination still does not compromise Merah's status as a lone wolf.

The role of Olivier Corel is interesting because the documentary did not specify whether Merah requested the advice of Corel, or whether he was pressured to radicalize by Corel. This factor certainly walks the line between indoctrination and training. While Abdelghani claimed that Merah consulted with Corel on pretty much everything, it is unclear whether or not Corel actively recruited Merah or Merah continuously sought out the help of Corel. This fact is important in determining whether or not this was indoctrination (passive) or training (active) engagement with the authority figure (Corel). It is useful here to set up contingencies: if Merah pursued Corel, it would be considered active engagement; if Corel pursued Merah as a subject to be radicalized, this would constitute passive indoctrination on Merah's part. Regardless, we can argue that Merah had at least some repeated social interaction with this man. The nature of this interaction cannot be determined, but if known would have implications for a more accurate categorization of Merah a lone wolf or a lone actor.

Merah's use of technology and the Internet, while very savvy and innovative, does not constitute active consumption. While it is known that he consulted Internet sites and communicated with one of his victims online, it is unknown whether or not he participated in chat rooms or forums, which would have qualified him as a lone actor according to my terminology. Instead, his Internet action fits with my profile of a lone wolf. An important note when discussing use of the Internet was Merah's revolutionary use of a Craigslist-like website to

facilitate a meeting with his victim. Masquerading as a potential buyer for the victim's motorcycle, Merah was able to gain a face-to-face opportunity for attack. This is simply an interesting facet of the case, and does not have any implications for Merah's status as a lone wolf.

Ultimately, this paper concludes that Merah was indeed a lone wolf following my own definition. However, it is clear that certain contingencies exist based on lack of information. For example, Merah's supposed training abroad has yet to be substantiated. Given the recent nature of his travels, if French intelligence services indeed found him to have trained abroad, his status as a lone wolf would be immediately compromised. Moreover, the role of Olivier Corel and Abdelkader Merah both in the planning and facilitation of these attacks remains unclear. If one or both of these individuals trained Merah or helped in the planning of the attacks, Merah would be labeled as a lone actor but not as a lone wolf. It is unknown whether or not Abdelkader has given up any information during his time in custody, but certainly the information he possibly holds could be vital to definitively making this distinction.

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Conclusion

Conclusion – Findings

This paper finds that the influence of the Internet has contaminated the traditional idea of a pure lone wolf, and thus multiple concepts must be demarcated to address the behavior of various lone individuals. I redefined the terms “lone wolf” and “lone actor” to achieve this aim. Accordingly, the case study of Mohamed Merah was ultimately deemed a lone wolf case, albeit with a lower degree of certainty given lack of information. Moreover, despite the inherent solitary nature of lone wolves and lone actors, the degree of social interaction still required for radicalization was surprising. This indicates that it is still difficult for an individual to completely radicalize in his or her basement using only a computer. Nonetheless, the potential for such self-radicalization exists and this research thus presents important implications for theory and policy. First, I will discuss the limitations on this research and suggestions for future research, including parallels between the Merah case and the recent Boston marathon bombings.

Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research

Limitations to this research abound in the case study section, most of which stem from a lack of information or abundance of misinformation concerning Mohamed Merah. My primary source for the case study was a documentary that clearly contained motivations of revenge against the Merah family. An objective academic study of Merah’s background and childhood is thus crucial to determining what factors were salient in his radicalization, and such a study is my first recommendation for further research. Furthermore, it seems pertinent in the European and French context to study negative identification as a result of group rejections. Mohamed Merah felt largely marginalized and rejected by the French and thus isolated from the French identity. It may be useful to apply Ramon Spaaij’s idea of ideological movement identification to the question of national identity to determine what the ramifications are of an individual feeling a negative identification to an entire country. In addition, as mentioned in the above case study, the link between education and terrorism should be re-examined. While it is clear that terrorists have disparate levels of education, the idea of education as an alternative to delinquency (as we see in the Merah case) is an important counter-radicalization measure and should be further explored. Moreover, Merah’s obsession with violent video games suggests that in addition to the Internet, gaming can influence individuals. The link between video games and radicalization is an additional recommendation for further research.

Boston Marathon Bombings

The final major avenue for future research concerns the parallels between the Merah case study and the still-developing case of the Boston marathon bombings on April 15, 2013. It is first important to note that these brothers are not homegrown terrorists because they were not born in the United States; however, they cannot be considered complete foreigners either because estimates at the time of this writing suggest they have lived in the U.S. for approximately a decade. As of this writing (April 25, 2013), investigators are still gathering information about the brothers’ radicalization process; it is still unclear whether or not they had outside support from a group or radical individual who indoctrinated them into radical Islam. Nonetheless, investigators are focusing on some of the same key points from the Merah case: the motivations of the brothers, the influence of the older brother Tamerlan over the younger brother Dzhokhar,

Tamerlan's travel abroad and efficiency of the American counterterrorism system and use of the Internet to self-radicalize. I will explore each of these briefly below.

First, Dzhokhar explained in some of his early interrogations that he and his brother were motivated by the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. This is an oft-cited motivation for Muslim terrorists, and indeed is similar to Merah's claim that his attack was in part revenge against France for participating in the war in Afghanistan. This touches the idea of the *ummah* or transnational community of Muslims. It is possible that the Tsarnaev brothers felt "moral outrage" (Marc Sageman's term) or "strong reciprocity" (Sophia Moskalenko Clark McCauley's term) and wanted to avenge the wrongdoings experienced by fellow Muslims as a result of U.S. wars. This has ramifications for the foreign policy of the United States because it clearly demonstrates how foreign policy interventions create grievances, which in turn fuel attacks on U.S. soil or against U.S. interests.

Second, the Boston case suggests implications for the influence of family dynamics on indoctrination. In this case, it is currently assumed that Dzhokhar was under the influence of the more-radical Tamerlan, yet they committed the acts together therefore disqualifying them as lone wolves. Currently, the media and investigators are trying to figure out whether or not there was a third-party individual or group who provided training, inspiration or tactical help. One recent development has been the influence of the mother, who was once overheard discussing jihad by Russian surveillance. However, because we are considering two people – one assumed to have been more radical than the other – it could be claimed that in fact that third party was subsumed by Tamerlan himself and he served to encourage and motivate Dzhokhar. Using research from the first and third sections of this paper, self-radicalization often still requires the reinforcement by another individual for confidence or spiritual sanctioning in certain phases of radicalization. What has not yet been explored in the scholarship is whether or not this outside contact is necessary when dealing with one individual who is highly radicalized and one who is less radicalized but under the influence of the first. This family association, not only between brothers but under potential influence of the mother as well, lends further significance to my discussion of family dynamics in the Merah case study.

Third, investigators are particularly concerned by Tamerlan's six-month trip to Dagestan and Chechnya in 2012 where it is believed he may have further radicalized. This trip is similar in nature to Mohamed Merah's travel abroad, because the FBI had been tipped off by Russia that Tamerlan "had changed drastically since 2010" and was traveling to Russia "to join unspecified underground groups."¹ This was one of four separate contacts between Russian spy services and the American counterterrorism bureaucracy (including the FBI and CIA) prior to Tamerlan's departure. The FBI questioned Tamerlan and his family in 2011 and concluded that they could not find connections to extremists; the case was closed without further questioning, just like the case of Merah.

Fourth and finally, the brothers' use of the Internet is currently being scrutinized. Because the investigation is in the early stages, their public social media profiles are of the most interest, as opposed to their actions on terrorist websites. It is known that they consulted the English online magazine *Inspire* produced by an Al Qaeda affiliate in Yemen. This magazine is well known for its detailed instructions on how to make homemade bombs.² A news analysis

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piece in the *New York Times* looked at Dzhokhar's Twitter account and his profile page on VKontakte, a Russian social-networking site.³ For the most part, his activity online was what could be expected of a teenaged boy – though some posts suggested anti-Americanism and Islamic fundamentalism. Tamerlan's YouTube account and suspected Amazon.com "wish list" were targeted in this particular news analysis, but it is difficult to draw concrete links between information consulted online and actual beliefs. The analysis of the brothers' posts suggested both the unique use of social media for understanding an individual, but also the pitfalls of over-analyzing the data and trying to forge links that may or may not actually exist.

Implications for Theory

This research shows that lone wolf theories are more precise when they take into account the influence of the Internet and specify how Internet usage affects an individual's status as a lone wolf. It is clear that when talking about terrorists who act alone, at least two terms should be defined to address the breadth of their activities – as I do in my section on lone wolf theory. My two definitions – lone wolf and lone actor – aspire to address the spectrum of lone terrorists that exist. For example, an individual can carry out a terrorist attack alone without actually fully acting alone. More precise definitions allow law enforcement officials and scholars to more accurately define these individuals and their paths to terrorism. That being said, it is important to note that my terms were only defined in the above section – causation was not established. Further exploration is necessary to develop a theory surrounding these defined terms.

Implications for Policy

This paper presents certain policy implications for intelligence surveillance and counterterrorism policy. First, intelligence communities face privacy boundaries in monitoring the Internet. Furthermore, new media is not yet considered a legitimate source of intelligence; this is particularly evidenced by the developing Tsarnaev case.⁴ It is important, however, to monitor users of extremist websites – especially those who are particularly active in online communities and forums. Though privacy should always be a core value in a democratic society, there are times when surveillance is necessary for the security of the country. Second, surveillance should be improved offline as well. As evidenced by both Merah's case and that of the Boston bombers, better efforts must be made to share information between security services on a domestic and international level. Leads on potential radical individuals need to be more aggressively pursued, as evidenced by the inability of both the French intelligence service and the FBI to detect, even after questioning, Mohamed Merah and Tamerlan Tsarnaev's respective radical tendencies.

Third, as mentioned above, Western countries must emphasize sensible foreign and domestic policies. In the French case, Mohamed Merah attacked based on both domestic and international policy grievances. His disadvantaged status was certainly heightened based on a perceived rejection by the French white majority, and his life of poverty, violence and crime in a disadvantaged *banlieue*. French domestic policy must be reformed in order to give individuals of immigrant descent a more equal chance at success; in addition, cultural laws should be sensitive to the fact that under the umbrella of French nationality, pluralities of sub-identities exist that may or may not be more important than the national identity. Particularly, a greater effort should

be made in the media to avoid stigmatizing Islam, or equating Islam with terrorism. Furthermore, foreign policy is also important, especially in light of Merah and Dzhokhar's statements concerning the war in Afghanistan. It is difficult, however, to temper foreign policy for fear of angering a small sect of "macro-nationalist" individuals who may avenge perceived wrongs committed against their Muslim brothers. Foreign policies thus should emphasize their goals explicitly and specify why such policies are not an attack on the global Muslim community. Such statements can help counter grievances felt as a result of Western foreign policies.

Section Endnotes

¹ Schmitt, Eric, and Michael Schmidt. "Tamerlan Tsarnaev, Bombing Suspect Was on Watch Lists." *New York Times*. N.p., 24 Apr. 2013. Web.

² "Boston Bombing Suspects Built Explosives with Help of Online Al Qaeda Magazine, Official Says." *Fox News*. FOX News Network, 23 Apr. 2013. Web. 25 Apr. 2013.

³ Kakutani, Michiko. "Unraveling Brothers' Online Lives, Link by Link." *New York Times* 24 Apr. 2013, Front Page sec.: n. pag. Print.

⁴ Amble, John C. "Combatting Terrorism in the New Media Environment." *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 35.5 (2012): 339-53. Print.

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