

Lone Wolf Attacks - Australian Prespective

What is the issue?

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- Terror operatives have increasingly promoted decentralised 'Lone wolf' attacks across cities.

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- Australia has been advocating to perceive the new trend as a psychological crime - which calls for a radically different approach.

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How are lone-wolfs different?

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- The common thread among all such attacks was that all these people acted on their own without any command from elsewhere.

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- Most lone-wolfs get indoctrinated online out of own volition without any direct contact with radical propagators.

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- Notably, objects of common use - like trucks, axes, knives are innovatively used as deadly weapons.

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- These features of lone-wolf attacks helps in effectively skiping the conventional surveillance radars.

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- This strand of terrorism is not akin to conventional war that can have definitive beginning and end.

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- It is rather closer to crime, which can best understood through, and handled by, the tools of law enforcement.

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- Therefore, the security challenge is to be more efficient when it comes to preventing indoctrination than the actual act.

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How should investigations proceed?

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- Structured operations of conventional terrorism called for a targeted nuanced policing coupled with tough physical action at times.

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- On the contrary, the lone wolf strand is practically untraceable by the security radar.

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- Hence, this stresses the need for enhancing security dialogue to a massive population in a non-targetive way to trace for specifics.

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- Also, in most cases till now, a family member or a friend noticed a significant change in the activities of the would-be attacker.

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- But he/she wasn't sure of reporting it due to lack of substantiation and the fear of an excessively muscled police interventions.

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- While in most cases behavioural aberrations might just be innocent changes, tracking them would help enhancing security.

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- Softening the tone of police responses would enhance reporting and thereby increase tracability of lone-wolfers.

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Is it related to Psychological health?

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- Australia had constituted many 'Fixated Threat Assessment Centers' in 2006.

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- That center was created to find people with obsessive, stalker-like fixations (not terrorists) on public figures and celebrities.

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- Such people were overwhelmingly found to suffer from some form of mental illness, particularly psychosis.
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- These centers has partnership with the health department to council these people and enhance their social cognition.
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- **Terror prespective** - Research to find patterns in the personalities of conventional terrorists have proven futile.
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- But preperators of lone-wolf terrorism, have been found to exhibit a higher level of psychological disturbance and depression.
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- Hence, expanding the scope of operations of such centers would in fact screen out lone-wolfers.
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- The mental illness angle would also redefine remedial programs and rehabilitation for lone-wolfers.
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Source: New York Times

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