Tracing the Cultural Background of Lone-Wolf Terrorism:
Dilemmas, Contradictions, and Opportunities for the Next Decade

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ABSTRACT

The end of the Cold War, as well as the collapse of the Soviet Union, posed new greater challenges and risks for the "Global North." Terrorism—doubtless—seems to be one of them. Over the recent years, and particularly after 9/11, terrorists changed the focus of their attacks. While classic terrorism targeted important persons such as politicians, chief police officers, or celebrities, modern terrorism planned attacks on leisure-spots spaces, tourist destinations, and lay-persons. This is particularly troublesome for policymakers (who are in charge of orchestrating all-pervading models to preserve homeland security) and for field-workers who are seriously punished when they are in contact with radicalized cells. For this reason, specialists traverse for many problems to understand the complexity of terrorism as well as the motivation of young lone-wolves to attack societies where they are native. The present conceptual research focuses not only on the borders of travel literature but also the colonial stereotypes forged during the European expansion to draw and model an "alterity" strictly limited to the ideals of the Enlightenment. In a nutshell, the allegories revolving around the "lone-wolf terrorism" continues the imprint of the "archetype of the noble savage" coined in 18th century.

INTRODUCTION

The problem of terrorism seems to be not new, but now it divided the scholars into two clear-cut poles. Since 9/11, which for some voices is considered a foundational event, Western democracies have gone through several economic and political crises associating to racism, racial violence, Islamophobia or the political discontent of citizenship. While some scholars agree that the scourge of terrorism results from the lack of democracy, as well as the internal political instability lower politics, generate in the Third World, (Huntington, 2000; Keohane & Zeckhauser, 2003; Mintz & Brule, 2009) other voices lament the political manipulation of governments which use the archetype of terrorism to pass laws and policies otherwise would be rejected by lay-people. These studies emphasize on the urgency to debate to what extent the so-called "War on Terror" is mining or eroding the basis of democracy in the US, as well as the check and balance institutions (Altheide 2006; Skoll 2010; Skoll & Korstanje 2013; Korstanje 2018). Professor Luke Howie explains that terrorism should be understood as a great spectacle, a simulation where terrorists play a role similar to celebrities. They do not want a lot of

people dying, rather they want a lot of people watching! Continuing the legacy of French philosopher Jean Baudrillard, he holds that terrorism should be framed as a something more complex than the political violence, but on the obsession for witnessing an apocalyptic scenario. To put the same in other terms, society receives a message from terrorism at the same time the media amplifies that message to create a type of cultural entertainment. It is time to speak of a phenomenology of terrorism which straddles nations and cultures across the world. Australians, citing Howie, were more concerned and frightened than the US after 9/11. This happens simply because the geographical location is no longer important in the globalization of terror (Howie 2010; 2012). Is this spectacle part of what the lone wolves consume?

Some works have focused on the phenomenon of lone-wolf terrorism as a process of radicalization where the self dislocates its identity while redirecting its rage against an abstract object (McCauley & Moskalenko 2008; 2017). These studies are mainly oriented to understand not only the psychology or the socio-economic background that leads "good people" to terrorism but also how the terrorist mind is gradually formed. Two different but combined factors play an important role in the radicalization process. On one hand, the socio-cultural structure where the terrorist lives, the perceived injustices or problems they had to face in his biography; and, on another, the daily micro-interaction with peers and other terrorist candidates. Young people who had a radical cosmology of the world are often seduced or recruited by some cells though not all radical minds become finally in terrorists (Dawson, 2009; Borum 2011; Sedgwick 2010). As McCauley & Moskalenko (2017) showed, twelve mechanisms intervene in the re-education of a terrorist. The process of radicalization is successfully achieved when the candidate is isolated to interact in a small group, probably geographically distanced from the community. His radicalization is targeted against impossible ends such as "the end of West", or the corruption of capitalism. In almost all cases, the recruitment is based on an emotional appeal where peers, friends or even relatives occupy a central position. The radicalization transforms deeply his cosmology altering his "being in this world" and the ways that external world is lived. As Daniele Valentini (2019) puts it, terrorists are stranded to feel in-between two worlds simultaneously. The European ethos where they live and the Muslim world where they would dream to live. As Muslims of a second-born generation, they face an identity crisis which is finally resolved violently. Having said this, violence catalyzes the tension between a real and fictional character. Experts, who are interested in responding how a mind is transformed (radicalized) and under what conditions, alert that counter-terrorism measures stay one step back of the terrorist cells.

As the previous argument is given, the current conceptual paper interrogates further the archetypical figure of the lone wolf in the Western literature which exhibits ways of feelings ideologically articulated in the social media. In our earlier book, *The Challenges of Democracy in the War on Terror,* we alerted on the methodological problems of terrorism research which lacks an empirical basis. Starting from the premise that terrorism is a highly-punishable activity, ethnographers who had direct contact with terrorists are forced to reveal their key-informants´ identities. In the western imaginary, terrorists are seen as enemies of democracy, demons or hatred-filled maniacs who look to destroy the Western lifestyle. Needless to say, any contact with them is punished by the state. Hence, studies in terrorism appear to be methodologically speaking weak or based on general speculations which often affirms the dominant narrative of the status quo (Korstanje 2018). Because of this, the goals of this essay-review research are threefold. The piece concentrates efforts in understanding how literature approaches the figure of the lone wolf, combining the post-colonial theory with writing travel as a new emerging subgenre. Secondly, we review the contributions and limitations of cultural theorists who have addressed the interplay of European ethnocentrism and the construction of the Non-Western "Other". We hold the thesis that the figure of lone wolf represents a continuation of the archetype of "the noble savage" originally ingrained in the classic colonialism. In third, we explore the plot of the novel *La Lenta Agonia de los peces [the slow death of the fishes] written by Eric Frattini.*

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