

“Lone Wolves”? Terror In Orlando, Birstall And Sydney

The Assassination of Labour MP Jo Cox

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London: *Much of Britain is recoiling in the wake of the death of Labour MP Jo Cox, who was shot and stabbed on Thursday in broad daylight outside the public library in Birstall to the shouts of “Britain first!” It was the first killing of a serving MP since Ian Gow, whose life was taken by Irish Republicans in 1990.*

The suspect, Thomas Mair, was said to have carried what was an “old-fashioned” possibly homemade gun, and also brandished a knife in the attack. At around 1 pm, the shots and blows rained down upon Cox, who was declared dead less than an hour later.

Her husband, Brendan Cox, reiterated a theme that has been articulated all too often of late. There was hatred, and such hate had no “creed, race or religion – it is poisonous.”



The wells and soil of Britain, and indeed many a state, have been poisoned by the flipside of such hate, which is fear itself. The country has been embroiled in a debate about whether to leave the European Union, and the sensible ones guided by sobriety are nowhere in sight. Apocalyptic scenarios are being generated on an hourly basis by the campaigns of those who wish to remain and those who wish to exit. There have been suggestions of economic collapse, impoverishment and even war.

In this climate, the immediate rumours that were set alight by the killing of the MP for Batley and Spen was whether it was another ISIS inspired, as opposed to directed, move.

As the torrid air began to clear, it surfaced that Mair had been a former psychiatric patient with suggested links to ultra-patriotic right wing groups, a habitual “loner” with a subscription to the S. A. Patriot, a South African publication coming out of the offices of the pro-apartheid group, [the White Rhino Club](#). It may be relevant in so far as Cox had spoken out against Britain First, [a vociferously proud anti-Islamic group of the right](#).

Across the Atlantic, in Orlando, Florida, the death of Cox seemed miniature in comparison to the killing and injuring of over a hundred people on June 12. As with everything else, the United States does things to vast scale, supersizing everything from food to death.

In the case of the attack on the Pulse club in Orlando by Omar Mateen, there were the usual personality issues, be there a history of abuse, innate aggression and paranoia. The same characteristics as those with Mair were manifest here, though the medical arguments were fast obscured by a tissue of incoherent political explanations.

It was clear that the Orlando shooter had little sense about an ideological anchor, deeply troubled about the roots of his inspiration. As long as the alternative was sufficiently contrarian, violent and contrary to the status quo, it featured in his mental universe. It explained why he would express support for the dirty work of the al-Nusra front prior to his exultant embrace of Islamic State in his 911 calls. Shia and Sunni differences were of little consequence to him, or is reading.

To the addling wonder that was Mateen’s mind came a not so closeted homosexuality. While that side of the pudding has yet to be proven in detail, friends and locals suggested that he had been a user of gay dating apps and a regular of gay bars. Along with ideological confusion came a good deal of self-woe.

The Mateen blueprint - confusion and indifference to the dimensions of faith and a creative streak of fabrication - were very much present in yet another “lone wolf”, that grand fabulist and showman, Man Haron Monis.

In seizing the Lindt Café in Sydney on December 15, 2014, a standoff resulting in three deaths including Monis, the hostage taker was simply adding another confused chapter to a series of preposterous acts he had engaged in since arriving in Australia as an Iranian refugee.

As local security services realised, he giddily switched sides with a breezy disdain. He advocated support for both Shia and Sunni causes. He created the impression he was knee-deep in the Iranian security establishment, and a threat as result. He also attempted to join the Rebel motorcycle gang. Similarly to Mateen, [he was a profoundly dedicated narcissist](#).

The nature of such outfits as the Islamic State is that any event that smells of murderous promise, done with sufficient dedication, is bound to get the seal of approval. News agencies were awash in the aftermath of the slaughter in Orlando with messages that Mateen had been “one of the soldiers of the caliphate in America.” Like Mateen, Islamic State issued a similar note of credit for Monis’s actions.

Never mind the actual profile of the killer, be he unstable, mentally fraught and desperate. It signals, if nothing else, a bone lazy disposition to putting in the hard yards, and hoping that ideas have wings that will find useful idiots. Mateen and Monis were convenient executors of that legacy. Britain First has, however denied having any influence over Mair's actions, issuing a statement of disassociation.

In time, it may simply transpire that yet another individual of ill-health, stumbling along the crooked road of life, decided to ingest a poor morsel of politics, and kill. The coherence of the idea was irrelevant; such matters are often indigestible. As Mair's brother Scott explained, "My brother was not violent and is not all that political. I don't even know who he votes for."

Sydney, Orlando, Birstall all reveal the difficulties of finding clarity of explanation in the world of the inscrutable. For the three assailants in question, the world must have seemed just as puzzling. They became useful fools in broader agendas. Other groups, be they the National Rifle Association on the one hand, or Islamic State on the other, will always be there to reap the bloody bounty.

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